

North Central Chat

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



April 2024

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

March has been a very busy month, starting with the Celebrating Women in Conservation Breakfast in Bendigo. The North Central CMA proudly partnered with the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA), City of Greater Bendigo and Parks Victoria to deliver a breakfast for more than 60 women to watch the livestream of the Melbourne event. It was a fantastic morning where women working in conservation agencies and women who are environmental volunteers could network and learn together.

A couple of weeks later, four North Central Landcare Facilitators and I attended Cascade Connections in Geelong. This was a two-day event for Landcare Facilitators across the North East, Goulburn Broken, Corangamite and North Central CMAs and Melbourne Water to learn and network. The first day consisted of a presentation on supporting communities and looking after yourself after disasters. We also participated in a peer learning session where facilitators shared challenges and discussed strategies to manage them. That evening we were fortunate to participate in an evening tour of Mt Rothwell, a privately owned conservation sanctuary. We saw numerous eastern barred bandicoots, brown bandicoots, bettongs and southern brush-tailed rock wallabies. The wallabies are critically endangered in Victoria but are breeding very well at the reserve. The event was rounded out with a visit to the wetlands of the Melbourne Water Western Treatment Plant at Werribee, where we learned about the project to bring back native grasslands using cultural burning with local Traditional Owner groups.

I joined three other North Central CMA staff at the Bendigo Sustainability Festival on March 17. It was a great event with lots of people stopping by our stand for a chat about Landcare, rabbit and weed management, water bugs, and soil. Thank you and well done to the Bendigo Sustainability Group committee on organising such a great event.



Finally, in exciting news, the 2024 Victorian Landcare Grants are now open. Up to \$20,000 is available for project grants and up to \$500 for support grants. For more information and to apply, see the Funding section of the Chat.

Happy reading,

Belinda Pritchard

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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...

New artworks a standout feature

Next time you visit the North Central CMA office in Huntly, you won't miss the stunning new artworks in the front garden: Gunga djaa dhelk (make County good – Djaara language).

As part of the North Central CMA's commitment to reconciliation, a new space is being developed as a place to help create a culturally safe and welcoming environment. The space will be available to provide a meeting place for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and community, and as a place for ceremony.

The north central region spans seven Traditional Owner groups; the seven artworks represent each. The organisation sought and received support from DJARRA to display the artworks on Djaara land, which are now in place and ready for everyone to enjoy.

Additional landscaping, planting, and seating is planned to further enhance the space. An opening ceremony is also being planned.

Thank you and congratulations to the seven artists who have all contributed beautiful pieces to be proudly displayed.

Please visit the space anytime to read their artwork descriptions and learn more.



Birds in Backyards summer survey results

From Birds in Backyards

Thanks to everyone who has taken part in our Birds in Backyards surveys for summer period. You're helping us build a long-term dataset of species patterns across the country.

We recorded 271 species across 845 surveys. That's a total of 26,335 birds that were counted.

The most frequently recorded species was the rainbow lorikeet with a 43 per cent reporting rate, followed by the magpie lark at 33 per cent and the Australian magpie at 31 per cent.

A less common backyard species has made an appearance on this season's most-reported list. The eastern koel migrates south in summer, travelling from the north of Australia, Indonesia, or further. Adults can be heard from long distances with their distinctive coo-ee. Eastern koels are brood parasites: adults lay their eggs in the nests of other species, and leave the host parents to raise the young.

Typically, we would say koels reach as far south as Nowra, on the NSW coast. In recent years though, what appears to be an increasing number of koels have been making their way into Victoria and even South Australia over summer. There are likely to be multiple factors affecting this range expansion. The proliferation of species such as the red wattlebird, which are a favourite host species of the koel, is likely to be a key factor. Birds in Backyards surveys are one tool we have to measure the change in this species' distribution over time.

We're in our autumn survey period across March and April, but you can keep participating in Birds in Backyard surveys right through the year. [Learn more here.](#)

Landcare Victoria AGM and Board nominations

The AGM for Landcare Victoria Incorporated (LVI) is coming up on Wednesday, 22 May and will be held online.

