



North Central chat

APRIL 2014

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

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

I hope you all had a lovely Easter and ANZAC long weekend.

Since the last newsletter I think most of you would have received some very welcome rainfall - I know us Bendigo folk are pretty happy. It is raining steadily outside as I write this newsletter - a welcome sight to many of the farmers across the region who are busy sowing crops.

There is plenty on the go as per usual. All of the Landcare Groups and Waterwatch monitors will have received an invite in the mail for the 3rd Annual Water Science Forum: A Focus on Waterbirds. To be held on Saturday 10 May at the Koondrook Cricket Club, this knowledge event is open to anyone that has an interest in learning more about waterbirds.

You will hear from a range of expert speakers including key-note speakers Matt Herring (Wildlife Ecologist, Murray Wildlife) and Jim Radford (Science & Monitoring Manager, Bush Heritage Australia). The guest speakers will explore and discuss topics such as waterbird conservation, monitoring methodologies and identification of waterbirds found in north central Victoria.

It is definitely a day not to be missed. There is no cost to attend and if you don't live near Koondrook there is a free bus leaving the Bendigo Train Station at 8 am sharp. You do however need to RSVP to ensure we cater for the crowd. All you need to do is contact us at the North Central Catchment Management Authority to reserve your spot. Call reception on 03 5448 7124 or email info@nccma.vic.gov.au.

This week I received a call from Melody Serena at the Australian Platypus Conservancy. She is seeking Platypus sightings old and new along, the Box and Pyramid Creeks. Can you help?

This Month's Contents:

News	2
Waterwatch update	6
Events	8
Courses and resources	8
Funding	10

North Central Waterwatch presents

3rd Annual Water Science Forum: A Focus on Waterbirds

Saturday 10 May 2014



As part of an environmental flows study for Box and Pyramid Creeks, the North Central CMA is working with the Conservancy to identify areas supporting platypus along these creeks. Anyone who has seen a platypus along Box or Pyramid Creeks - either recently or in the past - is asked to please get in touch with either myself (contact details below) or Melody Serena at the Conservancy on 03 5157 5568 or email platypus.apc@westnet.com.au. This is a realistic way to get a handle on how the platypus is doing and where it used to be found in the area. Any help you can provide will be greatly appreciated!

Until next time,

Jodie Odgers

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North Central Catchment Management Authority
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Weed of the month...

Herb

VARIEGATED THISTLE

Silybum marianum



(Cabbage Thistle, Gundagai Thistle, Lady's Thistle, Milk Thistle)

Description: Beginning bushy but develops into an erect thistle to 2.5 m tall.

Flowers: Purple, in large heads to 13 cm diameter surrounded by sharp spines. Solitary at the end of branches. Flowers October to December.

Leaves: Shiny green with white blotches and markings, duller and hairy underneath. Lower leaves to 60 cm long with wavy, spiky margins. Upper leaves smaller and stiffer.

Stems: Stout, hollow or pith filled, ribbed and usually much branched.

Note: Very competitive in highly fertile pastures.

Restricted Weed

Annual



CONTROL OPTIONS



VECTOR OF SPREAD



Environmental water for Lake Meran

During April and May, the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is coordinating the delivery of up to 1,850 megalitres of environmental water into Lake Meran, near Kerang. The watering will increase the lake level by around 1.5 metres.

The environmental water release is identified as a priority in the Seasonal Watering Plan 2013-14 of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, who makes decisions about the Victoria's environmental water entitlements, based on proposals by CMAs.

Brad Drust, Executive Manager Loddon and Avoca Catchments with the North Central CMA, said that the release would provide deep-water habitat for the lake's plants and animals, and support the health of surrounding trees. "It is part of a longer-term watering regime that aims to vary water levels in the lake.

"We have used the best available information on the needs of the plants and animals at Lake Meran to plan this event. This is the first time environmental water is being delivered to the lake. It provides an opportunity to learn more about environmental responses, water levels and salinity over the next 12 months and will help inform future environmental watering decisions," said Mr Drust.

