

North Central chat

April 2019

Keeping you up to date with all the Landcare and Waterwatch news



A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

What an exciting month March has been. I've left the Chat until the last minute as I have been out in the field getting hands on where the real Landcare action is!

I recently met with two colourful characters from the Friends of Mount Wycheproof group, who insisted we walk up the 'world's smallest mountain'. If you haven't had the chance, it is a great stroll with a gorgeous outlook over the Avoca River plains. I certainly felt the 43m ascent was a great excuse for a coffee and cake at the beautiful Bakery on Broadway- it's such a treat.

As Darren jetted off to Canberra to attend the National Agricultural Landcare Facilitators' conference, I worked alongside our colleagues from Goulburn Broken and North East CMAs to finalise the 2019 Norther Rivers Roundup, which we hosted in Moama on March 19 & 20. The training event was an incredible success, designed to allow facilitators to network, share ideas and work through common issues with peers, as their roles are often isolated and very demanding.

On the way home from Moama, I couldn't resist a visit with my new best friend Allan (*pictured*)- an endangered squirrel glider and resident pin-up glider for the Strathallan Squirrel Glider Sanctuary run by Veronica and John Groat of Strathallan Family Landcare. The facility they have built is world class, with researchers, zoologists and conservationists' part of the captive breeding recovery team to ensure a future for the gorgeous gliders.

The fun continued, when I was invited along to the Smiths Creek in Daylesford, joining the Friends of Cornish Hill's schools' event 'Under the Microscope'. Students from four local schools participated in the event which featured hands-on

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Left; Poster boy Allan is painted onto the Rochester Silos
Right; Students created leaf messages in grass boats which sailed on Smiths Creek.

sessions including Waterwatch, bug blitz, macroinvertebrates, clay art and grass boats. It's a joy to return to this site annually to see the condition of the waterway improve and the innovative ways the group is managing weeds and engagement activity in their beloved patch.

From the Landcare and Waterwatch teams, we wish you and your families a Happy Easter filled with cheer ...and chocolate bilbies.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

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News...

Citizen scientists collect platypus DNA

Article by Sandy Scheltema

The first results from a project using Citizen Scientists to gather data on platypus along the Campaspe and Coliban Rivers have just been collated.

Citizen Scientists were helping the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network gather data for the Platypus Project, a collaboration between platypus ecologist Josh Griffiths from EnviroDNA and the UCLN. The project aims to collect valuable data by testing the water samples for platypus DNA to paint a clearer picture of where the elusive animals exist.

Citizen Scientists, government agencies, Landcare, school students and Josh Griffiths recently collected water samples from 20 sites along the Coliban and Campaspe Rivers. Platypus DNA was detected at five sites along the Coliban River, whilst none was found in the Campaspe River.

“This project is a great example of innovative technology combining with citizen science to generate some really valuable data on platypuses throughout the region, it’s the first-time platypus distribution in the upper Campaspe/Coliban has been investigated. The sampling undertaken in Feb 2019 during a very dry period has been valuable to identify drought refuge areas for platypuses” said ecologist Josh Griffiths.

Over 300 school children from four schools in the area have been involved in the project with the students collecting water samples from the top, bottom and middle of the project area.

Molly Spencer-Stewart, a year 12 student from the Alice Miller School said *“Learning about biodiversity and the importance of maintaining it in Australia (because of our endemic and endangered species) is vital for our future. We’re the leaders of the next generation and we need to be empowered with the knowledge to be able to act upon these issues like how to protect platypus. Having Josh here today allowed us to participate in the steps towards documenting and protecting platypus in our area.”*

Fifty more sites will be tested along the rivers in spring during the platypus breeding season. Funding for the project was provided to the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network by the Victorian government.



North Central CMA Healthy Coliban Catchment, Project Manager Nick Layne, and landholder Kerry Connoley take part in the UCLN’s Citizen Scientist Field Day to collect platypus DNA from critical refuge areas along the Coliban and Campaspe Rivers. They are seen here collecting samples at Turpins Falls. Photo credit; Scheltema



Photo credit: Zoos Victoria



Students from Kyneton Secondary College learn from Platypus ecologist Josh Griffiths how to collect water samples for eDNA testing along the Campaspe River in Kyneton. Photo credit; Scheltema

"If you bugger it up, there's no other planet" – a heart-warming good news story



Source; Bush Heritage Australia

Bush Heritage Australia recently received a living bequest of \$1 million from Castlemaine locals and avid Landcarers' Caroline and Terry Bellair.

