

North Central Chat

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



November 2021

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

I trust this past month has put a spring in your step in more ways than one. With Victoria's easing COVID-19 restrictions and vaccination rates reaching 80% we can get back to the things we love best- sharing outdoor adventures with friends and family and getting volunteers back together to work on priority Landcare projects.

I know project and group meetings have been all but put on hold for the past two years, but I am assured things are bouncing back into gear. Receiving meeting apologies due to Landcarers being out and about chasing down pollinators, spraying, lambing and of course minding the grandkids, bring joys to my heart to know our communities are transitioning back toward something more normal.

The CMA Landcare Team alongside our Plains for Wanderer Project Manager Laura Chant were thrilled to host the ninth annual Chicks in the Sticks event on Sunday October 9. While online events aren't everyone's cup of tea this year's theme 'Grasslands for Good' really lent itself to a virtual session to make the most of the stunning photography, video and audio clips of the charismatic plains-wanderer. I've written a more detailed event summary in the News section.

We're welcoming many new faces to the CMA, and in particular, Darren and I warmly welcome Kristie Smith, who started on October 18, taking on the inaugural Eastern Bendigo Landcare Facilitator role. Already off to a flying start, Kristie has been getting the classic Landcare treatment with 'meetings' consisting of weed pulling, tree planting and a long chat, all followed up by a well-deserved cuppa.

In November, we turn our attention to National Agriculture Day, a campaign day of the National Farmers Federation. This #AgDayAU is celebrating the fabulous and fulfilling career opportunities on offer in agriculture. As everyone can appreciate, quality, safe and secure food and fibre systems are vital for Australia, and we're



This National Agriculture Day (Nov 19), celebrate the everyday extraordinary efforts of our farmers and all that is good about Australian agriculture.

Image: Courtesy of National Farmers' Federation Limited

all motivated to create a better future for our families and our environment.

Darren recently remarked on the volume of Federal Government funding that is around, so if you aren't already, it would be wise to sign up to the [GrantConnect mailing list](#). GrantConnect provides centralised publication of forecast and current Australian Government grant opportunities and grants awarded.

Congratulations to the 111 schools, kindergartens and junior Landcare groups who received one of the [t2021 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants](#), including Bendigo Pre-school who will use the funding to upgrade the schools front yard with native plants and Braemar College Woodend who will be exploring local ecosystems using Environmental DNA.

We look forward to sharing more good news stories of successful grant applications in our region as state and federal funding programs are announced.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator
North Central CMA

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Connecting rivers, landscapes, people

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

www.nccma.vic.gov.au



News...

Every Australian can celebrate National Agriculture Day!

This #AgDayAU is celebrating the fabulous and fulfilling career opportunities on offer in agriculture. From mustering cattle in the Top End to developing the next breakthrough wheat variety, there's a career pathway whatever your passion, you really can choose your own #AgVenture.

Whether you host a lunch, attend an event, or submit an entry to the photo competition, there is something for everyone to get involved in National Agriculture Day on November 20.

One of the main drawcards this year is the Careers Expo. A series of webinars spanning a huge range of professions such as stock and station agents, app. developers, plant breeding, vets, wool classers and famers will support people young, old or otherwise to better understand the wonderful career opportunities available in the agricultural industry.

Head over to the [National Agriculture Day website](#) and choose your own #AgVenture



BNG BioBlitz – Connecting Communities with Nature

Article by Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network Facilitator Andrew Borg

There's no doubt that under present circumstances, we've all wanted to get outdoors in small groups whenever the restrictions have allowed us to.

Through our project 'BNG BioBlitz', Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network (BNGLN) has sought to help out our communities through a series of free, small-group, planned activities during spring. Along the way, the Network has connected with many individuals who have not had direct contact with Landcare before, resulting in the attraction of new members for groups such as the recently reactivated Charlton Landcare Group.



Hooded orchids Kara Kara National Park. photo: Julie Driscoll.

With the primary aim of connecting people with nature (and of course, to capitalise on the physical and mental health benefits that time in the natural environment provides) the BNGLN and its members has hosted a pop-up information day at one of the nurseries, followed by some ten wildflower walks throughout the region.

With some excellent weather conditions (and some good early season rainfall), the guided walks conducted so far near St. Arnaud, Redbank, Dalyenong, Avon Plains and Charlton provided a fantastic opportunity to observe and record our regional flora and fauna. Additional walks are scheduled for other areas, in what will hopefully become an annual event. All participants are encouraged to photograph as many different species as they can, and to upload the digital images to the iNaturalist app.

