

North Central chat

NOVEMBER 2019

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

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

October was another bustling month of activity across the Landcare and Waterwatch teams. At one stage we were invited to five events across one weekend!

I was lucky enough get back into Waterwatch during the week-long Waterbug Blitz event series, with Dr. John Gooderham. John was a delight as always, sharing his knowledge and skills with more than 50 volunteers across four events held in Campbells Creek, Castlemaine, Lauriston and Bendigo.

Landcare groups have been hosting amazing community education events this past month. The power of social media means that whilst I can't attend each and every Landcare event, I can share in the learnings and follow up with the days information. Axe Creek Landcare Group hosted their annual 'Spring in Mandurang' event, which featured a full day of action packed Landcare topics, enjoyed by more than 40 people. I also read with interest that Connecting Country hosted a workshop featuring the gorgeous and complex relationship of the Eltham copper butterfly.

That led me to fall into somewhat of an 'insect spiral' online where I soon discovered that November 10-17 is National Pollinator Week.

As we know from the River Detectives program, bugs are a fantastic way to engage people of all ages and put the spotlight on the tiny creatures that are of such importance. The vast majority of pollinator species are wild, including more than 20,000 species of bees, some flies, butterflies, moths, wasps, beetles, thrips, birds, bats and other vertebrates.

The [Australian Pollinator Week](#) team have introduced mascot 'Rita, the native reed bee' to showcase Australian insects and their roles in

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**Australian
Pollinator
Week.** 10-17
Nov 2019



agriculture, biodiversity and society. What a fun way to learn more about the unsung heroes of our natural world.

Grant funding has been received by the 18 successful landcare groups and Darren and I are looking forward to getting involved in the delivery of group activities as the weather lends itself to spring planting and community events.

Next month's Chat will be a December/January edition, with an extended feature on revegetation, which is sure to be a great read over the Christmas break!

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

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News...

Terricks weekend teeming with birdlife

Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park group secretary Keith Stockwell sent in a great snapshot of their annual spring weekend of activity which we promoted in the last few editions of the Chat.

Over the weekend of October 4-6 more than 60 people attended with birdwatching a key activity for everyone involved. "More than 50 bird species were observed during the course of the weekend, including hundreds of crimson chats, a flock of budgerigars, some cockatiels, a pair of blue-winged parrots, scores of white-winged trillers, a harrier plus "the usual suspects". Three of us also observed a plains-wanderer" Keith said.



Budgerigars flocked into the bushland (Photo: Dr. David Ong) and one of the many crimson chats spotted by very happy twitchers. (Photo: John Childs via [FTTNP Facebook](#))



Alongside the birds on display outside, the wildflowers were also very good, making for some fantastic photos. Presenters across the weekend covered a range of topics. Group member Audrey



Saturday 26 October marked the 10th Anniversary of Chicks in the Sticks, and the 7th annual event hosted by North Central CMA.

Thankfully gumboots are part of the dress code, as the 80 guests experienced four seasons in one day.

Guests braved the rain during a farm tour of Moonambel Gap Olives with hosts Peter and Helen Yuille. Huddled into the processing shed, guests enjoyed a hands-on healthy soils session with soil specialist Rebecca Mitchell (Agriculture Victoria). The soils display and presentation worked people through the [Soil Health Guide- North Central Victoria](#) Bec's passion and knowledge of her beloved soils was a highlight of the day.



A picnic platter lunch and local vineyard were on hand to ensure tummies were warmed up before local author and historian Merri Hogan provided a short history of Moonambel followed by keynote speaker Emma Ayliffe (Summit Ag) who shared her impressive career journey working as an agronomist in rural and remote areas across Australia.

Before the days end, the sunshine arrived, and guests milled around the information displays and produce stalls hosted by Kara Kara Conservation Management Network and Moonambel Gap Olives.

