

# North Central Chat

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



May 2023

## A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

I trust you had a pleasant Easter period. The weather sure played havoc with anyone out and about camping and enjoying the great outdoors, but that's all part of the fun.

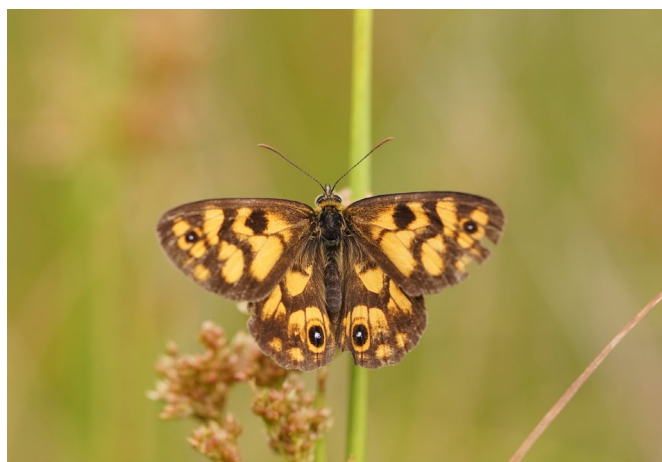
I spent time over Easter with family along the lovely Loddon River which is always a joy. I have been fortunate to spend more time along our region's waterways these days, as Kristie and I continue to job share the Regional Landcare Coordinator role, enabling me to work on the Upper Coliban and Tullaroop catchment projects, which I am thoroughly enjoying. I've come full circle; when I started here at the CMA, back in 2010, I was working on the Tullaroop Catchment as part of the Loddon Stressed Rivers program.

April was full of engagement events, with the North Central CMA annual Regional Roundtables being held in Daylesford, Avoca and Donald. I was fortunate to get along to Daylesford and Avoca, where I met local volunteers, new Landcare members and long-time farming families. Nina has made special mention of the Regional Recognition Awards recipients in her update (see News section) and will profile the other winners over the coming months.

We hosted the annual Landcare Network Chairs and Facilitators meeting on April 20 in Newstead. We bring the collective group together once a year and focus on strategic Landcare matters. Paul Foreman (LVI vice-president) presented on the Landcare Plan for Victoria, after which the group workshopped the six objective themes set out in the plan.

Due for completion in June 2023, the Plan will provide a united voice and future vision for the Landcare community in Victoria.

While the movement is strong and has a long, proud past, the Plan will also help Landcare to



Friends of Trentham Creeks and Reserves and Hepburn Shire are restoring habitat to improve biodiversity, and it's working! The Bright-eyed brown butterfly (*Heteronympha cordace*) has recently been observed feeding on and breeding in the (groups) revegetation, the species has not formally been recorded in Trentham since 1906.

Photo: Courtesy of iNaturalist (Reiner Richter)

grow and adapt. The Plan includes ways to tackle internal challenges, such as funding sustainability and declining membership, as well as external crises such as climate change and biodiversity decline.

Looking ahead, May 22 marks International Day for Biodiversity, which this year is themed: From Agreement to Action: Build back Biodiversity. I hope you take the chance to celebrate our unique creatures and the systems they are a part of through citizens science, onground action, art or any other way that takes your fancy.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator

North Central CMA

Phone: 03 5448 7124

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

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](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au)



### News...

#### Congratulations to Liz Russell

Article from Nina Cunningham, Project Manager, North Central CMA

#### Winner of Regional Recognition Award



Liz Russell winner of Regional Recognition Award, pictured here with CMA Community Leaders' Group member Rob Loats who presented her award.

Regional Recognition Awards celebrate individuals and groups from urban and rural communities who are making a positive contribution to sustainable natural resource management. North Central CMA recently held a Regional Roundtable in Donald where we were pleased to present Liz Russell with a Regional Recognition Award. Liz Russell has been involved in natural resource management for decades and is a driving force behind the Donald Landcare Group. She is a quiet achiever and highly respected in her local community.

Liz is always thinking of how to improve the environment and has contributed to many projects building connections across the landscape and between people. Projects have included biodiversity recovery around Little Lake Buloke, rabbit eradication, fencing off the Richardson River and local biolink projects. Alongside community projects, Liz and her husband Peter have made improvements on their own farm, including erosion control, fencing off the Richardson River and encouraging others to do the same. On behalf of the North Central CMA and the local Donald community, thank you Liz. We acknowledge and appreciate your significant contribution.