More information and registration details will be announced soon.

Nominations for the Landcare Victoria Inc Board are now open in the lead-up to the 2024 AGM. LVI are calling for nominations to join the Board. Nominations close on **Wednesday, 10 April 2024**. Four Board positions will be declared vacant at the AGM:

- North Central
- Port Phillip and Westernport
- Wimmera
- 1 x Professional Landcarer (open to all registered Professional Landcarers statewide)

Additionally, there are three extraordinary vacancies:

- Glenelg Hopkins
- Goulburn Broken
- Mallee

Members Council nominations may be accepted at any time, and there are multiple vacancies available. If you know a Landcarer who may like to get involved, please share this opportunity with them.

Further information on LVI Board and Member Council positions and the nomination process [can be found on the LVI website](#).



2024 Victorian Landcare Forum

Growing Landcare

Landcare Victoria presents the 2024 Victoria Landcare Forum on 9 and 10 May at the Bendigo Exhibition Centre. This year's forum focuses on Growing Landcare and will cover a range of topics around this theme. The forum offers a day of presentations and peer-to-peer learning as well as a bus tour to local Landcare sites and a networking dinner.

The 2024 Victorian Landcare Forum provides an engagement opportunity for the Landcare community to promote best practice and share stories, and to grow Landcare across the state.

Day one of the forum, Thursday, 9 May, will include the following topics:

- collaborating and combining management practices
- aggregating action for landscape scale impacts
- water in the landscape and learning from our peers

Day two (Friday, 10 May) will showcase Landcare projects across the Bendigo region via a bus tour.

More information on the program will be released in coming weeks. To learn more and to purchase tickets head to the [Landcare Victoria website](#).



Citizen scientists hop to it with rabbit virus tracking project

Aussies are urged to join in the longest-running citizen science survey of rabbit diseases in the world, to help keep the costly invasive pest in check.

This article is an extract from a news article on the CSIRO website.

Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, is calling on rural and regional Australians to join in the longest-running citizen science survey of rabbit diseases in the world, to help keep the invasive pest in check.

Feral rabbits are one of the most destructive invasive pest species in Australia.

They compete with native animals, cause plant biodiversity loss, reduce crop yields and cost the agricultural industry around \$239 million per year.

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), also known as Rabbit Calicivirus or Lagovirus, is used as a biocontrol agent to manage rabbit populations at the landscape scale in Australia.

It only affects rabbits and hares, and vaccination is available for domestic (pet) rabbits.

New research shows the success of the nine-year disease monitoring program, which relies on members of the public taking tissue samples from dead rabbits found in their area using free sample kits provided by CSIRO.

Samples can be taken from deceased wild or domestic rabbits.

CSIRO scientist Dr Maria Jenckel said the samples provided since 2015 have helped paint a better picture of the viruses circulating in wild rabbit populations.

“We encourage community members from across Australia, particularly in rural and regional areas, to contribute samples for testing so we can get the widest possible coverage across Australia,” Dr Jenckel said.

To request a free test kit, email the research team at rabbitcalicivirus@csiro.au with your postal address.

To read this article in full and to find out more head to the [CSIRO website](#).

Complete the Landcare Australia Survey and WIN!

In 2024, Landcare Australia and Landcare as a national movement celebrates a 35-year anniversary. We have achieved so much over the decades, yet there is still more we need to do together. To strengthen our vision of “All Australians actively caring for the land and water that sustains us”, we are creating a strategy to further support the individuals, groups and organisations involved in Landcare.



At Landcare Australia, we are committed to effectively demonstrating our purpose, values, impact, and achievements among our stakeholders. This allows us to foster advocacy, encourage collaboration and cultivate partnerships with individuals and organisations with shared values and vision. Landcare Australia has engaged Canberra based agency CRE8IVE to manage a confidential online survey to gain valuable insights and opinions about Landcare Australia.