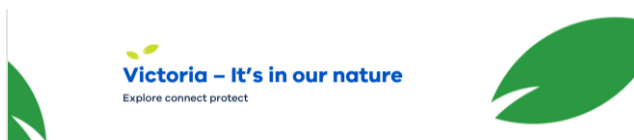
This year's event was delivered in partnership between North Central and Wimmera CMA's, Upper Wimmera Landcare Network (Project Platypus) and Pyrenees Shire.



Dickins gave a presentation about Gunbower Island. Other presenters were Jill Millsom and Ian Mellier who spoke about their recent round-Australia trek, Dan Nugent presented some significant findings about Plains-wanderers as a result of his continuing research - the birds often feed on grey soils and sleep in vegetation on red soils. Gail Osborne spoke about Wombat Forest and Parks Victoria ranger Tim Schwinghammer gave a presentation about the Terricks Grasslands and the Bael Bael Grasslands.

It is no small feat for this group to continue to attract so much interest and expert knowledge to what was their 15th annual weekend event. Congratulations to all the organisers and everyone involved.

Victoria, it's in our nature campaign



The Victorian Government has launched the 'Victoria - it's in our nature' website.

This campaign aims to provide Victorians and visitors with information on how to Explore, Connect and Protect Nature, bringing together information from all environment partners.

The website and campaign can be used by Landcare and alike to guide people asking about how they can do their bit for the environment, visit places of natural beauty and have their say on the future of Victoria's environment.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/ournature>

NEW TOOL: iNaturalist Australia

iNaturalist Australia is a member of the iNaturalist Network. Observations submitted online are added to the global iNaturalist database and shared with the Atlas of Living Australia and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to help scientists find and use your data. All you have to do is observe.

My colleague Tom Croft at North East CMA provided the following summary of the new tool.

"If you have not used iNaturalist, it is a very powerful Citizen Science system, which includes machine learning, community feedback and species validation systems to ensure your records are accurate. It is dependent on photos with sightings but has a very effective app that works

well – much better than the ALA or VBA Apps. The community feedback is improving as more people move to the system, but it means users get access to an extensive pool of professional and amateur experts on many species. This means that sightings which are identified and validated by two or more people are classified as 'research grade' which results in the records being added to the ALA".

The other significant update to the ALA Biocollect system (i.e. where groups can record their own projects) is the Nest Box Monitoring tools.

Through the work of Swamps Rivers and Ranges, a Wettenhall Environmental Trust funded group, and other Landcare Groups, the new Nest Box Monitoring survey tools are now the default for all Biocollect Nest Box projects nationally. These forms have been extensively modified and integrated to make nest box monitoring programs simpler and more effective for recording, and standardised. Project Officer Sally Day has been working extensively with ALA to get this update working- a supplementary activity to go with a new Nest Box Project Monitoring Guide that is close to publication.

There are now two survey forms for groups to use;

- Nest Box Location survey – to record the location and specific details of a nest box. This is done once to establish and record the nest box type and location details for a site, then all follow-up monitoring records are linked to the site.
- Nest Box Monitoring survey – to record monitoring results for each box. Again, this is integrated, standardised and simplified to enable quality and simple records.

Both forms can be used in the field using the Biocollect App.

If you would like to see an example of these surveys in action, have a look at the [NE Regional Nest Box Monitoring project](#).

GREAT NEWS: Training on using the Atlas of Living Australia's tools will be delivered in locations across the state, organised through the Serrated Tussock Working Party. If you are keen to upskill and use the ALA make contact with Martin Deering:

martin.deering@agriculture.vic.gov.au



Net-ready for fruit fly breeding season

Agriculture Victoria recently sent out a reminder to get ready to start netting your fruit trees and vegetable plants to protect them from Queensland fruit fly (QFF).

Once the fruit starts developing, cover trees and plants with a fine UV stable mesh net and secure it to the trunk's base or ground to stop QFF from laying eggs in ripening fruit and vegetables. For information on netting and other control strategies, visit www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/qff.