Mr Drust said that it is important to highlight that future environmental water deliveries to the lake are not guaranteed and will be subject to the North Central CMA and Victorian Environmental Water Holder's annual prioritisation process.

"Future decisions will also be informed by our observations following this watering event," he said.

Denis Flett, Chairperson of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, said environmental watering decisions are based on achieving the best value for the environment over time.



“We understand that Lake Meran is also highly valued by the local community for its recreational uses such as boating, swimming, fishing and camping. We recognise that environmental water can often contribute to recreational benefits when water is being delivered to meet our program of watering priority sites.

“At Lake Meran this year, our environmental water delivery will support these recreational values, while targeting the environmental objectives of protecting plants and animals and improving the health of surrounding vegetation, which is a good outcome all round,” Mr Flett concluded.

For more information, visit the North Central CMA website at www.nccma.vic.gov.au

2014 Premier’s Sustainability Awards

The 2013 Premier’s Sustainability Awards showcased the widest range of sustainability projects. Now in its twelfth year, organisers are expecting more terrific examples of innovation and leadership in Victorian sustainability during 2014.

The nine categories in this year’s awards program are:

Cleaner Yarra and Bay – Leadership, commitment and excellence by an individual, community group, business, organisation, or government to protect and/or enhance the health of the Yarra River, Port Phillip Bay and/or its waterways.

Community - Leadership, commitment and excellence in delivery of sustainable projects or programs which have demonstrated widespread benefits for Victorian communities.

Education - Development and delivery of educational programs and institutional practices that address and contribute to a more sustainable Victoria for current and future generations.

Environmental Protection - Leadership, commitment and excellence by a business in the protection of the environment.

Infrastructure and Buildings - Excellence in contribution to innovative design, construction/delivery and/or operation of sustainable infrastructure and buildings; whether

it is a new structure or re-imagining of existing form.

Innovative Products or Services - Outstanding innovation in products and/or services that reduce environmental impact from a lifecycle perspective.

Large Business - Outstanding achievements by a large business in adopting and implementing sustainability principles.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) - Outstanding achievements in small-medium business for their adoption of sustainable measures and minimising their environmental footprint.

Tourism - Excellence in sustainable tourism which contributes to the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of Victoria’s natural landscapes, ecology and local cultural heritage and/or provides tourism services through sustainable and efficient practices.

In addition to these awards, the Premier will personally select two overall winners: the Premier’s Regional Recognition Award and the Premier’s Recognition Award.

For further information on award categories, entry and judging process, go to www.sustainabilityawards.vic.gov.au.

To enter, simply download an Entry Kit and you’re on your way!

Entries close at 5pm Monday 2 June 2014.

Celebrating Mothers Day through ‘Trees for Mum’

When Angela Van Dam was thirty she had never imagined her wedding day without her mother’s guidance or becoming a mum and not having her own mother’s love, support and advice.

To lose a parent at any age is incredibly tough, so when Angela lost her mother to cancer in 2008, she knew she had to do something positive to make Mother’s Day a day of celebration.

In 2011, the year she became a mum herself, Angela found a way to celebrate through **Trees for Mum**.

"I now look forward to Mother's Day and helping others find a way to make the day a tiny bit less painful," says Angela.

Trees for Mum is a series of free national Landcare events inviting children of all ages to celebrate their mums, by planting trees in their honour.

Angela and her husband Jason were living in Sydney in 2011 when they read about Trees for Mum in the local paper. They planted in memory of Angela's mother and to honour Jason's mother in Victoria.

"My mum was a passionate gardener and lover of nature. Mother's Day 2011 became a very special day for us as our daughter was born just a few weeks later," says Angela.

Trees for Mum was first started in Sydney in 2002 by friends and colleagues, Deena Raphael and Lauren Adlam, as a way of paying tribute to their mums, who they had both lost to cancer. The first event was a huge success, attracting over 150 people to Manly to plant commemorative trees.