We invite you to participate in the survey to provide insights on the awareness and perception of Landcare Australia. These insights will help us understand how Landcare Australia is perceived within the community, guiding our future community engagement.

We appreciate your time and contribution to such an important project for our organisation so we can continue to support the efforts of the Landcare movement.

By completing the survey, you'll enter into the draw for a \$1000 environmental grant.

The survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Please click [here to complete the survey](#).

The survey will remain open until **Wednesday, 10 April 2024**.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority is proud to be able to help raise funds for Children’s Ground.

Children’s Ground is a First Nations organisation, with a First Nations approach creating change for future generations.

The North Central CMA recognises our shared history and celebrates First Nations Culture, knowledge and connection to land, waterways and biodiversity. We acknowledge First Nations Peoples continuous connection to Culture and aim to promote and build stronger connections to Country through employment, training, education and recognition.



We are committed to walking and working together on Country with First Nations Peoples and organisations as equals to promote healthy Country to enable our whole community to prosper.

If you would like to support this initiative, please head to the Children’s Ground website.

[North Central CMA • Fundraise for Children's Ground \(childrensground.org.au\)](#)



WaterWatch Victoria

QAQC is back, with a special guest

The annual WaterWatch quality assurance quality control (QAQC) program is back. After a couple of interrupted years, WaterWatch Victoria is once again preparing mystery samples for volunteers to test together at special events across the state. This allows staff to identify any faulty equipment and to ensure our methods are consistent, so we are all collecting accurate data.

As a bonus in the north central region, we have frog expert Professor Kirsten Parris joining us to deliver a talk on frogs of our region.

Later this year, we plan to launch a new WaterWatch frog monitoring program, so this is a bit of an introduction for those that might be keen.

Kirsten Parris is a Professor of Urban Ecology and the Director of the Office for Environmental Programs at the University of Melbourne. She loves all things frog and is passionate about making cities more nature-friendly. In addition to her academic work, she writes both fiction and creative non-fiction.

We are thrilled to welcome Kirsten and are hosting this event at two locations: Bendigo on 26 March and Malmesbury on 3 April.

WaterWatch volunteers should have received their email invite, if not please get in touch with Britt.

We look forward to seeing many of you there!

Britt Gregory

Project Officer – WaterWatch & Citizen Science

North Central CMA

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Water Storages Update

Region	Water Storage	% full	% full same time 2022
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	95.51	96.49
	Hume Dam	72.04	89.10
	Reedy/Middle Lk	96.84	93.72
	Kangaroo Lake	94.93	95.32
	Gow Swamp	86.21	83.46
	Lake Boga	82.56	83.06
	Lake Charm	96.90	85.02
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Res	80.62	87.03
	Tullaroop Res	90.46	86.66
	Laanecoorie Res	34.75	46.63
Bullarook Storages	Newlyn Res	62.80	66.93
	Hepburns Lagoon	51.19	63.86
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	94.25	94.46
	Waranga Basin	70.76	54.92
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	95.26	91.64
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Res	91	97.8
	Lauriston Res	91	89.3
	Malmesbury Res	46	41.2

Source:
<https://www.g-mwater.com.au/water-operations/storage-levels>
<https://coliban.com.au/about-us/our-reservoirs>

Upcoming Events and Special Days

April	
<u>Sustainable House Day</u>	21 April
<u>Earth Day Planet Vs Plastics</u>	22 April
May	
<u>International Composting Awareness Week</u>	5-11 May
<u>World Bee Day</u>	20 May
<u>National Volunteer Week</u>	20-26 May
<u>International Day for Biological Diversity</u>	22 May
<u>World Turtle Day</u>	23 May
<u>National Reconciliation Week</u> <i>Now more than ever</i>	27 May – 3 June
June	
World Environment Day	5 Jun
World Oceans Day	8 Jun
Sustainable Gastronomy Day	18 Jun

Sustainable Ag Snippet...

Irrigation drainage strategy out for comment

The Draft Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Irrigation Drainage Strategy is a plan to guide the effective management of irrigation drainage across the region.