Useful videos for managing trees, trapping garden hygiene and exclusion are available here: <https://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/FruitFly>



Ruffling feathers at Bael Bael

Ecologist Damien Cook has certainly spent his fair share of time wandering the Ramsar listed Kerang wetlands over the years but there's always surprises in store.

Whilst out monitoring in early October, he was delighted to see his first ever ruff. "This migratory wader breeds in marshes across northern Eurasia and mostly migrates to southern Europe, Africa and southern Asia, with a few finding their way to Australia."



Hello everyone,

During October, the Waterwatch team hosted four National Waterbug Blitz events as part of National Waterbug Blitz. John Gooderham, waterbug extraordinaire and all-round nice guy, came all the way from Hobart to help train around 50 Waterwatch volunteers and other community members in collecting, identifying and monitoring waterbugs from their local waterways.



John explains how to use The Waterbug App to participants at Lauriston

Waterbugs are great indicators of waterway health. Waterbug Blitz and Waterwatch use the Agreed Level Taxonomy (ALT) method, which is a water quality assessment procedure that evaluates seasonal aquatic waterbug diversity and abundance. Each waterbug has an ALT score depending on their sensitivity to pollutants.



A close up look at some waterbug faces

SIGNAL stands for Stream Invertebrate Grade Number - Average Level (V2 was developed in 1994, hence SIGNAL2). A SIGNAL2 score of a site can then be determined; for example, a site that



has abundant diversity and many sensitive aquatic invertebrates will have a high ALT SIGNAL2 score.

Results varied greatly across the catchment, with a diverse range of scores recorded. These results will become available on the Waterbug Blitz and Waterwatch sites in the near future.

Is it just me or are those two bugs actually cute?! Until next time,

Britt Gregory

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Campaspe Carp Catch

More than 100 anglers participated in this year's Campaspe Carp Catch. Now in its fifth year, the event gets better each year.

Each of the five hubs put on a barbeque and provided some great prizes for best catch and biggest bag in two age categories, adults and children under 15. There was great weather and big smiles all around.

North Central CMA Project Manager Angela Gladman said the event is a fun way to highlight the scourge of the introduced species.



Although the haul seems small in comparison to the numbers found within our rivers, this year's

event was deemed a success. The event not only focuses on carp removal but is also a way to highlight their detrimental impact.

"Carp are the rabbits of our rivers. They are a major component of the Murray-Darling Basin's fish population and cause significant damage to rivers, wetlands and the natural environment" says Angela.

"We also couldn't do it without the help of community organisations such as the Echuca Moama Landcare, Strathallan Family Landcare, Rochester and District Angling Club and the Longlea and District Landcare, with funding assistance from the Victorian Fisheries Association".

The North Central CMA has been doing a lot of work in recent years to improve the health of the Campaspe River through the delivery of water for the environment and working with farmers to protect and enhance the bank vegetation through the Caring for the Campaspe project - one of the results being the return of fish such as the Murray-Darling rainbowfish and increased numbers of the iconic Murray cod. Every carp pulled out of the river on the day has helped this cause.

The event was part of the North Central CMA's Caring for the Campaspe and Waterwatch projects, funded through the Victorian Government's \$222M initiative to improve the health of waterways and catchments.

Campaspe Carp Catch received a grant from the Victorian Fisheries Authority and the Victorian Government's Regional Riparian Action Plan.

The frogs are calling you

A new citizen science project, The Frogs Are Calling You, is looking for help to investigate how frogs respond to water management throughout the region.

Water is scarce for everyone – including both frogs and people! Water entitlements were introduced a few years ago to help balance the consumption of water by people with the needs of the environment. In order to maintain biodiversity at wetlands during dry times, water is pumped into natural wetlands to benefit the animals and plants that live there.