At the Donald Roundtable the CMA, Birchip Cropping Group and the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network spoke of the many and varied activities happening in this area. Then everyone broke into groups to discuss issues and future opportunities. The CMA hold a number of Regional Roundtables around the region every year. These events contribute to improved partnerships and collaboration, and development of local projects that deliver on the commitments of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.

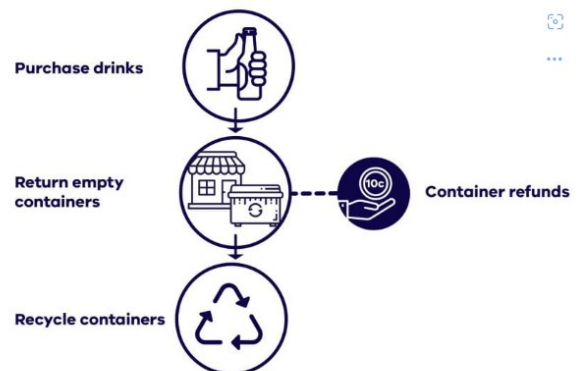
#### 'Container Deposit Scheme Victoria' launches

Victoria's container deposit scheme, CDS Vic, is set to start in November 2023. The scheme will reward Victorians with a 10-cent refund for every eligible can, carton and bottle they return.

This initiative will go a long way to transforming Victoria's waste and recycling system.

CDS Vic will provide shared benefits to the community, environment and economy by delivering:

- more and better recycling
- less waste - old containers become new ones
- less litter - cut by up to half
- hundreds of new jobs and economic opportunities across Victoria
- a cleaner, greener state.



For more information, please visit: <https://www.vic.gov.au/container-deposit-scheme>



## WaterWatch Victoria

### Monitoring fish species using eDNA

**RiverScan is a citizen science program co-delivered by the North Central CMA's Native Fish Recovery Project (NFRP) and North Central Waterwatch.**

We have been working with Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba Traditional Custodians to undertake environmental DNA (eDNA), monitoring 90 samples from 30 sites across the RiversScan and Ramsar project areas.

North Central CMA staff were joined by Uncle Ron Galway and Aunty Joy Galway as well as Alex Stewart for two days of collecting eDNA samples in early April under the guidance of Dr Nick Murphy from La Trobe University.



Nick Murphy demonstrates how to collect eDNA samples from the Loddon River

Samples will be analysed at La Trobe University's Department of Environment and Genetics laboratory for the presence of DNA from more than 30 species of native and introduced fish. The results will give us an indication of the species present in the Loddon River. We are very excited to see what Nick and his team discover!



Wamba Wemba man Alex Stewart filters a sample to send for eDNA testing.

### Team movements

The North Central CMA Citizen Science team has expanded in recent months, and we are now five people (3.3 FTE) strong! Along with familiar faces Tania, Nicole, and Britt, we now have Andre Fitzpatrick and Asha Bannon working with us on Waterwatch, River Detectives, and other citizen science projects. Andre has recently completed his degree in environmental sustainability, and brings a suit of IT, data analysis and media production skills. Asha has come to us internally from the Major Projects team, and prior to this she worked with Connecting Country for several years as a Landcare Facilitator. Britt is on a part-time secondment at the City of Greater Bendigo and will be with us on Thursdays and Fridays until returning full-time in August.

It is all hands on deck with a busy few months for the North Central Citizen Science team. With the 'North Central Waterwatch Volunteer Survey 2023' recently closed, we are pulling together a report on the results to share with you soon. We are also working hard on the annual River Health Snapshot Reports, which use data collected by our incredible Waterwatch volunteers and

others to tell stories of the health of waterways as part of projects that our team partner with.



Asha and Andre are excited to join the team and work with passionate fellow staff and volunteers.

For our Waterwatch existing volunteers, there are opportunities for shadow-testing coming up, so please reach out if you are interested in refreshing your skills by emailing [asha.bannon@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:asha.bannon@nccma.vic.gov.au)

**Water Storages Update**

Region	Water Storage	% full	% full same time 2022
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	95.89	93.29
	Hume Dam	91.24	85.84
	Reedy/Middle Lk	93.89	94.43
	Kangaroo Lake	95.42	97.94
	Kow Swamp	80.93	93.38
	Lake Boga	84.18	80.75

	Lake Charm	91.42	96.19
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Res	85.30	54.03
	Tullaroop Res	83.99	62.53
	Laanecoorie Res	46.19	46.81
Bullarook Storages	Newlyn Res	67.42	71.05
	Hepburns Lagoon	66.98	67.60
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	93.83	77.12
	Waranga Basin	59.28	43.46
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	91.24	48.45
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Res	89.9	↓0.5
	Lauriston Res	89.3	↑2.8
	Malmsbury Res	43.4	↑20.2

