

North Central Chat

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



April 2021

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

As I write, the rain is petering down, and the smell of wet eucalyptus is flowing through the office.

Not only is this rain a welcome boost for fodder crops and soil moisture in the lead up to post-Easter sowing, but the catchment overall is also enjoying a flush of streamflow and vegetation growth, which is great to see.

The North Central CMA doors are well and truly open for business, with staff back in the office at Huntly. We are out and about in the community as projects, meetings, strategies, and events return under our COVID-safe workplan. If you are happier online, opportunities are still available for participation, as we move into offering more hybrid engagement options. You can join in what suits you, how and when it suits you.

The current Regional Catchment Strategy community sessions are a great example of this. Face-to-face drop ins have taken place this past month in Kyneton, Clunes, Bendigo, St Arnaud, Charlton, Serpentine and Kerang, complimented by Zoom drop ins. The draft RCS remains available [here](#) and we are encouraging comments via the online feedback form.

March and April mark the start of 'grants season', with Landcare, community NRM, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community groups spoilt for choice this past month. I was thrilled to talk through and offer support to many exciting applications across the North Central CMA region. The Landcare volunteers are really taking the opportunity to bounce back from 2020's impact, gather landholders together and get stuck into on-ground activities. We wish you all the best with a successful outcome.

Coming up, the Victorian Landcare Grants (VLG) are expected to be opened in April, as stated in the 2021 Community Environment Grants [announcement](#) back in February.



Darren and I had a fantastic day on March 27, chatting all things Landcare and North Central CMA at the 2021 Bendigo Sustainability Groups 'Sustainable Living Festival'. More than 60 stallholders were on display and the event attracted hundreds of people from across Victoria.

Photo: Courtesy of Karen Corr

In the lead up to the VLG program, I am available for grant writing workshops and mapping help as required, so don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like support.

Finally, we wish you and your families a very happy Easter break and hope you have some travels planned to enjoy the great Autumnal outdoors.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator
North Central CMA

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Connecting rivers, landscapes, people

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the region, their rich cultures, spiritual connection to Country.

www.nccma.vic.gov.au



News...

Landmate crews now available

After the suspension of the Landmate program in 2020 due to COVID-19, crews across the state are back.

Extra planning is required to ensure we stay COVIDSafe, and the Landmate team is working through these requirements.

If you have any environment projects needing Landmate crews, please do not hesitate to contact your local sites or Matthew.Menhennet@justice.vic.gov.au

Backyard Birds: Fall breeze and Autumn leaves



The Birds in Backyards Team at Birdlife Australia invite you to participate in Autumn surveys

Gazing at gang-gangs, marvelling at magpies or smiling at some spinebills?

Join our Birds in Backyards surveys this Autumn and let us know who is visiting your garden. 20 minutes and some information about your garden helps to understand our local birds and gives us invaluable insight into their daily lives. We've got details [here](#).

Remember the Birddata web portal and app automatically gives you a list of 30 birds from your region to help get you started on your surveying journey - you don't need to be an expert.

Free online events to assist rural residents

The City of Greater Bendigo is running a series of free online workshops from late March until June 2021 tailored specifically for rural residents who may have experienced significant impacts on their health and wellbeing due to a range of factors over the past few years.

The online workshops funded by the Department of Health and Human Services are to raise community awareness of mental health issues and help the development of resilience in uncertain times.

The following, free workshops have been planned from April to June:

Wellbeing Vacation workshop for rural women facilitated by Cynthia Mahoney, will take place on March 30 and April 28. Bookings at <https://www.trybooking.com/BOSJO>

Grounded Thinking – a healthy mindset for profitable and enjoyable farming workshop facilitated by Dr Kate Burke from Think Agri will take place on April 8 and May 25. Bookings at <https://www.trybooking.com/BOEPV>

Occasional Counsellor webinars conducted by David Cherry will help participants to learn skills to support others who may be emotionally distressed. Sessions will take place on April 21, May 13 and 20. Bookings <https://www.trybooking.com/BOSTU>

Rural Minds Briefing to build knowledge, understanding and confidence in participants about mental health and wellbeing. Sessions will take place on May 6, and June 1. Bookings at <https://www.trybooking.com/BOXLB>

To find out more about these events and how to register for them, visit the City's website www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Services/Community-and-Care/Rural-Communities

Looking
for a virtual
wellbeing
break?



Smart Farms Small Grants Round 4 Announcements

North Central CMA congratulates Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network on securing funds for their *Healthy Agricultural Landscapes Project*.