Because water is so limited, a keen effort is being made to ensure the right amount of environmental water goes in the right wetlands at the right time. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and



Planning (DELWP) and Victoria’s Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) are surveying the animals and plants of wetlands to see how they respond to environmental watering. The authorities that manage waterways can then use this information to make informed decisions about where and when water for the environment should be delivered.

To assist with data collection, citizen scientists are being recruited to help record frog calls in their local area. The Frogs Are Calling You project is easy to join – simply sign up at www.frogscalling.org, download the FrogID App and start recording whenever and wherever you like! The program is a collaboration between Frogs Victoria, DELWP, Australian Museum, Goulburn Broken CMA, North Central CMA and the University of Melbourne.

People who participate in citizen science make a meaningful contribution to science and nature, gain an insight into scientific research and engagement with the environment, a win-win for all involved! The Frogs Are Calling You is free, fun, easy and important for the frogs. Anyone can contribute to science, so get out there - the frogs are calling you.



A pobblebonk or Banjo Frog. Photo by Geoff Heard.

For further information, check out www.frogscalling.org, find The Frogs Are Calling You on social media, @frogscalling or email Lynette@frogsvic.org

Upcoming events and special days

November	
National Recycling Week	12 – 18 November
Pollinator Week	4 – 10 November
World Fisheries Day	21 November

December	
International Volunteer Day	5 December
World Soil Day	5 December

Water storages update

Most storages have seen levels decrease this month:

Region	Water Storage	% full at 25 Sep	% full at 23 Oct
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	58.62	↓ 55.97
	Hume Dam	42.22	↑ 39.98
	Torrumbarry Weir	100.02	100.02
	Third Lake	96.94	96.94
	Reedy/Middle Lake	99.56	↓ 96.55
	Kangaroo Lake	97.35	↓ 92.04
	Kow Swamp	95.87	↓ 83.26
	Lake Boga	78.51	↑ 88.66
	Lake Charm	97.73	↓ 95.19
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Reservoir	52.91	↓ 52.75
	Tullaroop Reservoir	82.74	↑ 84.24
	Laanecoorie Reservoir	92.88	↓ 52.06
Bullarook Creek Storages	Newlyn Reservoir	100.76	↓ 100.20
	Hepburns Lagoon	101.79	↓ 99.09
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	48.32	↓ 46.38
	Waranga Basin	66.59	↓ 65.29
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	38.69	↓ 35.16
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Reservoir	100.1	↓ 97.8
	Lauriston Reservoir	97.7	↓ 97
	Malmsbury Reservoir	74.3	↑ 75.4

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

Events...

Gunbower Island turtle nest protection

Turtles Australia will be out and about during November in the Cohuna region and you can join in.

President Graham Stockfeld said "This year's monitoring will be part of several other events happening during our time at Gunbower Island. The Cohuna festival, the Lake Meran Survey and school talks, it is going to be a very busy time and all and any help would be greatly appreciated.

With any luck we will be on site for the nesting of the Murray River and eastern long neck turtles.

We will be checking out known nesting sites and searching to identify previously unknown sites.

This will involve visiting farms and bushland and doing a lot of walking."

When: November 1-12, 2019.

Where: Gunbower Island State Forest and surrounding areas

RSVP: For further details and to register, visit: <http://turtlesaustralia.org.au/event-3574053>

Building on a bush block

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is hosting a workshop on November 14 for those interested in learning about building in a forest environment, council's planning requirements and approaches to sustainable building design.

When: Thursday, 14 November 2019, 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Where: Woodend Neighbourhood House, 47 Forest Street, Woodend

RSVP: <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/See-Do/Events/Events-Activities/Building-on-a-Bush-Block>

Wil-im-ee Moor-ring discovery tours



Known as Wil-im-ee Moor-ring, meaning 'Home of Many Axes' in the Woiwurrung language, the greenstone quarry was an important source of raw material for the manufacture of greenstone ground-edge axes, which were traded over a wide area of south-east Australia.