The Bellairs heard Bush Heritage Conservationist Jeroen van Veen's plan for the Kara Kara-Wedderburn Landscape at a Campbells Creek Landcare meeting last year.

The next day, they began the process of donating a million dollars to Bush Heritage

BHA Chief Executive Officer, Heather Campbell said when making the announcement "If you had \$1 million, would you spend it on buying land to protect it forever? That's what the amazingly generous Caroline and Terry Bellair have done, gifting us a 'living bequest' so we could extend our conservation corridor in the ecologically abundant Kara Kara–Wedderburn landscape in north-central Victoria.

With their big-hearted donation, we are adding over 500 hectares to our protected area in this landscape."

If you missed it, grab a cuppa and read their story from the front page of [The Sunday Age](#)

Wrap up of Northern Rivers Roundup

22 Landcare support staff from across three catchments came together on March 19 & 20 to "do good...stuff"

Two half-days were designed to provide Landcare Network Facilitators with not only practical training sessions but networking and collaboration time as feedback from the 2016 indicated peer-to-peer learning was an incredibly valuable and empowering component of the event.

Participants enjoyed training sessions on;

- 'Sustaining and Revitalising groups' with Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc Founding Director [Neil Blake](#)
- 'Strategic planning & Partnerships' with Wettenhall Environment Trust Executive Director [Beth Mellick](#), and
- 'Working with the Media' with North Central CMA Communications Coordinator Anthony Radford.

A highlight for the group was the dinner keynote presentation from local farmers Andrew and Faye Bail. Their story of farming and conservation to protect the habitat of plains wanderer was simply inspiring, one participant noted that they had "a great evening - loved the passionate landholders talking about their works/knowledge"



On day two, six facilitators presented their own projects to the group in peer-to-peer learning sessions. The brief was to give everyone a taste of the 'good, bad and the ugly' of a project, and there were some great laughs had, but importantly some common themes, including nest box monitoring and data collection, which resulted in a small working group wanting to take the idea further as a collective.

Formal feedback indicated that event remains valuable for Landcare support staff, with 100% of attendees looking forward to a third round-up in the future.

If you are interested in any of the speakers or notes from presentations, please get in contact with me and I'll do my best to pass on relevant information.

This event was made possible through funding from the Victorian Landcare Program.

Sustainable Ag Snippet...

Darren Bain, Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator.

It's been a dry start to the year for most of the catchment except for a couple of areas receiving decent rainfall in early February.

Farmers will start sowing their crops dry and will slowly continue in anticipation of some rainfall this month. Dry and windy conditions have also created several large dust events, turning the sky an orange brown colour. Let's hope the rain comes soon and stimulates ground cover growth for fragile soils.

It is a busy time with many community events occurring across the catchment. The Regenerative Agriculture Project has held events with farmer groups including soil health and moisture probe workshops at Raywood and Normanville in partnership with Agriculture Victoria. We also partnered with Vic No-Till to deliver a workshop with international speaker Nicole Masters on soil health. This was an excellent day and really had the farmers thinking about alternative ways to improve soil health and increase soil biodiversity. The participants visited Grant Sims property to inspect his vermicast extract process to produce a biological stimulant, which is then sprayed on the crop and soil.



A great field day was held at Grant Sims property in Pine Grove alongside speaker Nicole Masters

I was one of the 56 RALF's in attendance at the national conference in Canberra. This annual event provides a fantastic networking opportunity with fellow peers and develops a shared understanding of what is occurring around the nation from a sustainable agriculture perspective. We all have our own agriculture issues but we are all working towards supporting our farming communities

promoting sustainable agricultural practices to increase resilience and connect farmers and industry especially during these dry times.

Events...

Seminars/webinars for livestock producers during dry conditions

During April, Agriculture Victoria is hosting a series of phone seminars/webinars to discuss key livestock and farm management practices that can assist during dry conditions:

SEMINAR 2: 1 April, 8pm – 9pm

Farm water supply:

- o Understanding your farm water requirements
- o Assessing current farm water supply
- o Identify and map potential improvements in your farm water supply
- o Planning for future challenges

SEMINAR 3: 8 April, 8pm – 9pm

Livestock feeding and nutrition in dry times:

- o What are your animals' energy requirements?
- o Understanding the true value of your feed
- o Introducing new feed/rations to livestock
- o Animal health considerations

SEMINAR 4: 15 April, 8pm – 9pm

Pasture recovery after rain

- o Will I need to re-sow?
- o When can I stop supplementary feeding?
- o Getting the balance right for stock and recovery of pastures.
- o Top tips – what to watch for after the rain; weed and stock management

You can choose to participate by phone or online via computer, tablet or phone, or using a combination of phone and online.