BNG Landcare Network was awarded more than \$99,000 to assist and improve preservation of soil, water, and beneficial insect assets through demonstration of sustainable agricultural practices. A multi-faceted approach, incorporating both community and digital networks, will be implemented to provide sustainable agriculture information hubs, serviced by the concurrent development of a Sustainable Agriculture Group within the existing Network framework, and in accordance with the Network's Strategic Plan.

Minister Littleproud has announced 84 projects have been successful in receiving funding valued at \$6.48 million under Round 4 of Smart Farms Small Grants. The media release can be found at: <https://minister.awe.gov.au/littleproud/media-releases/smart-farms-small-grants-84-projects>

Further information about Round 4, including a list of successful projects can be found on the department's website at: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/natural-resources/landcare/national-landcare-program/australian-government-investment-in-landcare>.

Grounding the water table in Kamarooka

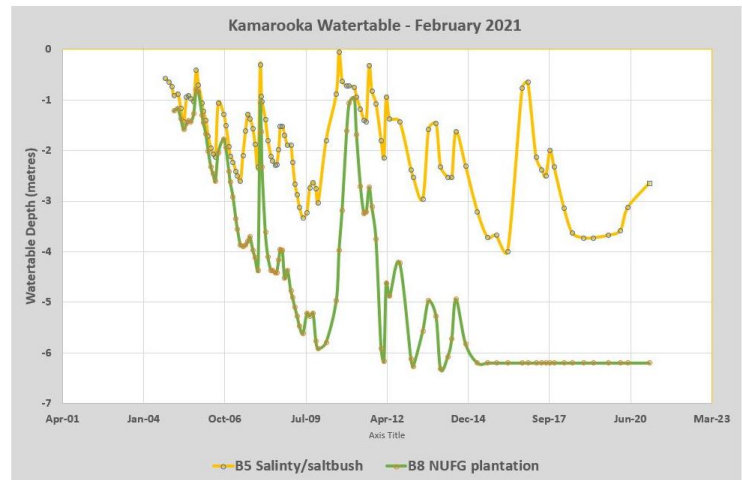
Article by Phil Dyson, North Central CMA Project Manager and Northern United Forestry Group member

Some of you might find the latest results from the Northern United Forestry Group (NUFG) Kamarooka Saltland Restoration project of some interest. They say so much about the capacity of eucalypts to transpire shallow saline groundwater.

I thought I might write a few words about the impact of the plantation we established in 2004 on the watertable within the NUGF Saltland Restoration project at Kamarooka. We now have so much data that it is a little hard to make a lot of sense of it without spending a fair bit of time looking at the results, and it is difficult to present it clearly at NUGF meetings.

With this in mind, I selected the results (below) from just two bores that contrast the results from the 2004 plantation with saline land with only a little saltbush cover some 50 metres to the south. The two hydrographs demonstrate that the plantation has had a profound

impact on the shallow groundwater causing the salinity issue.



At the commencement of the project the watertable was within 1.5 metres of the land surface. It is clear that it was beginning to fall within three years of the establishment of the plantation, and despite the interruption imposed by the 2010 floods groundwater, continued to fall. In 2014 it fell below the monitoring bore and has remained this deep through to the present day. Since I can no longer read the water level, I have plotted it as a flat line at the maximum depth of the bore.

In very strong contrast, the bore in the saline land adjacent the plantation displays a trend that follows the rainfall, showing a profound rise, for example, in response to the wet spring of 2016.

Clearly, the contrast between the two bores demonstrates the capacity of the 2004 plantation to command control of the water balance. The trees not only use the saline groundwater (>30,000 uS/cm) to support transpiration but also mitigate groundwater recharge. Climate change helps because it eliminates waterlogging, a far greater enemy of the trees than shallow saline groundwater.

The Kamarooka results are unique in terms of the longer term monitoring of the performance of Eucalypt plantations on shallow saline groundwater in dryland terrain in southeastern Australia.

For more information on this topic, you can contact Phil 'Dr Dirt' Dyson via

P: (03) 5440 1886

M: 0408 580 830

E: phil.dyson@nccma.vic.gov.au



Communities Caring for Catchments

Hi all,

Over the next few months, we hope to share some stories of a few of our dedicated Waterwatch volunteers. We have such a diverse range of participants, we thought it might be nice to share a bit about them, why they got involved and what Waterwatch means to them. Read Tony's story below.

Thanks to all those that either participated in Quality Assurance Quality Control (QA QC) week, either at one of our events or at home. The results indicted a few minor issues, in particular that several of the pH meters were playing up; they have now been replaced. This is a great opportunity to test not only our skills, but also our equipment is functioning correctly. Nothing lasts forever; if you suspect your pH meter (or other equipment) is playing up, please get in touch.