The strategy is crucial for safeguarding agricultural productivity, high-value industries, and public assets, while acknowledging evolving environmental priorities and First Nations people aspirations.

The plan addresses the risk of waterlogging, salinity, and decline in water quality caused by irrigation-induced rainfall runoff from irrigated land.

Updating the existing plan is vital, to address the changes in irrigation across the region, such as reduced volume of water delivered, more on-farm efficiencies, and more opportunistic irrigation.

The strategy focuses on irrigation-induced rainfall runoff, not flood waters, and recognises the changing climate and irrigation trends over the past two decades.

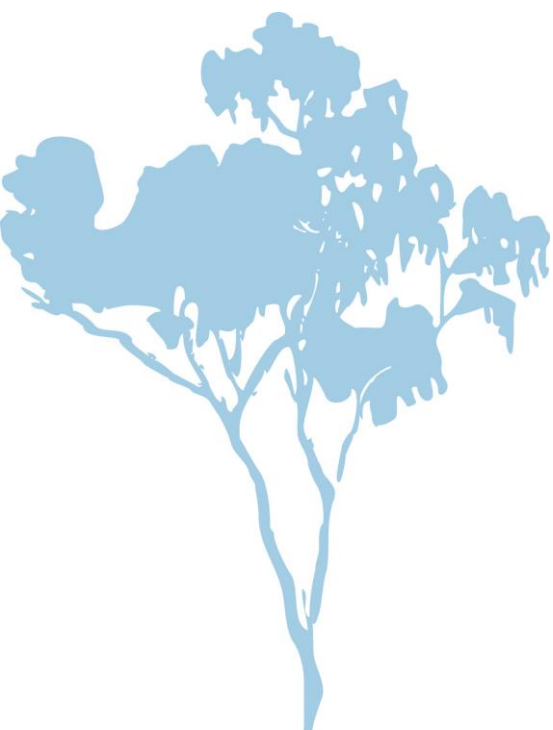
It covers the Loddon Valley Irrigation Area and the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area, but not the Nyah, Tresco, Tyntynder, and Woorinen drainage schemes, which have different needs.

We're keen to get your feedback on the strategy to ensure the future drainage needs of the community are met.

A series of drop-in community sessions, an online survey, and focussed engagements will take place over the next few months to help steer the strategy through to completion.

More at <https://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/projects/agriculture/lmir-drainage-strategy>

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Courses & Resources...



Building an inclusive volunteer program

Free webinar

Volunteering has a powerful impact when it is accessible to all and reflects our diverse communities. However, developing and maintaining a truly inclusive volunteer program can be challenging.

This interactive workshop will provide participants with the skills and knowledge needed to recruit, engage, and retain a diverse team of volunteers, including reviewing organisational procedures and workplace culture.

Learning outcomes

- Review organisational procedures to identify opportunities for promoting inclusion in volunteering
- Reflect on workplace culture and inclusion
- Identify and develop strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion in volunteering

When: Tuesday 16 April 2024, 9.30am to 12.30pm

Where: Online via Zoom

Cost: Free

Register with [Volunteering Victoria](#).

Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) seminars

The ARI seminar series aims to showcase the excellent applied ecological research being conducted by scientists at ARI and other organisations, and to provide a forum for engagement with our broader community.

Upcoming seminars:

- **Monday, 15 April 1pm to 2pm** – Reading riparian tree leaves – what our plants can tell us about the health of our waterways
- **Monday, 29 April 1pm to 2pm** – Changing human behaviour to save our species
- **Monday, 13 May 1pm to 2pm** – Oh deer! Is our environment a hog's breakfast? Our latest invasive species population modelling and genetics.

- **Monday 27 May 1-2pm** – Working together to understand the impacts of cultural burning – Reconciliation Week.

For more information, to register and to catch up on previous seminars head to the [ARI website](#).

Cultural safety training online

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

Learn about cultural safety to create inclusive, safe, and welcoming spaces.

