

# North Central Chat

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



July 2020

## A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

What a turn the weather has taken, we're certainly in the thick of winter now. I must admit to excitedly receiving daily snow reports from Mount Hotham and itching to get up the to the mountains. But alas working from home is still in place, so it's a heated home office and making multiple sourdough loaves a week for the time being.

The arrival of winter brings with it one of my favourite things (aside from snow)...lambs! Lenny the lamb has been a hit during home-schooling and certainly makes for great life-skills lessons - care, compassion and early rising to make up bottles.

The start to sowing and planting season has been very favourable and as the catchment wettens, I've asked around the virtual office for observations from staff who have begun to travel further afield. The rivers and wetlands have received healthy drink, so we've featured some of our favourite photos in this edition.

Over the past few weeks, I've been very fortunate to be involved in some fantastic discussions as part of the 2020 Reconciliation Week festivities. A very refreshing and inspiring session was a story and music webinar with Ron Murray. Ron is a proud Wamba Wamba man, cultural educator, storyteller and half of the musical duo Kinja. He lives with his family near Castlemaine.

The current working arrangements have made time available for a lot of planning and prioritisation discussions. Landcare Groups and Networks current priorities, projects and past actions have been the focus of a recent meeting series hosted by North Central CMA and DELWP. Represented by Landcare Network Chairs and Facilitators, the group discussed land, water and biodiversity assets, as part of the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) and Biodiversity Responses Planning (BRP) processes.



*The early bird gets the bottle feed. Jonty and Lenny enjoying one another's company on a chilly winters day.*

We've also hosted a session with the Victorian Landcare Team, focussing on the next phase of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.

Networks Facilitators and Chairs were presented with the renewed programs focus, Expressions of Interest process and implementation of minimum employment standards.

During July, Darren and I plan to get back out in the field with Kara Kara CMN to lend a hand with some planting to support their revegetation projects around St Arnaud. Like many volunteer groups, COVID-19 restrictions have left Landcare projects struggling to accommodate their usual numbers of volunteers at a working bee and with plants already grown and ready, there remains plenty of greenery still to go in the ground.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grievs

Regional Landcare Coordinator  
North Central CMA

Phone: 03 5448 7124

Email: [tess.grievs@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:tess.grievs@nccma.vic.gov.au)

## News...

### Sowing seedlings is in full swing

**The Buloke Northern Grampians Landcare Network has got stuck into revegetation and they have quite the task ahead, with thousands of seedlings ready to go in the ground.**

Network Facilitator Andrew Borg described the task ahead. "Our BNGLN groups received Victorian Landcare Grant funding for 18,000 trees across the Network (6 different groups, and 17 different planting areas). Additionally, Fifteen Trees have provided sponsorship of a further 3,360 trees to be planted across a further 5 project areas. I also recently managed to score another 560 trees through a couple of 'tree donations' which have been allocated to some of the groups that missed out on funding.

"So far, we've planted 6,320 with a further 9,500 scheduled in the next three weeks, and we will probably leave the balance until Aug-Sep. It's been a struggle without large numbers of volunteers, but the conditions have been good. Fingers crossed for a decent success rate"



It is thrilling to see Landcare Groups able to once again get their hands dirty and get stuck into on ground works. Anyone keen to head out west and lend a helping hand, feel free to give Andrew a shout: 0407 856 227 or [bnglandcare@gmail.com](mailto:bnglandcare@gmail.com).

### End of firewood collection season

**The autumn 2020 Firewood Collection Season will close across the state at midnight Tuesday 30 June.**

Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) Chief Fire Officer, Chris Hardman said: "From 1 July it is illegal to collect firewood and there are serious penalties for failing to follow firewood collection rules. Under Victorian legislation, firewood can only be collected during the firewood collection seasons between 1 March to 30 June 2020 (autumn season) and 1 September to 30 November 2020 (spring season).