**Upcoming Events and Special Days**

May	
International Composting Awareness Week	May 7-13
World Tuna Day	May 2
International Day of Plant Health	May 12
World Migratory Bird Day	May 13
National Volunteer Week	May 15-21
World Bee Day	May 20
International Day for Biological Diversity	May 22
World Turtle Day	May 23
June	
World Environment Day	June 5
International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing	June 5
World Food Safety Day	June 7
World Oceans Day	June 8
Whole Grain Week	June 12-19

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought	June 17
Sustainable Gastronomy Day	June 18
<b>July</b>	
Plastic Free July	July 1-31
World Zoonoses Day	July 6
World Mangrove Day	July 26
Schools Tree Day	July 29
National Tree Day	July 31
World Ranger Day	July 31

## Courses & Resources...

### Young Farmers Scholarship Program



#### Up to \$10,000 for young farmers to study and invest on-farm or in professional development activities.

The Upskill and Invest – Young Farmers Scholarship Program provides young farmers and/or young farm workers up to \$5,000 towards training or study (Upskill), and up to \$5,000 extra funding to invest on-farm or in professional development (Invest), to put new skills into practice. Each year, 12-14 scholarships are awarded to young farmers aged 35 or younger. Since the program was established in 2015, 102 young farmers have been awarded scholarships.

The scholarship program is designed to be flexible and to fit with the different demands and ambitions of young farmers. It provides young farmers and those who work directly on farm with an opportunity to invest in themselves and their career.

#### Potential funding

- \$5,000 towards study or training (Upskill)
- a further \$5,000 on completion of study or training to invest in activities that will support application of learnings from the chosen study or training (Invest).

#### Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be aged 35 years or younger at the time of the application closing date.
- Have been working in a farm business in Victoria at least three days per week for the past three months.
- Have at least two years of total experience on-farm.
- Be an Australian citizen or permanent resident currently residing in Victoria.

Please see the program guidelines for further information. [Young Farmers Scholarship Program | Business Victoria](#)



## Sustainable Ag Snippet...

### Sustainable Soils Forum

I recently attended the Sustainable Soils Forum in Bendigo. The forum was hosted by the North Central CMA's Regenerative Agriculture project, and attracted more than 200 people who attended in-person or who joined the forum online. . The project, in its fifth and final year, has supported six farmer groups with soil testing to determine the status of their soils, demonstrations to explore opportunities, build confidence for change and better farming practices and workshops with expert speakers to increase knowledge and skills. The project also continues to provide many opportunities for sharing information, peer-to-peer learning and capacity building within their communities.

The day prior to the forum we were delighted to host the National Soils Advocate Penelope Wensley on a farm tour at Jo and Jess Conlan's property at Runnymede. Penny was keen to get out on the land and talk directly to farmers and listen to what is occurring on their land and their current challenges.



Penny Wensley talking to Mandy Coulson from the North Central CMA.

Penny was the keynote speaker on the day and provided a broad overview of the many challenges faced by the government, industry and farmers to manage and protect the fragile soils of our nation. Penny was very impressed by the amount of work the North Central CMA has committed to engaging farmers to broaden their understanding and knowledge of soils and supporting practices to improve soil health.

Jess Conlan is one of the regenerative agriculture group members and farms with her mother at Runnymede. Jess presented on their journey into regenerative agriculture, the successes, and challenges. Multi-species cover crops were adopted to assist in releasing locked up nutrients that weren't available to the plant and improving soil health. The other outcome they were chasing was the ability to finish lambs on grass without the need to feed grain. The cover crops and practices they were adopting was looking promising in achieving their goal. But, as with new practices, new challenges arise. With trial and error and knowledge gained, 2022 was looking like the year to achieve their goal of finishing lambs on grass. The start of the season was going well with plenty of rainfall to grow grass, but the rain kept coming and the paddocks were too wet. This caused other issues with sore feet and lack of appetite resulting in finishing lambs on grain. Let's hope this year Jess and Jo will achieve their goal of finishing all their lambs on grass.



Jess Conlan presenting at the forum.

The panel session consisted of three group facilitators and an independent consultant who had worked directly with the farmer groups. They spoke on several topics including soil erosion, soil carbon, technology, and cover crops. The session was well received by the audience, both in person and online, with plenty of opportunities to interact directly with the presenters.

The breaks throughout the forum offered time for attendees to interact and discuss with each other what they'd heard from the presenters and the time to have conversations with the people on the display tables.

The forum was a huge success it was great to see so many people who are passionate about their soil and

improving soil health learning, sharing, listening and connecting with each other.