In a very positive outcome, the nature walks have led to marked growth in the level of interest in our regional biodiversity, culminating in increased regional participation in the Great Southern BioBlitz: a Spring Citizen Science activity for the southern Hemisphere.

Thanks to generous grant funding from the Northern Grampians Shire and The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, participant's photos will be used to produce a handy fold-out field guide, as well as a small book as a record of our spring observations.

What's cuter than a Plains-wanderer chick?...

Correct- nothing is cuter than a 'pompom with legs'

That was the sentiment shared by more than 40 women (and several gents) participating in the 2021 Chicks in the Sticks event. At the heart of it, this annual event is a field day celebrating the achievements of women in agriculture and the environment. This year's guests donned their native flora accessories, gumboots and frocks before embarking on an incredible virtual journey through the Critically Endangered Northern Plains Grasslands.

MC and proud Dja Dja Wurrung woman Bec Phillips beautifully performed a Welcomed to Country ceremony, before inviting guest speakers Deanna Marshall and Kirsten Hutchison (Trust for Nature) to discuss grassland habitats, management, incentives and covenanting. Trust for Nature are keenly awaiting the release of 'The Plains-wanderer' feature film by Remember the Wild so more people can understand the species quirks and engage with the plains-wanderer story.

Local farmer and Northern Plains CMN President Faye Bail followed, sharing her family's experience protecting and balancing farming and conservation on the Northern Plains for the benefit of the farm and the incredible plains-wanderer and other grassland dependant flora and fauna species.

Finally, rivalling any cute viral video, Yvette Pauligk

(Werribee Open Range Zoo) melted hearts with footage of adult plains-wanderers dancing and tiny captive bred chicks first days earthside, giving a behind the scene glimpse of the incredible work the Zoo is doing to study the species and successfully captive breed plains-wanderers in an effort to assure their survival in the wild.



The speakers and North Central CMA's 'Plains for Wanderers' project team are partners in the Plains-wanderer National Recovery Plan, which is Australia's commitment to protecting this unique species and it's critical habitat.



North Central CMA Chicks in the Sticks founder Heidi Kleinert got into the spirit of things, celebrating her birthday with her favourite chicks this year!

North Central CMA is calling for ideas and expressions of interest from communities around the region to host the 2022 event, which will mark 10 years of Chicks in the Sticks.

This event was supported by the North Central CMA, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



The 2021 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony will be held online on Friday 26 November at 10am.

While we must forego the usual excitement (and incredible scones) of a typical Landcare Awards ceremony at Government House, I encourage you all to please show your support for the nominees and join in the 2021 Victorian Landcare Awards.

The 16 awards will honour people and groups making outstanding contributions to protecting and enhancing Victoria's natural environment.

Everyone is welcome to join the free online ceremony.

Register by Friday 12 November at events.humanitix.com/2021-Victorian-landcare-awards.

Welcome to our new Landcare Facilitators

Darren and I are thrilled to welcome two newly appointed Landcare Facilitators to our region, Eastern Bendigo Landcare Facilitator Kristie Smith (North Central CMA) and Mount Alexander regional Facilitator Hadley Cole (Connecting Country Inc.).

Hadley Cole has lived and worked in Central Victoria for the past ten years. Growing up in North East Victoria, she developed a strong love for nature and a keen interest in agriculture. Her career has spanned multiple environmental management roles with both government and non-government organisations. This experience has provided Hadley with a sound knowledge of the key conservation issues within Central Victoria. Hadley lives in Guildford with her young family, and has been actively involved in local community-based projects in the Guildford area.

Hadley is passionate about regenerative farming and enjoys spending her time in the garden and in nature with her family. She is delighted to join the Connecting Country team as Landcare Facilitator for the Mount Alexander region, as she believes strongly in the power

of community, and values the knowledge and passion volunteers bring to local conservation projects.

Hadley Cole – Mount Alexander Region Landcare Facilitator

Office days: Mon, Wed, Thu, 8:30am – 4:30pm
Connecting Country (Mount Alexander Region) Inc
03 5472 1594 or 0448837964 | PO Box 437
Castlemaine VIC 3450
hadley@connectingcountry.org.au

North Central CMA has welcomed Kristie Smith as the inaugural Eastern Bendigo Landcare Facilitator. Kristie has leapt into the role, meeting Landcarers onsite and online learning about the volunteers and group leaders in her patch. Kristie will focus on supporting the aspirations and projects of environmental community groups around Axe Creek, Axedale, Strathfieldsaye, Heathcote, Huntly, Ironbark Gully, Junortoun and Longlea.