"Limits are in place to prevent households stockpiling large volumes of firewood from public land and denying others a supply."

Any information the community may have about the illegal removal of firewood for sale can be reported to DELWP on 136 186.

Concession card holders who rely only on buying firewood for home heating may be eligible for the non-mains energy concession. More information is available on the Department of Health and Human Services website: <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/non-mains-energy-concession>



FFMVic supports domestic firewood provision through the creation of firewood collection areas on public land and a list of these areas can be found at [www.ffmpeg.vic.gov.au/firewood](http://www.ffmpeg.vic.gov.au/firewood)

During the designated collection periods, an individual can collect a maximum of two cubic metres of firewood in a day and may collect up to 16 cubic metres per household per financial year.

If you are collecting firewood before the season ends, be considerate, use common sense, follow physical distancing requirements and stay safe.



## Gorse Control Calendar Update

**Victorian Gorse Taskforce Project Officer, Brydie Murrihy has provided an update to encourage everyone to stay vigilant.**

Now that the colder, wetter weather is here, so too are the gorse flowers. COVID-19 has most of us at home and looking into our gardens more, so it's time to take advantage and get on top of your gorse control.

Having an effective, long-term management plan is key to controlling gorse and the VGT is here to assist you wherever safe and possible in these trying times.



## Help controlling gorse for local landholders

The Victorian Gorse Taskforce will be delivering a series of community-wide extension programs in the **Sutton Grange, Ballarat and Pipers Creek areas** this June to July 2020.

The VGT Extension Officer, Brydie Murrihy, will conduct a property assessment either alone or assisted by the landowner and will provide professional best practice management advice tailored to the property.

The landowner will receive extension material and information on any support or assistance that may be available to them, a property map detailing location of gorse plants, a detailed weed management plan and follow up phone calls and/or visits with landholders if required.

This program is a free service and the property inspections will be scheduled to suit the participants involved.

For enquires and to set-up an inspection contact: Brydie Murrihy 0428 335 705 or email [bmurrihy@cva.org.au](mailto:bmurrihy@cva.org.au).

## LVI 2020 AGM, Election Outcome and inaugural CEO appointment

**Over 65 delegates, members and guests joined the Landcare Victoria Inc.'s first virtual AGM on 29th May.**

The videoconferencing option proved popular with many new faces, over half attending an LVI Forum for the first time.

Good discussion was held around the report from Acting Chair Terry Hubbard – the full Annual Report can be found here, including the future of the Victorian Landcare Program and local Landcare facilitators.

The LVI Committee of Management for 2020 is Acting Chair Terry Hubbard (Goulburn Broken), Treasurer Leanne Jackman (Wimmera), Secretary Beth Ripper (West Gippsland), Alice Knight (Corangamite), Jenny Robertson (East Gippsland), Celia Tucker (Glenelg Hopkins), Ian Arney (Mallee), Paul Foreman (North Central) Jane Carney (North East), Marijke de Bever-Price (Port Phillip and Westernport) and Professional Landcarers Kerri Robson and Scott Elliot. For more information on each LVI Committee of Management member [click here](#)

In addition, Landcare Victoria Inc is pleased to announce the appointment of Andrew Maclean to the position of inaugural CEO.

Acting Chair Terry Hubbard said "Some among you will know Andrew who has been CEO of Southern Gulf NRM for the past five years.



Andrew brings to the position a strong understanding of the Landcare movement, strong links with our vital partners, our CMAs and government.

We look forward to working with Andrew to build on our strengths as we transition to become a stronger, more relevant organisation representing the interests of our members for the benefit of our environment and our communities."

### **Inquiry into ecosystem decline In Victoria - community submissions invited until 31 July**

**The Environment and Planning Committee of the Victorian Parliament is undertaking an [Inquiry into ecosystems decline in Victoria](#).**

The Inquiry will look at measures to restore habitats and populations of threatened and endangered species.