The success of the Regenerative Agriculture project is due to farmers getting out and having a go, trialing new practices, sharing their successes and challenges and being part of farming community that want to improve their farming practices that benefit soil health. The Regenerative Agriculture project is funded by the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program.

Darren Bain

Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator

Ph: 5440 1893

M: 0419 560 348

E: [darren.bain@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:darren.bain@nccma.vic.gov.au)

## Events...

### Greater Bendigo Climate Summit

*Be inspired, collaborate and commit to climate action in our region.*

Listen to experts, panels and inspiring speakers; Immerse yourself in workshops, demonstrations and how-to sessions; Have your say on the draft Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap; Explore the trade stalls filled with the latest ideas and new products; Transport solutions and advice for your home; Entertainment, interactive and creative displays.

**When:** Saturday May 27 9am – 5pm

**Where:** Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo

**Cost:** Free

**Register:** Ensure your seat at the table by [registering early](#).

### Electrifying Everything Greater Bendigo

**Keynote Speaker: Saul Griffith**

Inventor, author, founder and scientist, internationally recognised Saul Griffith has featured on 'Australian Story', the Quarterly Essay and is the author of 'Electrify' and 'The Big Switch'. Learn how we can reduce power bills, switch to renewable energy, create healthier homes and make the biggest wealth transfer in history.

Also hear from a panel of local business leaders on how we can electrify Greater Bendigo, and the launch of the Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Climate Clock.

**When:** Saturday May 27 6 pm – 8.30pm

**Where:** Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo

**Cost:** \$5 per person

**Register:** [Electrify Everything Greater Bendigo - Capital Venues & Events \(bendigoregion.com.au\)](https://bendigoregion.com.au)

### Walkshop for small acreage owners

**The North Central CMA, in partnership with Biolinks Alliance, are looking to connect with landholders who manage property (10 to 50 hectares) in the Heathcote to Kyneton region.**

- Are you a new or small property owner?
- Do you want to learn more about the landscape on your property?
- Do you know what grasses are on your property and how to manage them?



The day will include a workshop presentation with two speakers talking about landscapes and pasture grasses. Followed by a Q&A session and a walk on a local landholder's property to discuss vegetation and management options.

The day will also be a good opportunity to seek your feedback on what your interests are on your property to help us develop future projects for small property owners.

Morning tea and lunch are provided.

#### Speakers

- Paul Forman, Ecologist and Conservation Strategist, and Chair at Biolinks Alliance.
- Jason McAinch, Private Land Conservation Officer, Macedon Ranges Shire.

#### Coordinator on the day

- Cameron O'Mara, Heathcote Local to Landscape Facilitator, Biolinks Alliance.

**When:** Friday 2 June 2023

**Where:** 2915 Lancefield-Tooborac Rd, Tooborac VIC 3522

**Cost:** Free

**Register online via**

<https://healthcotewalkshop.eventbrite.com.au>

## Expert panel debate topical conservation approach 'rewilding' in central Victoria



Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Photo: Dave Watts.

**Hosted by local conservation organisation, Biolinks Alliance, an expert panel is set to debate whether 'rewilding' can solve widespread environmental challenges in Central Victoria.**

'Rewilding' is embraced worldwide as an approach that goes beyond saving single species or patches of remaining habitat, to restoring the wider natural processes, and missing species, that support life.

This free event, at 11am on Sunday 7 May at Kyneton Mechanics Institute, 81 Mollison St, Kyneton, brings together an eminent panel of experts and thinkers to discuss what rewilding could look like in central Victoria why hasn't it been taken up widely so far and the potential to restitch the natural fabric of life through the initiative to support future generations.

"Restoring nature across large scales – together with drastically reducing greenhouse emissions – is the great environmental challenge of this decade," says Dr. Sophie Bickford, Biolinks Alliance Executive Director.

"We are convening leading thinkers to explore whether rewilding can restore nature at the extent and speed we urgently need here in Central Victoria."

With Victoria being the most cleared state in Australia and having lost at least 13 mammal species in the past 200 years the need for rewilding could not be greater, yet the approach has not taken hold here to the extent it has elsewhere in Australia.

"Rewilding has had ecological success in other countries and places in Australia but hasn't been widely used so far in Victoria and tends to spark robust debate around efficacy and relevance," says Dr. Bickford.

"As a community, we must look at options like rewilding that take a landscape approach and can have great impact at speed."

Through its own scientific expertise and leadership – Biolinks Alliance supports the restoration of wildlife and landscapes in central Victoria by partnering with and building the capacity of other environmental groups and networks.