Waterwatch Volunteer Profile

Volunteer: Tony Brown

Project: RiverScan (Citizen Science Program for the native Fish Recovery Project)

North Central Waterwatch and the Native Fish Recovery Plan coordinate and deliver a citizen science program called RiverScan. The aim is to get the community involved in waterway management, with a specific focus on monitoring river health for native fish.

Citizen scientist Tony Brown joined the program in early 2019 when another volunteer program he was involved in ended. *"I have always been an outdoorsy type of person; I get very annoyed with all the environmental degradation that I see about the place, so I like to help out where I can,"* Tony said.

"I heard on the radio that the RiverScan project was calling for more volunteers and I thought, that's it, that's for me".

Before getting involved in Waterwatch, Tony said he didn't know much about waterway health *"Participating in RiverScan has helped me to learn a bit more about water*

quality issues like salinity and high phosphorous and their impact on the environment."

Tony said his love for the bush came from his dad, and he's passed that on to his son. *"I spend quite a bit of time camping and feel connected to nature when I'm under the stars."*

Since Tony's involvement in the project, he's now found a new favourite fishing and camping spot. *"I monitor a site on the Loddon River, it's a really pretty spot, but I'm about to take up an additional site a bit closer to home, too."*

Peter Rose, Native Fish Recovery Project Manager at the North Central CMA said, *"Southern pygmy perch were once a common species in north central Victoria, but over the past 40 years or so, numbers have drastically declined. Altered flows, lack of seasonal flooding to connect waterways to wetlands where they breed, habitat loss and predation and competition with pest fish species, especially carp and redfin, have seen a huge decline in this and other small fish species."*

"We partner with the Australian and New Guinea Fishes Association (ANGFA), Native Fish Australia and City of Greater Bendigo to coordinate a breeding program of the southern pygmy perch, with the aim to re-distribute them throughout the catchment."

Tony recently helped out with a release of 100 southern pygmy perch into a permanent pool on the Sheepwash Creek near Bendigo, where he will monitor on a monthly basis to ensure the water quality remains healthy. After learning of their impact, he now also plans to fish for carp and redfin at the site, to help ensure the survival of his new little pygmy pals.

Tony is also an active member of the Friends of Strathfieldsaye Streams and Land (the 'FOSSALS'), who get together every Tuesday to clear exotic trees and woody weeds, and plant native vegetation in the Strathfieldsaye area. *"Every little bit helps,"* Tony said, *"Wherever I go, I'll be picking up the tiniest pieces of rubbish. We've cleared so many weeds from the creek edge, locals often mention how it's nice to be able to see the water again".*

Tony is looking forward to seeing an improvement over time. *"I hope my contribution helps, I know it's a long-term thing and I may not see the change in my lifetime, but I hope that one day we see it back to the way it once was. There's good potential, I think we'll know we've got there when we have a good range of fish, it will be healthy again, like mother nature intended."*

The Victorian Government is supporting community partnerships through Waterwatch and other citizen science initiatives to address local waterway priorities. These priorities are being addressed as part of the Victorian Government’s \$222 million Water for Victoria investment to improve catchment and waterway health across regional Victoria.



Thanks for sharing Tony! And thanks for your good work keeping a watchful eye on the Loddon River and Sheepwash Creek. We hope the southern pygmy perch thrive in their new home.

Britt Gregory
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 North Central CMA
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Water Storages update

Region	Water Storage	% full at 23 Feb	% full at 22 Mar
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	63.36	↑63.45
	Hume Dam	55.19	↓47.46
	Third Lake	77.87	↑82.74
	Reedy/Middle Lk	96.14	↑97.20
	Kangaroo Lake	92.70	↑96.98
	Kow Swamp	80.63	↑85.02
	Lake Boga	75.77	↓72.52
	Lake Charm	91.90	↓89.12
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Res	43.83	↓39.93
	Tullaroop Res	51.27	↓46.59
	Laanecoorie Res	53.81	↓40.75
Bullarook Storages	Newlyn Res	83.87	↓76.56
	Hepburns Lagoon	73.27	↓65.52
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	63.38	↓60.74
	Waranga Basin	62.14	↓48.35
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	39.45	↓37.26
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Res	94.70	↓94.30
	Lauriston Res	86.80	↓84.30
	Malmsbury Res	37.50	↓24.10

Source:
www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels
www.coliban.com.au/about-us/reservoir-levels

Upcoming events and special days

April	
World Heritage Day	18 Apr
Earth Day	22 Apr
May	
International Composting Awareness Week	2-8 May
World Migratory Bird Day	8 May
Hairy-Nosed (Wombat) Day	11 May
National Volunteer Week	17-23 May
World Bee Day	20 May
International Day for Biological Diversity	22 May
World Turtle Day	23 May
June	
World Environment Day	5 Jun
International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing	5 Jun
World Oceans Day	8 Jun
World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought	17 Jun

Sustainable Ag Snippet...