The Inquiry's [Terms of Reference](#) include:

- the extent of the decline of Victoria's biodiversity and the likely impact on people and ecosystems
- the adequacy of the legislative framework protecting Victoria's environment and ecosystems, particularly in the context of climate change impacts
- the adequacy and effectiveness of government programs
- opportunities to restore the environment while upholding First Peoples' connection to Country.

**Submissions: close 31 July 2020**

**To make a submission: go to [Inquiry website](#)**



Protected area of threatened buloke and black box woodland in the Birchip area. Photo: Birchip Landcare Group.

### **Do you have a story to tell?**

**Stories are being sought for the Spring 2020 (issue #79) issue of the *Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management* magazine, which will contain a feature on roadsides, rail reserves and walking trails**

Stories for this issue of the Landcare magazine are sought on how Landcare and other environmental volunteer groups and networks are managing roadsides in their areas, and planning, constructing and maintaining linear reserves and walking trails. This also includes work that private landowners and groups/networks doing to manage unmade Government roads on private land.

Magazine readers are keen to learn about the successes of different approaches and projects, as well as what hasn't worked, and the insights and reflections of your group or network along the way.

#### **Contribution deadline**

Contributions for the Spring 2020 issue need to be sent to the editor by **Friday 17 July 2020**.

The Landcare magazine fills up with stories very quickly so please get in touch with the editor (Carrie Tiffany) well before the contribution deadline if you want to submit a story.

**Where to send contributions:** Carrie Tiffany  
Editor - *Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management* magazine  
Email: [editorviclandcare@gmail.com](mailto:editorviclandcare@gmail.com)

*The current issue features several North Central Landcare stories- [Winter 78 is now online](#).*





Hello to our dear readers! It seems social distancing restrictions are once again becoming tighter so it may be a while before we can get our Waterwatch volunteers and River Detectives teaching groups back together again.

Although some of the restrictions we have had to impose may seem excessive, particularly more recently, it's important to remember that North Central CMA staff are guided by the State Government for the safety of the broader community. We are bound by these guidelines and are unable to make changes within our own region or programs. A big thank you to all for your patience.

Waterwatch volunteers would have received recent advice that monthly water quality monitoring may now resume (see below). For everyone's health and safety please stick to the guidance and keep updated with any changes that may occur.

Keep up the great work, rug up and enjoy visiting your sites again! I look forward to seeing your results coming in again.

**Britt Gregory**  
 Acting Regional Waterwatch Coordinator  
 North Central CMA  
 Phone: 03 5448 7124  
 Email: [britt.gregory@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:britt.gregory@nccma.vic.gov.au)

## COVID-19 Update

### Coronavirus Information for North Central Waterwatch Volunteers

Volunteering is an important activity for many people in the community and we greatly value the willingness and dedication of our Waterwatch volunteers contributing their time.

With measures still in place to help slow the spread of COVID-19, first and foremost, we need to ensure the health of volunteers and the broader community. Although volunteering activities have been on hold, we are now able to make a safe and gradual return to monitoring activities, however we ask that Waterwatch volunteers adhere to the following:

You must not participate in Waterwatch volunteering and stay at home if:

- You are unwell or have cold or flu like symptoms.
- You are currently in isolation or are awaiting test results.
- You have been in contact with a person who is in isolation or awaiting test results.

If you're in a high-risk category i.e. over the age of 70, over 65 years with chronic medical conditions, have a compromised immune system or are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and over the age of 50, please consider your risk of participating and if in doubt, stay at home.

### Volunteers undertaking monitoring activities should observe the following:

- Collect your water sample from site and then return home to undertake water quality testing.
- Wash hands before and after undertaking water quality testing.
- Social distancing of at least 1.5 m must always be maintained.
- No monitoring with others, unless from the same household.
- Do not share monitoring or other equipment.

If in doubt, or if you simply feel more comfortable to do so, please feel free to stay at home and continue to hold off Waterwatch activities.