"We ensure that the significant momentum there is for community-driven conservation on public and private land in central Victoria is supported, coordinated and amplified - and, use events, such as this one, to include as many people as possible in the process," says Dr. Bickford.

**When:** Sunday 7 May from 11am

**Where:** Kyneton Mechanics Institute 81 Mollison Street Kyneton, VIC 3444

**Cost:** Free

**Register online via** [Rewilding Central Victoria Tickets](#) or contact Georgia Gross:

[georgia.gross@centralvicbiolinks.org.au](mailto:georgia.gross@centralvicbiolinks.org.au)

## Cultural Heritage session for landholders @ Lauriston



**Farmers and land managers are invited to join the Macedon Ranges Shire led Healthy Landscape program on Country with Traditional Owners for an information session.**

This session will cover topics such as:

- Identifying cultural heritage, artefacts, and living heritage (trees, food and fibre).
- What to do when you have identified cultural heritage and the different ways it can be protected.
- The role of fire in the landscape.

Lunch is included.

**When:** Friday 26 May, 10am to 2.30pm

**Where:** Property location details will be emailed out 72 and 2 hours before the event to all registered participants.

**Register:** [Cultural Heritage Community Information Session - Macedon Ranges Shire Council \(mrc.vic.gov.au\)](#)



## Funding opportunities...

### 2023 Victorian Landcare Grants open

The Victorian Landcare Grants support Landcare and other environmental volunteer groups and networks to deliver on-ground works, education and capacity building projects that protect and restore our land and natural environment.

The Victorian Landcare Grants are administered by each of the Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) or Melbourne Water (in Port Phillip and Western Port region).

#### Funding available

A total of \$3.95 million is available for Project Grants and Support Grants across Victoria through the 2023 Victorian Landcare Grants.

#### Project Grants

Project Grants of up to \$20,000 - for on-ground works, capacity building activities, community education and engagement that protects or improves our natural environment such as native vegetation, native fauna, waterways, wetlands, and soils.

#### Support Grants

Support Grants of up to \$500 - to assist groups and networks with costs such as insurance, incorporation and other operational needs, e.g., events, newsletters, websites and other communication.

#### Who can apply?

All Victorian Landcare and other environmental volunteer groups and networks that are community-based and have a focus on on-ground land and natural environment improvement work are eligible to apply. This includes Landcare groups and networks, Friends groups, Conservation Management Networks, Committees of Management, Coastcare groups and Aboriginal groups and organisations working on Country.

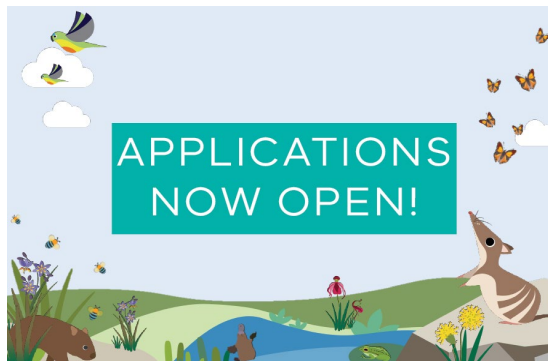
#### How to apply?

Applications can be made through the North Central CMA via the [Guidelines and more information](#).

If you are unsure which CMA region your group or network is located, please click [here](#) and zoom into your location on the map to identify your CMA or Melbourne Water region.

**Applications close: 5pm Tuesday 16 May 2023**

### Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants open



All schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, Scouts, Girl Guides, youth and Junior Landcare groups in Victoria are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000, for projects that involve and educate young people in valuing and actively caring for Victoria's biodiversity and natural environment.

The grants can focus on biodiversity focused on-ground projects – such as planting an indigenous garden to create habitat for native birds and insects.

Projects can also be about hands-on learning activities – such as a biodiversity focused educational incursion/excursion or citizen science activities to collect data about the natural environment.

Funded by the Victorian Government's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and delivered by Landcare Australia through its Junior Landcare program, applications for the grants close at **3pm AEST, Friday, May 12**.

#### How to apply

1. Read the project example and budget info sheet [here](#) mentioned above.
2. For more detailed information on what we do and don't fund, check out the [full guidelines here](#).
3. Chat to your colleagues, local Landcare or Friends group or Landcare facilitator about your project idea.
4. Login or register to start your grant application on the [Landcare Australia Grants Site](#).
5. Complete your application by 3pm, Friday 12 May 2023.

For more information, project examples or to apply, visit: <https://juniorlandcare.org.au/grant/2023-victorian-junior-landcare-and-biodiversity-grants/>