RSVP: Registration is free

To participate in any of these seminars, please register online at: <https://bit.ly/2CdWVX2>

If you are unable to register online, please contact: Jo Cameron 03 5355 0523 / 0419 832 704 or email: jo.cameron@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Connecting to Country event

Boort and the surrounding marshes, lakes and rivers are culturally and spiritually rich. For thousands of years the area was home to the first peoples of Australia, the Dja Dja Wurrung.

Within a 20-kilometre radius of Boort there are more than 2,000 scar trees making the area one of, if not the largest, collection of scar trees in the world. There are also numerous cooking mounds and artefacts scattered throughout the area that was, and still is, buzzing with activity.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Dja Dja Wurrung are hosting a fun, family event bringing the cultural significance and stories from the area to life. You will also learn about local natural resource management projects.

Come along to hear and learn from local Traditional Owners and Elders. There will be heaps of activities for everyone including:

- A BBQ lunch
- Welcome to Country
- Weaving workshop
- Boomerang painting
- Traditional stories
- Cultural artefact display

When: Monday 15 April. 12.30pm-3.30pm

Where: Nolans Park Godfrey Street, Boort

RSVP: to the North Central CMA on (03) 5448 7124 by Thursday 11 April



Grant writing and iMap workshops

The North Central Landcare team recently contacted all Landcare Networks across the catchment to offer workshops in preparation for the next round of the Victorian Landcare Grants.

The workshops (1.5 hrs) can be tailored but to be practical, groups of up to 15 works best. Workshops will focus on:

- o A short presentation about applying for the grants program
- o Discussion time to answer FAQs
- o Working through iMap queries

I have available dates in April and May to come out to your local areas but am booking up fast. So far, Landcare Networks have arranged sessions in Lockwood (April 3) Daylesford (April 8) and Castlemaine (May 15)

To join in or to book a workshop in your area contact Regional Landcare Coordinator, Tess Grieves (03) 5440 1890 or email tess.grieves@nccma.vic.gov.au

Courses and Resources...

Restoring urban waterways fact sheets

The Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities has recently released a series of 13 fact sheets designed to walk practitioners through repairing or designing a living stream site on a flowing urban waterway, and to support them in working out the actions required to improve the ecological function of urban waterways.

The fact sheets aren't prescriptive but are a useful resource to better understand the environmental factors and urban constraints at a restoration site.



Supporting the fact sheets is a decision making tool called [RESTORE](#), to help waterway practitioners determine which components of urban waterway repair or design to focus on.

You may find the information useful in your planning and management of Landcare sites, for distribution at community events or in conversations with waterway managers. Visit the website for more information:

<https://watersensitivecities.org.au/content/new-factsheets-offer-strategies-for-restoring-urban-waterways/>

NEW: Early Invader manual

The Weeds at the Early Stage of Invasion (WESI) Project has a brand new tool.

The Early Invader manual is a tool to assist public land and biodiversity managers with the management of early invader environmental weeds. It is packed with easy-to-understand steps and templates to guide you through a logical weed management process.

The manual is a great introduction to a range of WESI tools and guides to help with managing early invader weeds. It is an informative summary of the six WESI guides first published in 2016.



Missy the springer spaniel detector dog who has been deployed in Victoria to search for hawkweed. Image: OEH, NSW.

The manual is available online:

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/invasive-plants-and-animals/early-invaders>.

Victorians can order a FREE hard copy of the Early invader manual posted directly to you here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/bianca-gold-department-of-environment-land-water-and-planning-18080018366>



Hello all,

We hope you have been enjoying the cooler weather of the past week! It's been a busy time again for us here in the Waterwatch and River Detectives team. Britt has been working with regional coordinators across Victoria to kick off another wonderful year of the statewide River Detectives program with more than 90 schools registered this year.

Our Waterwatch volunteers have been actively collecting wonderful data from the across the region. To say thank you we are working on a small get together in April, see below for more info on the Avoca River Bus Tour.

We are still looking for volunteers to get involved and help us with our great citizen science programs. If you live in the Bendigo, Smeaton, Gunbower/Cohuna or the upper Coliban region, or would like to get out and about, please give us a call. We are looking for people to head out once a month to test water quality samples from waterways within these project areas. The information collected from these projects helps us to track the health of waterways across the region and guide waterway management decisions.