Two new Regenerative Agriculture Groups starting in the region

The North Central CMA’s Regenerative Agriculture project is starting up two new regenerative agriculture farmer groups. Recently meetings were organised at St Arnaud and Inglewood where there was a good turnout of farmers to hear about the project. Felicity Harrop, Regenerative Agriculture Project Manager, presented to the farmers to give them an understanding of how the project operates.

Currently the project supports farmer groups in the Castlemaine, Talbot (Central Victorian Regenerative Farmers), Normanville, and Raywood regions. These groups have been active for almost three years, conducting soil tests, running workshops, and conducting on farm demonstrations. These groups have had the

opportunity bring expert speakers such as Christine Jones and David Hardwick directly into their community supporting knowledge exchange and peer to peer learning. The demonstration sites provide opportunities for paddock walks and to build on local knowledge that can be further developed as they increase their skills and confidence for larger demonstrations.

Plans are in place to re-engage the two new farmer groups. These meetings will involve gathering local knowledge from the farmers, which will assist in the development of a local area plan. This plan will form the basis to develop a proposal for the activities the group choose to deliver over the following two years.

The new groups will be formed over the next couple of months with activities starting to happen in the 2021-22 financial year.

If you would like to know more about the project or would like to be involved with the farmer groups, please contact:

- Felicity Harrop
felicity.harrop@nccma.vic.gov.au
Ph 0438 180 733 or
- Darren Bain
darren.bain@nccma.vic.gov.au
Ph 0419 560 348



Central Victorian Regenerative Farmer group visiting Grant Sims property/ Photo: North Central CMA

Courses & Resources...

Creating Wildlife Friendly Gardens

ABC TV's Gardening Australia presenter Jeremy Colby-Williams launched the City of Greater Bendigo's new publication, **Creating Wildlife Friendly Gardens, at the Sustainable Living Festival on March 27.**

The booklet explains simple ways to create a wildlife-friendly environment even when outdoor space is limited and includes advice for courtyards and even balconies.

Mayor Jennifer Alden said the book was written with the region's wonderful natural habitat in mind.

"As a 'city in a forest', we are so fortunate to be in the heart of Victorian box and ironbark country where our native flora and fauna contribute to Greater Bendigo's unique character," Cr Alden said.

"This booklet gives practical tips on how our gardens can support wildlife and become a vital refuge, particularly during times of drought."

Top tips for designing a wildlife friendly garden

- **Layers** Aim to create a mix of trees, shrubs of varying height, grasses and groundcovers. Dead trees and rocks, sticks, mulch and leaves on the ground can provide habitat for many local insects and wildlife
- **Diversity** A wide variety of indigenous plants helps to provide a range of habitats, shelter and food sources for different wildlife. Aim to achieve a mixture of different plant heights, foliage densities, plant surfaces and a range of species that flower throughout the year
- **Food** Plants that produce nectar, pollen, fruit, seeds, leaves and roots provide food for many of our native animals. Insects provide food for birds, lizards, frogs and mammals, which in turn are a food source for reptiles and large, carnivorous birds such as kookaburras, butcherbirds and owls
- **Host plants** Some insects, such as butterflies, only lay their eggs on certain plants. If you want butterflies to visit your garden, include host plants such as wattles (*Acacia* species) for, kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) or everlasting daisies (*Xerochrysum* species)

For a copy, visit: [Creating Wildlife Friendly Gardens booklet 2021 | City of Greater Bendigo](#)

Climate adjusted provenancing for revegetation

Prior to 2020, a local provenancing approach was recommended whereby "seed/cutting material should be collected from within or as close to the site as possible".

While this prioritises suitability for local conditions, a lack of genetic diversity limits the extent to which populations can adapt to change.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) invests in revegetation for biodiversity benefits in accordance with the targets of Protecting Victoria's Environment: Biodiversity 2037. DELWP's Revegetation standards prioritise planting species which maintain and/or restore the Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) of the area. DELWP recognises the need to revise provenance approaches in revegetation projects we invest in to ensure current and future revegetation works are suitable for our changing climate.

The proposed method, called the combination approach based on [Greening Australia research](#), recommends a revegetation mix of

- 70% local seed,
- 20% from hotter and drier climates (preferably 10% from a 2050 analogue location and 10% from a 2070/90 analogue location) and
- 10% from a wetter, cooler climate.