Kristie has a background in outdoor education, marketing, media, communication and promotions, is an Axe Creek Landcare Group member and an active Mum of three, based in Sedgwick.

Kristie Smith- Eastern Bendigo Landcare Facilitator

Office days: Mon, Tue, Wed
5440 1851 or 0408 487 157
kristie.smith@nccma.vic.gov.au

Fish-friendly flows for the Loddon

Article by Will Honybun, North Central CMA Project Officer

Fish have been on move in the Loddon River after spring environmental flows gave them the perfect migration conditions to breed and feed.

Water flowed all the way from Laanecoorie Reservoir to the Little Murray River near Kerang – about 370 kms – and meet up with irrigation flows down Pyramid Creek creating ideal spring flow conditions in the system for native fish.

The flow created a fish super-highway, connecting long flowing stretches of the Loddon with hundreds of kilometres of the Murray River.

This is the time of year when native fish such as the Murray cod and golden perch expect higher flows.

Monitoring shows that almost three-times as many fish move up the Loddon when there are high flows.

The movement allows for a greater diversity of fish and healthier populations. It also makes for great fishing!

Fishways built on the Loddon and Murray rivers and Pyramid Creek make it easier for fish to access key habitats, by helping them move upstream through weirs and regulators.



The water for the environment is an extra boost for the river, following on from the natural flows that led to Laanecoorie Reservoir spilling in August.

Ideally the Loddon would have three high flows each spring and early summer.

Being able to follow up a natural flow with water for the environment has been a great opportunity. It's not a chance we get every year.

It also has meant that the condition of the Loddon is improved rather than simply maintaining it, which is a situation we often face in years when natural flow events are absent.

It's been the perfect recipe for supporting critical for fish, water quality, and for the instream and bank habitat.

The flows are authorised by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder in line with its Seasonal Watering Plan 2021-22.

The Plan is available for download from www.vevh.vic.gov.au, with regular watering updates posted on the North Central CMA website www.nccma.vic.gov.au.

Great news for native fish and regional communities

The North Central CMA is powering ahead with critical elements of the Native Fish Recovery Plan Gunbower and Lower Loddon (NFRP) underway.

The Gunbower and lower Loddon Fish passage of works, part of the NFRP, is about reconnecting fish habitat along 400 km of waterways, including the Gunbower

Creek, lower Loddon River, Pyramid Creek and Kow (Ghow Swamp), with 530 km of open Murray River.

The works are part of Victorian Government's \$2.7 billion Building Works package to support projects and jobs across Victoria as part of its coronavirus (COVID-19) economic recovery. The combined CMA project cost is \$11,671,046 this includes \$4,571,046 contributed by Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH).

Modifications to the fishway at Gunbower weir; a new fishway at Taylors Weir; a new fishway at Dehnes weir, at the connection point of Taylors Creek and Kow (Ghow) Swamp; and a fish exclusion screen on the No. 4&5 irrigation channel at Koondrook to prevent fish coming up from the Murray being lost down an irrigation channel, are part of the works.

In addition, two new fishways on Gunbower Creek at Koondrook and Cohuna, will allow up and down stream passage of native Threatened and recreationally important fish species such as the iconic Murray cod, for the first time in decades. This means small to large bodied fish can move freely from the Murray River up Gunbower Creek and back again without being blocked, or killed or injured by irrigation weirs and undershot (bottom opening) regulators.

Fishways are great if you love fish and great for regional communities. Recreational fishing contributes \$304 million annually to the regional economy in north western Victoria.

Goulburn Murray Water has overseen the construction of both fishways and provided funding for the fishway at Cohuna Weir.

Keep an eye on our social media or visit our website over the coming months to keep updated on works.



Special thanks to NFRP partners GMW, Gannawara Shire, Campaspe Shire, VRFish, DELWP, ARI, VFA, Traditional Owners of the Yorta Yorta, Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wamba Nations as well as the local community.



Bendigo Creek Waterbugs

Spring is a busy time of year for Waterwatch, and this year is no exception. Our team, together with our project partners and Waterwatch community are immersed in waterbug monitoring for our priority waterways. By identifying the critters that live in our waterways, we can learn a lot about how healthy these water bodies are.