On November 23, tours will be run in conjunction with Extinct Lancefield Megafauna Festival, Australia's only Megafauna Festival. A range of special talks will be on offer, as well as tours of the dig site and other activities for the whole family.

This is an experience not to be missed. Tickets are limited.

When: Saturday, 23 November 2019. Three tour times available

Where: Lancefield Court House, 55 Main Rd, Lancefield. NOTE: Travel to the site is by bus only - no private vehicles are permitted access.

RSVP is essential: Tickets are \$20 each and can be booked via: <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/See-Do/Events/Events-Activities/Wil-im-ee-Moor-ring-discovery-tours>





Connecting Country AGM - 'hearing our place' with Andrew Skeoch

All are invited to the Connecting Country 2019 Annual General Meeting, where guest speaker Andrew Skeoch will speak about 'hearing our place' in nature.

Frances Howe, Connecting Country Director, says 'Andrew Skeoch is an educator, naturalist, environmental thinker and one of Australia's best-known nature sound recordists. From his bush home near Newstead, he has journeyed over the past 25 years to remote locations in Asia, India, America, Europe, Africa and the Pacific in search of some of our planet's most beautiful and fascinating sounds.

His intriguing presentation will focus on our box ironbark birdsong and natural soundscapes, and will have you appreciating our local bushlands from an entirely fresh perspective

When: Saturday 16 November, 4.00 pm – 6:00 pm

Where: Campbells Creek Community Centre (45 Elizabeth St, Campbells Creek VIC). Afternoon tea will be provided from 3:30 pm.

RSVP: Please RSVP online at www.trybooking.com/BGEST by 13 November 2019 for catering purposes. If you have any questions, please email asha@connectingcountry.org.au or call (03) 5472 1594.

Butterfly celebration

Castlemaine Landcare Group's Vanessa Case and other local artists will be running a Butterfly Celebration afternoon in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens on November 17.

Children from two local schools will present the creative work they have been doing with Vanessa and Andy Rigby to show how a local ant (*Notoncus capitatus*) and the sweet bursaria plant offer help to the Threatened eltham copper butterfly - and what the butterfly does in return.

Other local groups focused on butterflies will also be there - music, dancing, tours of the butterfly breeding area and a parade-with-wings will be part of the entertainment and there will be a session for pre-schoolers to create their own artistry. Bring a picnic and join with the performers in celebrating nature's beauty

When: Sunday 17 November from 10.00 AM

Where: Castlemaine Botanical Gardens, Walker Street, Castlemaine.

RSVP: Vanessa Case 0488 024 915 or visit the Castlemaine Landcare Group Facebook page.

It's Showtime!



Carnival: Friday 15 November (9pm fireworks)

Show Day: Saturday 16 November

For all the info and to book tickets visit: <http://www.kynetonshow.org.au/>

Come say hello; North Central CMA will be co-hosting a stall with the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network.



Show Day - Saturday 23 November, 2019

For all the info and entry forms visit: <https://daylesfordshow.com/>



Courses and Resources...

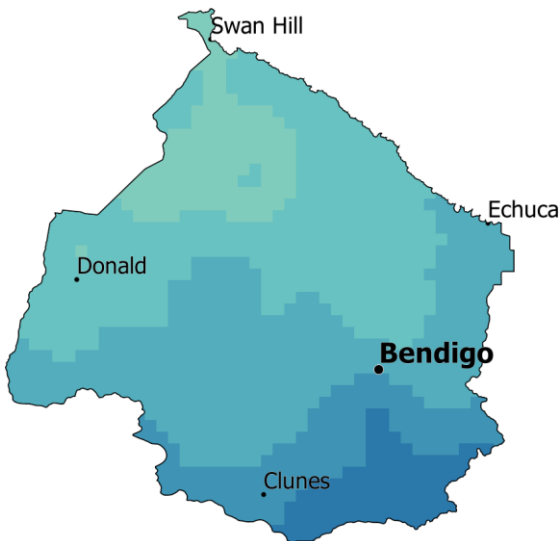
30 years of climate change- North Central Victoria Climate Guide

The Regional Weather and Climate Guides project is part of the Australian Government's Drought Assistance Package.