### If you are experiencing signs of anxiety, depression, loneliness, or concern for others:

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Lifeline: 131114 or [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

### Additional and current advice can be found at:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

<https://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/covid19>



## Hot off the press!

### Our latest River Health Snapshot Report for the Birch's Creek Citizen Science project has been launched.

The 2014-22 North Central Waterway Strategy identified Birch's Creek as a priority waterway. It's not hard to see why, with platypus and a regionally significant population of river blackfish.. This beautiful permanent stream is an important waterway for many locals. It's popular for fishing, tourism and its historical significance, and supplies water to six towns and for stock and irrigation across the region.

Our dedicated citizen scientists keep a close eye on the water quality and health of this significant waterway through their regular monitoring activities.

Overall, the data reflects an ecosystem recovering from significant disturbance from on-ground works. Water quality is generally good; however, we should expect that ecosystem recovery along Birch's Creek will be slow due to the highly disturbed nature of the works undertaken in the past four years and its long history of environmental threats.

[Click here to download your copy and read more about it](#)



## Water Storages Update

Region	Water Storage	% full at 18 Mar	% full at 25 Jun
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	46.74	↑51.06
	Hume Dam	16.44	↑35.47
	Torrumbarry Weir	100.02	↓95.37
	Third Lake	74.49	↑96.06
	Reedy/Middle Lake	96.22	↓89.07
	Kangaroo Lake	94.97	↓91.47
	Kow Swamp	81.80	↓80.86
	Lake Boga	67.38	↑80.60
	Lake Charm	94.59	↓91.92
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Res	39.54	↓39.08
	Tullaroop Res	66.46	↓60.25
	Laanecoorie Res	40.06	↓38.25
Bullarook Creek Storages	Newlyn Res	61.38	↓56.63
	Hepburns Lagoon	59.74	↑67.48
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	39.79	↑47.73
	Waranga Basin	60.24	↑85.70
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	27.44	↑37.28
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Res	86.10	↓83.9
	Lauriston Res	74.00	↑82.5
	Malmsbury Res	11.3	↑19.6

### Sources:

[www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels](http://www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels)  
[www.coliban.com.au/about-us/reservoir-levels](http://www.coliban.com.au/about-us/reservoir-levels)

## River Detectives update

### COVID-19 restrictions since March have had a tremendous impact on all aspects of life.

Our River Detective schools, like schools everywhere, moved to remote learning with teachers developing new ways to teach and learn with their students at home under the guidance of parents.

Knowing how the River Detectives program is valued as a way of connecting students with their local environment, and in the absence of monthly water quality testing, we were very keen to support teachers with engaging content to ensure continuity of learning.

We developed monthly themed activity matrices offering a variety of fun, achievable, hands-on and thought-provoking activities for students across a range of year levels and with various preferred learning styles.

April saw students all around the state offered Nature Study activities, the May matrix focused on Salinity and the recent June template homed in on Catchments with all themes having aboriginal perspectives embedded.

We invited teachers to participate in a short survey to learn how these matrices were being received and used by River Detective schools. The results are very positive;

- 55% of respondents felt well supported by the matrices with the flexibility to use them as needed
- 40% of respondents had used the matrices in their remote learning programs, some shelving them for now knowing they would be a great resource at a later date
- Matrices were used in a variety of ways (shared with students in online platforms/provided as hard copies in remote learning packs)
- 90% of respondents indicated they'd like to see us continue developing matrices on a selection of other River Detective themes
- Future themes could include water quality, water cycles, stormwater, waterbugs, frogs, birds and other fauna

The July activity matrix is out now and based on Waterways – past, present and future with a heavier focus on Aboriginal Cultures. Given the positive feedback we will continue developing themed activity matrices during 2020 to shine a light on each of the main topic areas of the program. Matrices can be found on the

website under the Resource Riverbank tab at [www.riverdetectives.net.au](http://www.riverdetectives.net.au)