Not only are waterbugs an important part of the food chain, but they can indicate the health of the ecosystem by their presence, absence, abundance and their tolerance levels (to pollution and other unfavourable conditions). Using this data, we can calculate a score which, together with other information, can indicate the general health of the waterway.

Last Tuesday, we were assisted by North Central CMA Aboriginal trainee Annalise Varker and school-based Aboriginal Trainees (SBATS) in the region to collect samples and identify the number and diversity of waterbugs present along Bendigo Creek. This data will be used to help inform the River Health Snapshot Report for Bendigo Creek which will be prepared in early 2022.

Waterbug monitoring activities are planned over the coming weeks for the Campaspe River, Birch's Creek and our Native Fish Recovery Plan sites along the Gunbower, Loddon and Little Murray Rivers.



SBATS helping to identify waterbugs from a Bendigo Creek sample

Welcome new volunteers

North Central Waterwatch would like to welcome our newest volunteers to the program. Rosemary and Heather have signed up to monitor three sites along Bullock Creek in Marong. Our newest volunteers were inducted into the program by Waterwatch officer Britt Gregory and fellow Waterwatch volunteer Frank who monitors sites upstream in Ravenswood. Thank you to Rosemary and Heather for signing up and to Frank for his support and valuable insights!

If you are interested in becoming a Waterwatch volunteer visit www.vic.waterwatch.org.au or send us an e-mail at citizenscience@nccma.vic.gov.au

River Detectives Program Funding Secured

We are delighted to announce that funding has been secured to continue the state-wide River Detectives program for the next three years.

Kirkland Lake Gold has committed to funding the program in its current form until October 2024. This funding ensures the important education program can carry on both in the North Central CMA region and across the state with participation from the North East, Corangamite and Wimmera Catchment Management Authorities.

The River Detectives program is an exciting education initiative that inspires and supports teachers and students to understand, appreciate and care for their local waterway through engaging citizen-science activities. We are thrilled that we can continue to support our teachers and schools and the wider state-wide River Detectives network to continue delivering this popular program.

Kirkland Lake Gold operate the Fosterville Gold Mine just east of Bendigo and, as part of their environmental commitments and corporate social responsibility, they invest in a range of programs and partnerships in our region. We are very much looking forward to working with KLG, partnering CMAs and our school communities in delivering this important program over the next three years and beyond.



Tania MacLeod
Citizen Science Coordinator
North Central CMA
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2022 River Detectives Registrations

Despite the challenges of 2021, the River Detectives program and our participating schools have achieved some wonderful things and we are looking forward to a productive and more connected 2022.

We strongly believe in the power of connecting young people with nature and the schools we work with do too. The past two years have taught us that students thrive when learning is practical, engaging and meaningful and it's even better when it offers the wellbeing aspects of being outside!



We are excited to announce that registrations for the 2022 River Detectives program will open on **Monday 15th November** for schools and youth groups in the north central region. If you are a current River Detectives school, you will receive a registration pack soon.

As in 2021, we will be targeting schools in certain locations across the region to align with CMA projects:

- Bendigo Creek Citizen Science project
- Caring for the Campaspe project
- A Healthy Coliban Catchment project

- RiverScan project (Gunbower and lower Loddon area)

We are also encouraging new schools to apply by heading to the River Detectives website after November 15 and clicking on the 'apply now' link.

To find out more about the program and how it could work in a school near you visit www.riverdetectives.net.au

Nicole Howie
 Waterwatch Project Officer
 North Central CMA
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Water Storages Update

Region	Water Storage	% full at 22 Sep	% full at 27 Oct
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	78.01	↑82.32
	Hume Dam	97.00	↑98
	Third Lake	45.26	N/A
	Reedy/Middle Lk	97.45	↓96.55
	Kangaroo Lake	94.74	↑95.16
	Kow Swamp	92.84	↓91.95
	Lake Boga	83.73	↑88.06
Loddon Storages	Lake Charm	93.42	↑93.76
	Cairn Curran Res	64.00	↑66.25
	Tullaroop Res	72.94	↑73.82
Bullarook Storages	Laanecoore Res	49.88	↓44.88
	Newlyn Res	100.65	↓100.29
Goulburn Storages	Hepburns Lagoon	102.24	↓102.02
	Lake Eildon	78.40	↑84.03
Campaspe	Waranga Basin	92.16	↑96.37
	Lake Eppalock	53.79	↑56.77
	Upper Coliban Res	100.60	↓100.30
	Lauriston Res	98.80	↓96.90