The new information brochure contains further details on this approach: [Biodiversity revegetation information sheet](#)



Acacia oswaldii, seed pod, Gunbower Island.
Photo © Australian Ecosystems Pty Ltd

Events...

2021 National Landcare Conference Program Announced

The 2021 National Landcare Conference brings together Landcare groups and volunteers, landholders and farmers, Indigenous land and sea managers, Landcare facilitators and coordinators.

The conference is attended by educators, research agencies, natural resource management professionals, and all community environmental groups and individuals to share insights, learn and connect.

You can attend the event in Sydney or register as an online delegate.

Early Bird tickets available until Thursday 1 May:

- Early Bird Community 2 Day Delegate registration \$250
- Early Bird Professional 2 Day Delegate registration \$600

Standard tickets available from 2 May:

- Standard Community 2 Day Delegate registration \$400
- Standard Professional 2 Day Delegate registration \$750

2021 National Landcare Awards Gala Dinner ticket \$100

The field trip program will be announced in April.

Due to COVID-19, Landcare Australia understands many people may not travel to Sydney this year so they will bring the conference to you! LAL will live stream and record the sessions, and also publish the posters and abstract papers on our Landcarer platform. During the conference, online delegates will have an opportunity to connect and engage with the with each other to discuss the content. **The online registration is free.**

For more information and to register please go to the National Landcare Conference website: <https://nationallandcareconference.org.au/>

Camp Out on the Mount 2021 – going virtual!

The annual Camp out on the Mount hosted by Connecting Country is on again, *just not as we know it.*

Organiser Asha Bannon said, “*This year, to reduce the risk of having to cancel or reschedule, we have decided to jump the gun, get creative and plan for a virtual ‘Camp Out on the Mount’. No, this doesn’t mean toasting marshmallows by the light of your computer screen. We are encouraging everyone to plan their own camping trip in whatever way is possible for you, and to join in online by contributing to our ‘Camp Out Collage’.*”

When: 3 to 18 April 2021

Where: Online

at www.connectingcountry.org.au/landcare/camp-out-on-the-mount-2021/

How to join: Sign up to our blog for updates, or check the webpage during the dates above

Questions: Anyone and everyone is welcome to participate, so hop online and join the fun! If you have any questions, please contact asha@connectingcountry.org.au

We hope to capture the Camp Out on the Mount spirit by encouraging everyone to engage with our special Camp Out 2021 web pages, and inviting you to contribute to our Camp Out Collage of photos, stories and pledges. These will focus on some of the elements that make the Camp Out special:

- Camping out (of course!)
- Caring for the land
- Loving Leanganook
- Connecting with Indigenous culture



Camp Out on the Mount 2019 (photo by Leonie van Eyk)

Caring for old trees

Connecting Country has announced the second education event for 2021 and it's sure to be terrific, hosted by two local leading naturalists and ecological experts, Jarrod Coote and Tanya Loos.

The event will be in-person, face-to-face (for a change!) at the stunning [Hillside Acres farm](#), in North Harcourt, Victoria.

The event is part of our 'Healthy Landscapes' project, funded through the Australian Government's Smart Farms program.

"Our project is about helping our local farmers and other landholders to manage their land sustainably for the benefit of wildlife, themselves and the broader landscape. We are also developing a Healthy Landscapes guidebook, especially targeted to the Mount Alexander region of central Victoria. This event is part of a series of educational workshops for landholders on sustainable land management" said presenter Tanya Loos.

When: Saturday 24 April 2021 from 10am to 12pm

Where: Hillside Acres farm, North Harcourt, VIC.

Cost: Free

RSVP: [via Connecting Country](#). Online booking will be available shortly. There will be strict limits on booking, due to COVID restrictions.

Funding opportunities...

2021 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants

The Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants are back for 2021.

Victorian schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, and youth groups are encouraged to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 each.

Projects can be either direct-action projects (with an on-ground component) or indirect action projects (with an education component), or a mixture of both.

Applications close 30 April.

How to Apply

1. Read the [Guidelines and Criteria](#) to see if your project idea fits.
2. Read about [how to plan your project](#) including ideas about working with the local community.
3. Login or register and start your grant application on the [Landcare Australia Grants Site](#).
4. Complete your application online by 3pm (AEST) Friday, 30 April 2021.



Inspiring Junior Landcarer and 'Bush Postie' Caius van Slade enjoying outdoor adventures upon Mount Alexander. Photo © Lena (@palette_full_of_play)