Cultural safety is about providing an environment that considers and respects the cultural identity, values and norms of the peoples attending your activities. These cultural values and standards may often differ from your own and majority of society.

For Australia's First Peoples, culturally safe practices and attitudes demonstrate an understanding, acceptance, and respect for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural identities, cultural ways, and our ongoing connection to culture, Community and Country.

VACCHO's Introduction to Aboriginal Cultural Safety training offers foundational knowledge and awareness on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, identities and cultures while exploring the basics of cultural safety and simple ways to put it into practice. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators enhance participant experience and learning by sharing cultural knowledge and lived experience in a safe learning environment where questions are encouraged and welcome.

When: Monday, 29 April 2024 or Thursday, 27 June 10am to 3pm

Where: Online via Zoom

Cost: Free

Further information contact Barry Kennedy, Melbourne Water barry.kennedy@melbournewater.com.au

Register [here](#).

Understanding income tax reporting changes

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has introduced changes that may make environmental groups liable to pay income tax this year.

We know tax is not everyone's cup of tea, but recent changes by the ATO mean all Landcare organisations

should re-evaluate their tax-exempt status. It may be necessary to take action to ensure your group is not required to start paying tax from the 2023/24 financial year onward.

Landcare groups may have previously thought they were exempt from paying income tax because they operate as a not-for profit (NFP). **However, not all NFP organisations are tax-exempt.**

To learn more about how these changes might impact your group/network – and what to do about it – join us at this webinar presented in collaboration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

When: Thursday, 2 May 2024 5.30pm to 7pm

Where: Online via Zoom

Cost: Free

RSVP: [Register via Humanitix](#)

Volunteering Loddon Mallee

Volunteer Manager's Network

Be part of a monthly sharing and discussion circle. For all people who work with volunteers, the sessions are held online on the second Monday of the month. The next session will feature special guest Amy Atkinson, Strategic Coordinator Environmental Volunteering, DEECA. Amy will share the learnings from the Regional Environmental Volunteering Coordination pilot project.

When: Monday, 8 April, 2pm

Where: Online via zoom

Register via email at vlm@bgovolunteers.org.au

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre training opportunities

Leadership and management forums

Leadership and management of volunteers is a challenging task, as we navigate best practice approaches to volunteer engagement. Two upcoming webinars provide learning outcomes which will enhance understanding of the importance of compliance and having policies and procedures in place and in line with the National Standards of Volunteer Involvement.

Volunteer recognition: Wednesday, 23 April, 10am to 11am

Workplace safety and wellbeing: Wednesday 28 May, 10am to 11am

Gender equality is everyone's business

Participants in this two-hour interactive online workshop will gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to apply a gender lens to their work in voluntary organisations and life and to understand their role in creating a gender equitable world.

When: Monday, 29 April, 10am to 12pm

Where: Online via Zoom

Targeted recruitment and engaging young people

Presented by Hazel Maynard of Volunteering Victoria.

Recruitment and retention can be tricky at the best of times, particularly when looking to attract specific cohorts of volunteers. It's important to examine the make up of our volunteer teams, what barriers may exist for some cohorts, and how to encourage volunteers from different demographics.

This session is interactive and focussed on discussion-based scenarios, examining strategies specifically to engage young people.

When: Tuesday, 30 April, 9.30am to 12.30pm

Where: Online via zoom

Cross-cultural awareness training

With Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services.

This online workshop will assist participants to understand who our local communities are and how to adapt your organisation's volunteer program to support a diverse and inclusive program.

When: Thursday, 2 May, 9.30am to 1pm

Where: Online via Zoom

Disability confidence training

A two-part online learning workshop designed to support managers of volunteers to confidently support people with a disability within their team and facilitate an inclusive recruitment process.

When: Wednesday 8 May, 10am to 11.30am and 1pm to 2.30pm

To register for all of these workshops email bvrchub@bgovolunteers.org.au

Events...