Coliban Water Storages	Malmsbury Res	103.30	↓102.50
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www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels
www.coliban.com.au/about-us/our-reservoirs

Upcoming Events and Special Days

November	
Turtle Month	November
Australian Pollinator Week	7-14 Nov
National Recycling Week	8-14 Nov
World Science Day for Peace and Development	10 Nov
National Agriculture Day	19 Nov
World Fisheries Day	21 Nov
December	
World Soil Day	5 Dec
International Volunteer Day	5 Dec
Coastcare Week	6-12 Dec
International Mountain Day	11 Dec

Love Turtles?

Help out in November – Turtle Month

Through Citizen Science, the ‘1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program’ will support turtle conservation initiatives, such as ‘Turtles in the Classroom’ or the creation of protected islands and nesting grounds around local wetlands, urban parks, and even golf courses.

These initiatives will ensure that our freshwater turtle populations persist into the future.

[Click here](#) to find out more and get involved



Courses & Resources...



Drought Resilience Leaders’ Mentoring Program

Are you a farmer or does your work impact the agriculture sector or rural communities?

Are you looking for someone to call for advice? Or are you looking to make a positive impact on someone by sharing your knowledge?

The Drought Resilience Leaders’ Mentoring Program connects farmers and people in the agriculture industry from across Australia to share trusted advice and help tackle common challenges associated with drought, climate change, wellbeing and agricultural practice.

Participating in the program also means that you’ll grow your networks and meet people from all over the country.

- Join the expansive nationwide ARLF alumni network of leaders and changemakers.
- Be part of a network of people that you can rely on when things get tough for you and your community.

You might also consider yourself as a mentor or a mentee?

If you or a colleague, friend or family member that might benefit from this program, find out more about this program via: [Drought Resilience Leaders Mentoring Program | Australian Rural Leadership Foundation \(rural-leaders.org.au\)](http://rural-leaders.org.au)

Events...



Macedon Ranges Shire Council is releasing a series of webinars and workshops during the coming months as part of their Healthy Landscapes program.

November

- **Nov 9:** Compost on Ag. pastures and Natural Capital Accounting Webinar presented by Jim Radford (Principal Research Fellow from LaTrobe University).
- **Nov 17:** Transition from spring to summer feeding webinar with Brian Wehlburg.

December

- **Dec 7:** Central Victorian climate: Today, Tomorrow and the Future webinar with Felicity Gamble, Senior Climatologist from the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM).

To learn more about the presenters, topics and registration information for these events, visit the [MRSC Healthy Landscapes events page](#) or contact: Jason McAinch

Email: jmcainch@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Phone: 0455 210 436

Connecting Country Annual General Meeting

Connecting Country wishes to announce our 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 2pm on Saturday 13 November 2021.

This year's AGM will be again an online event via Zoom. But as usual, it will be much more than an AGM!

Presenters will include Geoff Caine and Dona Cayetana (DELWP-Climate Sciences) on 'Climate scenarios and planning considerations for central Victoria' and Bonnie Humphreys (Connecting Country) on 'Future-proof our forests'.

When: Saturday 13 November 2021 2 PM - 3:30PM

Where: Online event access details will be provided by the event organiser

RSVP: [Connecting Country Annual General Meeting Tickets](#) | [TryBooking Australia](#)

Pasture: What is it and how to increase its value for stock

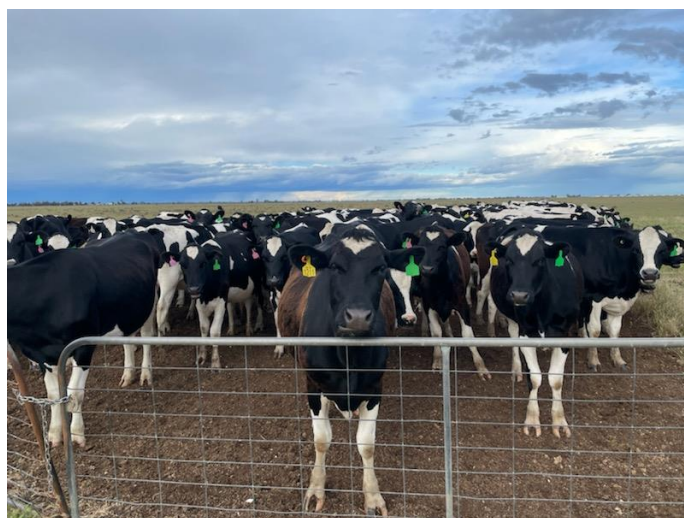
Hosted by Goulburn Broken CMA, Greg Bekker from Ag. Vic. will facilitate an interactive discussion with farmers about their current pasture, understanding why it looks the way it does and how to increase its value for stock and soil health.