## Upcoming events and special days

July	
<a href="#">Schools Tree Day</a>	31 Jul
August	
<a href="#">National Tree Day</a>	2 Aug
<a href="#">National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day</a>	4 Aug
<a href="#">International Day for World Indigenous Peoples</a>	9 Aug
<a href="#">National Science Week</a>	15-23 Aug
<a href="#">Keep Australia Beautiful Week</a>	17-23 Aug
<a href="#">World Humanitarian Day</a>	19 Aug
September	
<a href="#">National Biodiversity Month</a>	Sep
<a href="#">National Wattle Day</a>	1 Sep
<a href="#">National Walk to Work Day</a>	4 Sep
<a href="#">National Landcare Week</a>	7-13 Sep
<a href="#">National Threatened Species Day</a>	7 Sep
<a href="#">National Bilby Day</a>	13 Sep
<a href="#">Sustainable House Day</a>	20 Sep
Bushcare's Major Day Out	TBC
<a href="#">World Car-Free Day</a>	22 Sep

## Events...

### 2020 Chicks in the Sticks?

As we enter another month working from home, the first thing that came to was "What do we do about Chicks in the Sticks?"



So who better to ask than the ladies of Landcare, who have enjoyed the regional event since its inception in 2013.

An event at the scale of 'Chicks in the Sticks' is unlikely to be possible in 2020. I'd love to hear your thoughts on whether we should be aiming for a 2020 event. Is there interest in doing it online/ virtually? Or would you rather wait until next year and see what kind of 'normality' we are in and gather together then?



I have seen many similar gatherings such as the Women on Farms Gathering and Victorian Rural Women's Networking events re-think their approach this year. Getting together as we have done for the past six years will need a rethink if we are to go ahead.



All thoughts and ideas are welcome:  
[tess.grieves@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:tess.grieves@nccma.vic.gov.au)

## In case you missed it...

Several fantastic webinars were hosted last month which are all recorded and available for you to watch online in your own time.

- **Designing Shelterbelts (100 min)**

Sustainable Farms ecologists Dr. Mason Crane and Colleen O'Malley talk about designing shelterbelts for multiple benefits.

Watch the recording here:

[http://sustainablefarms.org.au/fielddays/designing-shelterbelts-webinar?fbclid=IwAR1aOjfbD\\_rvOVvcQ\\_c7dHkTHsA98ElpgPDNqL7-CyFrn3T\\_A5NFMiFgkI](http://sustainablefarms.org.au/fielddays/designing-shelterbelts-webinar?fbclid=IwAR1aOjfbD_rvOVvcQ_c7dHkTHsA98ElpgPDNqL7-CyFrn3T_A5NFMiFgkI)

- **Navigating the new Agriculture Victoria soil moisture monitoring website (33 min)**

Dale Boyd (Agriculture Victoria) provides an explanation and walk-through of the new Agriculture Victoria soil moisture monitoring website.

Watch the recording here:

<https://agriculturevictoria.cmail20.com/t/r-l-jktloid-ukijhuddhi-i/>

- **North Central CMA hosted Dung beetles with Dr Bernard Doube (60 min)**

Watch the recording here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wVenn\\_ZyME&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wVenn_ZyME&feature=youtu.be)

## Coming up online

### Managing Country Together with Traditional Owners

Parks Victoria are hosting a webinar focussing on working with Traditional Owners as part of their "Insights into Nature" webinar series.