Coliban Creatures Walk and Talk

Platypus evening with ecologist Josh Griffiths

Are you interested in learning more about the platypus in the Coliban River catchment? Keen to know more about their habitat and river restoration?

North Central CMA is hosting a platypus walk and talk evening with ecologist Josh Griffiths to present the most recent Coliban River environmental DNA sampling results.

When: Thursday 11 April 2024

- 5pm to 5.45pm – river walk location TBC
- 6pm to 7pm – presentation in the Lauriston Hall

Where: Lauriston Hall

What to bring: Please wear sturdy footwear, long pants and dress for your own comfort walking along uneven ground along the riverbank. A small torch may be handy.

Register [via Eventbrite](#).

A light supper will be provided. Please advise any dietary requirements upon registering.

This is an informal evening and family friendly event. Nature enthusiasts of all ages are encouraged to attend.

Connect with nature in the Loddon

Join us for an adventurer's weekend as we explore Mt Korong, its surrounds, and the Wychitella area.

Workshops and walk-shops include Traditional Owner weaving, Cultural history, seed bombs, exploration hunts, nature apps. This event is a great way to gain knowledge, learn practical skills, and meet like-minded

others. You'll discover ways to help nature at home and through local volunteering opportunities. A barbecue dinner on Saturday evening is provided, so please advise any dietary requirements upon booking. Come for one day or both.

When: Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 April, from 9am

Where: 888 Wedderburn Serpentine Road, Glenalbyn

Cost: Free

What to bring: Tent, swag, camper, or caravan if staying overnight.

Register [via Eventbrite](#)

Funding opportunities...



2024 Victorian Landcare Grants

Applications are now open for the 2024 Victorian Landcare Grants.

Through the 2024 Victorian Landcare Grants, \$3.55 million is available for Landcare and other environmental volunteer groups and networks that are working to protect and restore land and the environment.

Up to \$20,000 is available for project grants and up to \$500 for support grants.

The grants are open to environmental volunteer groups, including Landcare groups and networks, Friends groups, Conservation Management Networks, Committees of Management, Coastcare groups and Aboriginal groups to support their important work in helping protect the health of our land, waterways and biodiversity.

Applications close 5pm Tuesday 30 April 2024. For more information go to [Landcare | North Central Catchment Management Authority \(nccma.vic.gov.au\)](#)



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

Apply for Climate-Smart Agriculture grants to support Aussie farmers.

The Australian Government is helping the agriculture sector respond to climate challenges through the \$302.1 million Climate-Smart Agriculture Program, funded through the Natural Heritage Trust.

The Climate-Smart Agriculture Program will support Australia's agriculture sector to drive climate-smart, sustainable growth and protect Australia's natural capital by funding best practice sustainable agriculture and natural resource management activities that support farmers to respond to the impacts of climate change.

The program has multiple investment streams, including \$45 million Partnerships & Innovation grants and \$9 million Capacity Building grants that are now open.

Is your big idea ready to make a big impact on Australian agriculture? Do you want to build up your community's capacity to support Aussie farmers to adopt climate-smart and sustainable agriculture practices? Apply today to help secure the future of Australia's agriculture sector.

Applications for Partnership and Innovation grants close 8 April 2024.

Applications for Capacity Building grants close 28 March 2024.

For more information, visit agriculture.gov.au/climate-smart

we must multiply our impact by strengthening our existing partnerships, establishing new ones, and collaborate with local communities to lead change.

BirdLife Australia Community Grants support this by empowering passionate Australian groups to act for birds, with up to \$20,000 in funding for projects that align with BirdLife Australia's Bird Conservation Strategy.

For more information and to apply head to the BirdLife Australia website.



2024 BirdLife Australia community grants

BirdLife Australia is fighting to save birds and the natural ecosystems on which their survival depends. [The Bird Conservation Strategy](#) outlines our focus areas of Species, Sites, Systems and Societies.

To achieve BirdLife Australia's vision that by 2050, birds and nature are valued, conserved, and restored, sustaining a healthy planet for the benefit of all people,