When: Tuesday 9 November from 12.30pm-1.30pm

Where: Online

RSVP: Register by emailing

kerstiel@gbcma.vic.gov.au or call 0437 310 840



Passion into Action: how women create change workshop

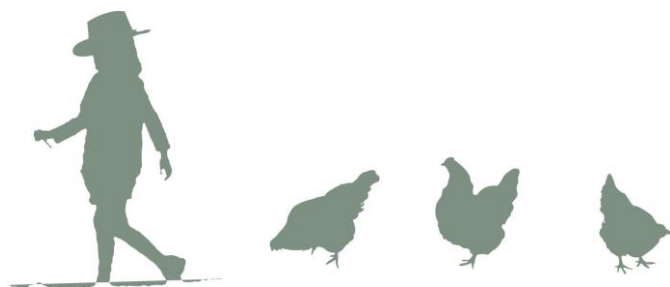
Goulburn Broken CMA is hosting a workshop on restoring land - how women create change. It is designed to connect, encourage and inspire women caring for our land. Cassie Leatham, Anika Molesworth and Sally Murfet sharing their stories

When: Thursday 11th November from 10.00am-12.00pm

Where: Online

RSVP: [Register here](#) or contact

kerstiel@gbcma.vic.gov.au for further information.





Funding opportunities...

Youth Volunteering for Nature Fund

The Youth Volunteering for Nature is part of the [Victoria's Great Outdoors program](#), which seeks to get more Victorians, from all walks of life outdoors enjoying nature.

Parks Victoria want to empower youth all over Victoria to become champions for nature by creating innovative answers to challenges facing Victoria's natural environment. Youth Volunteering for Nature is looking for ideas that engage with the community through environmental volunteering to protect and preserve Victoria's special places for future generations.

Funding is available for a broad range of projects. We are looking for innovative project ideas that champion environmental volunteering, have a positive impact on Victorian environmental, historic and/or Aboriginal cultural heritage values, encourage more young people to volunteer for nature and provide lessons for the future.

As a Youth Volunteering for Nature recipient, you will be provided:

- Up to \$1,500 to help fund your idea.
- 6-month mentorship with an expert in your field of interest (flora/ fauna/ marine/ terrestrial/ Traditional Owner cultural heritage/ historic heritage/ advocacy and awareness).
- Opportunities to share your ideas, brainstorm and network.
- Workshops to build your knowledge and skills.
- An opportunity to present the outcomes and learnings from your project to Parks Victoria and DELWP staff and the wider community.

Applications close 5pm Thursday 4 November

<https://www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au/yif/>

Environment Restoration Fund

The Federal Departments of Industry, Science, Energy & Resources and Agriculture, Water & Environment will provide \$10M in grant funding for the Environment Restoration Fund Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan - Priority Species.

The fund covers a wide range of fauna and flora species. Details are in the program guidelines.

Environmental Volunteer groups that are incorporated not-for-profit entities are eligible to apply. The minimum grant amount is \$50,000 and the maximum is \$250,000 and the grant can be for up to 100% of eligible costs.

Funds must be spent by 31 March 2023 and the maximum project length is 13 months.

Applications open on Monday 1 November and close at 5pm, Monday 13 December.

Read the program guidelines and learn more about the fund [here](#)

Sponsorship Grants for Student Science Engagement and International Competitions

The Federal Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources is supporting students to participate in virtual or in-person STEM engagement event, completion or activities.

The grant opportunity provides organisations, such as schools and community groups, funds to sponsor a student or group of students to participate in:

- in-person and virtual STEM engagement events, activities and competitions hosted in Australia and New Zealand (where permitted by COVID-19 restrictions)
- virtual STEM engagement events, activities and competitions hosted overseas (students to participate remotely from Australia).

Eligible primary or secondary schools with an ABN and relevant authority registrations are eligible to apply.

Applications close 5pm Tuesday 25 January 2022.

To apply, go to www.business.gov.au/SGSEIC