Presentations are free and everyone is welcome to attend. The series will run on Wednesday's fortnightly from **10:30am - 12 noon.**

**When:** 22 July 2020

**Register via:**

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=t0qZs\\_z9bUGDbZzDusznaSTnCAiQsc5OnElwFxxxQ09UQzhOT1dIM01PT0FQSTRHQkcyTk5FQVM3Qy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=t0qZs_z9bUGDbZzDusznaSTnCAiQsc5OnElwFxxxQ09UQzhOT1dIM01PT0FQSTRHQkcyTk5FQVM3Qy4u)



## Courses & Resources...

### Waterway Twinning mentor program applications open

**The Waterway Management Twinning Program is a structured mentoring program, focusing on improving the on-ground delivery of Victorian river and riparian restoration projects.**

Victoria has Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), industry, non-government and community groups independently developing and delivering different approaches for similar riparian restoration outcomes.

This program uses mentoring to enable the most effective approaches to be shared and adopted between all those working in waterway management across the State.

Program objectives are to:

- Build capacity and confidence
- Connect and create networks
- Foster supportive behaviours within organisations

2016 Twinning Graduate and CMA Catchment Restoration Officer, Emma Wolters thoroughly enjoyed the program experience; *"I liked that this program offered a person of like for like or similar role to me. I liked that the program offered a mentee and mentor philosophy, however, both participants learnt heavily from each other."*



To find out more about the program details visit:  
<https://www.twinningiswinning.com.au/our-program/>

The call is open now for 2021 and the link below will provide more information regarding the application process: <https://www.twinningiswinning.com.au/get-involved/>



### Loddon Landmate- back on board

**The Loddon Middleton Prison Landmate Crew Leader Tony Pritchard recently advised North Central CMA that they have now begun resuming services.**

Crews will have limited numbers and social distancing precautions are in place. *\*Changing restrictions related to COVID-19 in Victoria may affect this work.*

If you have any work for the crew or to determine whether your project is eligible visit [the website](#) or contact Tony Pritchard 0419 876 620

### Do you want to data share with us?

**Do you have data and/or activity information from your on-ground works you'd like to share with DELWP?**

North Central CMA and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) are teaming up to identify the biodiversity options and priorities for the Regional Catchment Strategy Review and DELWP's Biodiversity Response Planning.

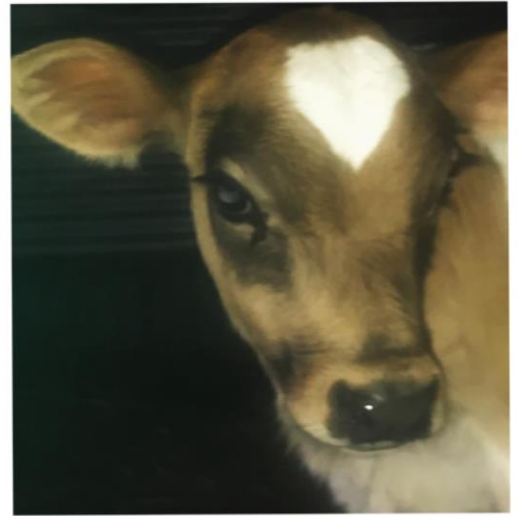
A key component of this work is to understand where Landcare groups, over the last five years (2015-2020), have been conducting on-ground works including weed control, pest animal control, revegetation works, remnant protection, installing nest boxes etc. This will help both DELWP and the CMA to incorporate where current activity is occurring across the North Central region.

We'd love to hear from you! Please email us at [biodiversity.lmr@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:biodiversity.lmr@delwp.vic.gov.au) with your contact information and we will be in touch to discuss the details of your activities .

## North Central Staff Snapshots...



*Ullina Landcare Group's Birches Creek revegetation project planted over 1700 tubestock to restore the riparian zone. Photo: Lang Dowdell*



*This new calf is head over heels with #dairylove at our Sustainable Ag Manager Mandy Coulson's farm in Tongala.*



*"I found this basket fungus (likely *Ileodictyon cibarium*) which is in the stinkhorn family, in the garden. It grows like a big egg and once opened, a latticed ball of meshes pops out." Photo: Genevieve Smith*



*Tang Tang Swamp (near Dingee) is a secret paradise at this time of year. Photo: Robyn McKay*