A quick team update: I am now working half my time on Waterwatch, the other half is split across two projects, one is the Kerang and Gunbower Ramsar Wetland program that I have been working on for some time now. I am also working with the City of Greater Bendigo in a secondment role for 12 months, focussing on the Re-imagining Bendigo Creek project, which I am very excited about. Britt continues to work across the River Detectives program, Bendigo Creek and Healthy Coliban Catchment projects along with providing support for regional Waterwatch volunteers. Due to the workload, Nicole Howie has joined the team for a short while. Nicole will deliver our North Central River Detectives teacher training workshops, help organise the Avoca River Bus Tour and is developing some resource material to support our community volunteers.

I am very excited about our little team and we are already achieving lots of great things! Watch this space for updates over the coming months, and



please don't forget, if volunteering is something you have been thinking about, please get in touch so we can fill you in on all the programs on offer.

Cass Davis

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Waterwatch events and special days

Avoca River Bus Tour – Tuesday 30 April 2019

We have been planning this tour for a while and have finally found a date that works.

Waterwatch volunteers will soon be invited to a one-day tour of the Avoca River, stopping at several sites for presentations from Landcare members, Traditional Owners, local Waterwatch volunteers and fish ecologists. There will be plenty of opportunities for discussion and exploration on the day and a great day to get together with others in the Waterwatch network to learn about the catchment. Transport and catering will be provided. More details soon.

April	
World Heritage Day	18 April
Earth Day	22 April
May	
Composting Week	5 - 11 May
Migratory Bird Day	11 May
National Volunteer Week	20 - 26 May
International Day of Biodiversity	22 May
World Turtle Day	23 May
National Sorry Day	26 May
Reconciliation Week	27 May - 3 June

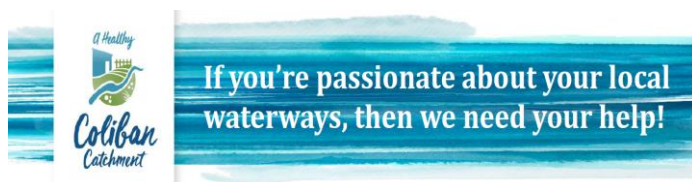
Water Storages Update

With continued limited inflows, most storage levels continue to decrease:

Region	Water Storage	% full at 20 Feb	% full at 26 March
Murray Storages	Torrumbarry Weir	100.02	100.02
	Third Lake	100.71	↓ 98.48
	Reedy/Middle Lake	96.08	↑ 96.41
	Kangaroo Lake	96.23	↓ 96.14
	Kow Swamp	89.64	↑ 90.13
	Lake Boga	85.87	↓ 77.55
	Lake Charm	91.93	↓ 87.32
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	43.64	↓ 40.39
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Reservoir	37.64	↓ 34.51
	Tullaroop Reservoir	43.76	↓ 40.88
	Laanecoorie Reservoir	36.63	↑ 37.88
Bullarook Creek Storages	Newlyn Reservoir	50.62	↓ 37.65
	Hepburns Lagoon	41.92	↓ 28.53

Source: www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels

Healthy Coliban Catchment – Help us keep an eye on the health of our waterways



The Upper Coliban is one of the most important catchments in north central Victoria. The area supplies drinking water for more than 130,000 people and is a key asset for the region.



Historical land management practices have resulted in extensive loss of riverside vegetation, that impacts water quality and river health. The Healthy Coliban Catchment project will improve this with fencing, off-stream stock watering, revegetation and weed control.

We can't do it alone; community involvement is vital to the success of the project. We're starting a citizen science program to help build people's knowledge of waterway health. Training and test kits will be provided so participants can collect data that will be used in an annual River Health Report to demonstrate how restoration works are transforming the catchment.

No experience necessary - it's easier than you think! Community members can become citizen scientists by helping monitor water quality and waterbugs at selected sites.

If you live in the project area and would like to become a volunteer citizen scientist, please register your interest with the Britt Gregory, Waterwatch project Officer: Email britt.gregory@nccma.vic.gov.au or phone: (03) 5440 1843

Native Fish Recovery Plan's RiverScan - calling all citizen scientists

We are still looking for volunteers to help monitor waterways in the Lower Loddon and Gunbower regions.