The project aims to improve the resilience of farming businesses by providing localised facts about the likelihood, severity and duration of key weather variables in regions across the country.

The project is a collaboration between the Bureau of Meteorology, the CSIRO and FarmLink Research. The climate guides have been developed in collaboration with representatives from each NRM region to ensure information is tailored to the needs of local farmers and agribusinesses.

Timing of the autumn break in the North Central region



Weeks after 1 April	4	5	6	7	8
Autumn Break Usually Occurred After...	5 May	12 May	19 May	26 May	2 June

Access a copy of the Victorian Climate Guides via: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/climate-guides/>



The team at Dung Beetle Ecosystem Engineers are expanding their Bertles with benefits project.

The Dung Beetle Ecosystem Engineers (DBEE) project aims to fill in the gaps in the distribution of beetles in southern Australia by introducing new species.

It will also build on previous research to:

- expand the distribution of existing species.
- develop a supply and distribution pipeline so more livestock producers can access beetles.

The national research project will also quantify the ecosystem services and economic benefits provided by dung beetles.

The team are asking you to record your own observation via the MyDungBeetle Reporter App, which you can download for your preferred App store.

Anyone can help map dung beetle distributions by using their phone to make reports with up to four photos from their camera or gallery, and GPS location of the sighting. The experts will then attempt to identify your beetles and reply back to your device.

Find more details via <https://www.dungbeetles.com.au/report-an-observation>



Funding opportunities...

Dry Seasonal Conditions funding boost

On 2 October 2019 Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes announced a further \$31.6 million in assistance for farmers affected by the current dry conditions.

The funding boost will assist farmers and communities impacted in the Millewa and surrounds, the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) and Gippsland. While the details of some new programs are being finalised, farmers can register interest through email drought.support@agriculture.vic.gov.au or via an [online form](#) or by calling 136 186.

Some programs under previously announced packages (i.e. for Swan Hill, Buloke, Gannawarra, Mildura, Campaspe and Bendigo) are still available. To understand what financial assistance is available (state and federal), farmers can contact [Rural Financial Counselling Service – North West](#) by phone 1300 769 489 or (03) 5022 0799.

Access more information: <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought/dry-seasons-support>

Do you know where to find the funding?

It can be tricky to keep updated on when funding is available from local, state and federal government departments.

I keep an eye on upcoming funding rounds from government through the following websites.

- Australian Government: <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants>
- Victorian Government: <https://www.vic.gov.au/grants>
- Local Government- access via your relevant Council or Shire website.

Other organisations and businesses whom I hear of funding Landcare activities include Landcare Australia Ltd, Wettenhall Environment Trust, Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR), and Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation.



Rural Aid provides assistance to farmers in times of drought, flood and fire. We know farmers are a proud bunch, many of whom won't ask for help.

They know that many suffer in silence, however they want to change that through our Assistance Program.

If you're a farming family in need of help, please register at: <https://www.buyabale.com.au/can-we-help-you/>.

Farmers must be registered with Rural Aid to receive this assistance. **Please note you MUST be a primary producer and have a current ABN.*

Rural Aid's assistance includes:

- Fodder
- Gift cards
- Financial assistance (capped at \$1,500)
- Mental health counselling
- Water
- Farm Army volunteers

Victoria's community representative is Suzie Jacobs. Suzie said, "Farmers in need can register online at www.ruralaid.org.au or send in their forms or call me".

For more information contact: Suzie via 0476 719 874 or suzie@ruralaid.org.au

Next Month- Revegetation Feature Issue

The final 2019 edition of the North Central Chat will focus on revegetation and the experiences of contractors, Landcarers and Nursery owners from across the catchment