Photo: John Gooderham with a Waterwatch Volunteer in Kerang

The Native Fish Recovery Plan is a long-term project aimed at improving native fish populations and river health in more than 200 km of waterways and wetlands in the Gunbower and lower Loddon area of North Central Victoria.

The project has teamed up with the North Central Waterwatch program to work with people in the

local community to help monitor the response of water quality and water bugs at selected locations in Box-pyramid Creek, Gunbower Creek, the lower Loddon River and the Little Murray River.

Each year, North Central Waterwatch and the Native Fish Recovery Plan will release an Annual River Health Snapshot Report that will highlight changes in ecosystem health of these waterways using citizen science data.

If you'd like to help contact the North Central CMA (03) 5448 7124 or email: info@nccma.vic.gov.au

You can learn more about our citizen science programs here: <http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/waterwatch#node-1610>

Waterwatch Victoria - EstuaryWatch Waterwatch Annual Achievements Report 2017-18



Many thanks to the dedicated volunteers for their incredible contribution to citizen science, and further thanks to the Catchment Management Authorities and Water Authorities for your support and assistance.

During 2017 - 18, community volunteers and groups from across Victoria have been involved in Citizen Science programs, contributing well over 9,516 hours of their time to care for our precious waterways and estuaries. This contribution provides an economic value of \$319,832.76 in volunteers contribution!

To learn more about the actions being undertaken by our communities across Victoria and in your region, check out this amazing report. This report provides a statewide update on the activities of our program's contribution to Victorian citizen science programs. It describes how community monitoring programs are used to inform waterway management decisions, while strengthening community engagement and participation in waterways.

Funding for these community citizen science programs is part of the Victorian Government's

\$222 million investment over four years to improve the health of waterways and catchments.

Funding opportunities...

National Landcare Program: Smart Farming Partnerships Round 2

Smart Farming Partnerships is an open, competitive, grant opportunity to support substantial, complex projects that are to be delivered in consortium partnerships to trial, develop and implement innovative tools and practices.

Food and fibre industries want and need to trial, develop and use innovative technologies and tools that will reduce the pressure on Australia's natural resources while increasing industry productivity and profitability.

Smart Farming Partnerships Grants fund experienced and skilled organisations to undertake projects in consortium partnerships with others to encourage Australia's agricultural, fishing and forestry industries to trial, develop and adopt sustainable natural resource management innovations and deliver more sustainable, productive and profitable agriculture, fishing, aquaculture and forestry industries.

A total of \$60 million is available for Smart Farming Partnerships Grants in two rounds over six years (2017–18 to 2022–23). The first round opened for applications in October 2017.

These grants are available for application until 11.00pm, May 17, 2019 via <https://www.grants.gov.au/?event=public.GO.s how&GOUUID=F97D06AE-9BC7-BF58-D4C2BB4C9E0308F1>

Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their partnership, project idea and application with the CMA's Regional Agricultural Landcare facilitator, [Darren Bain](#) before applying.

Leadership Development Grants

The Victorian Government, through *Our Catchments Our Communities*, is again running its Leadership Development Grants program.

Funding will be provided for travel, study, research, training and other forms of professional development in each of the following categories:

- **Innovation:** new approaches and knowledge to address contemporary issues in integrated catchment management.
- **Aboriginal Leadership:** recognising and supporting Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians as leaders.
- **Women in Leadership:** improving diversity and inclusion and the opportunity for women to lead.

A total of \$10,000 is available under each grant category. The number of recipients in each category will be based on the applications and funding levels requested.

Awarded annually until 2020, the grants provide funding to early and mid-career individuals (both in paid and voluntary roles) to develop their leadership skills, tackle big challenges, and make an impact in the field of natural resource and catchment management.

For guidelines and application forms: go to <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/grants/ococ2019>

Applications close: **Friday 26 April 2019.**

Farm Household Allowance



The second lump sum payment is now available for farmers who qualify for the Farm Household Allowance (FHA).

This instalment will provide couples in a household up to an additional \$6,000 (if both people are receiving FHA) and single households will receive \$3,600.

FHA recipients between 2 December 2018 and 1 June 2019 will automatically receive the additional payment.

The FHA net farm asset threshold will remain at the increased limit of \$5 million through to 30 June 2019.

These measures will help farmers manage through the current drought, and other hardship.

Don't self-assess – call the Farmer Assistance Hotline 132 316 or see a rural financial counsellor to assess your eligibility today. This is a free service. Call 1800 686 175 or visit www.agriculture.gov.au/rfcs.