In the eleven years since Trees for Mum was created, more than 30,000 sons and daughters have planted trees for their mums.

"Last year we had a few families from surrounding towns and Melbourne come for a day trip to plant in Woodend and it's great that they've already signed up to come again this year," says Angela.

Trees for Mum partnered with Landcare Australia from 2012, and now even more people have the opportunity to host events and plant trees in their communities, nurturing the environment and creating living legacies for so many mums.

The event is now in its third year in Woodend and has become part of the town's event calendar attracting around 150 people each year.

This year Trees for Mum Woodend will be held on Mother's Day, Sunday, 11 May 2014 from 9:30am to midday at the Rotary Community Exercise Track near Buffalo Stadium on Forest Street, Woodend.



"Funding for the Woodend event has been generously received through the State Government's Victorian Landcare Grants which means there is no cost to participate.

"All we ask is that people contact us to reserve their your tree and bring some gardening gloves and wear sturdy shoes or boots. All planting equipment will be provided on the day," says Angela.

To reserve your tree please contact Angela Van Dam via treesformumwoodend@gmail.com on 0409 373 010 or via 'Trees for Mum Woodend' on Facebook.

To find other sites nationally visit www.treesformum.com or follow the [national Trees for Mum page on Facebook](#).

2014 National Landcare Conference – Call for Abstracts Deadline Extended

On behalf of the Landcare community, Landcare Australia is pleased to extend the call abstracts for presentations at the 2014 National Landcare Conference, to be held 17 – 19 September 2014 at Crown Conference Centre, Melbourne.

The submission deadline has been extended to 5pm (EST) on Friday 16 May 2014. For more information visit the Landcare Australia website www.landcareonline.com.au/nationalconference.



Snaps of the month!

The first 'snap of the month' was taken by Chris Tzaros from Birds, Bush and Beyond. Chris managed to get this beautiful photo five Grey-crowned Babblers (*Pomatostomus temporalis*).

Grey-crowned Babbler groups have been found near Boort and on the Bendigo Creek, an area where they have previously not been recorded. The find came during benchmark monitoring as part of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network's Community Bird Monitoring Project.

The Grey-crowned Babbler is the largest of Australia's four babbler species. Populations have declined throughout their range as a result of land-clearing practices that has left habitat fragmented. When groups become isolated, numbers decline to a level where they cannot continue to successfully breed. Habitat degradation is also a factor in their declining numbers.



The following two snaps were taken from a camera trap on the south east slopes of Mount Alexander in January 2014.

If you look at the time stamps on the bottom right of the photos you'll see that the fox came sniffing in the exact spot where the wallaby was standing about nine hours before.

Max Schlachter, Region Landcare Facilitator with Connecting Country, set the camera trap in an effort to photograph a wombat. There are two burrows nearby with a well-worn track between them and he was hoping to snap the wombat that calls them home. But alas no wombat on this occasion - hopefully next time.



Keep the pictures coming - email them to jodie.odgers@nccma.vic.gov.au.



Hello everyone,

Did you get your invitation in the post to the North Central Waterwatch 3rd Annual Water Science Forum: A Focus on Waterbirds? We would love to see in Koondrook on Saturday 10 May.

I hope you all had a wonderful Easter and had the chance to take some time out and relax over the holidays. I certainly did. Finn and I spent most of our week at home, in the veggie garden. We also ventured to Melbourne for an Easter egg hunt fiesta with some of our very close friends, it was amazing!

Some exciting things to discover in May include:

- Launch of the North Central Waterwatch Short Film
- Release of the North Central Waterwatch Waterbirds Field Guide
- North Central Waterwatch 3rd Annual Water Science Forum
- Waterwatch Victoria 20 year report card

I hope you enjoy this month's contribution from Waterwatch. Until next time,

Cass Davis

Regional Waterwatch Coordinator
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Meet John and Jan Dods - and their little helpers!

This month John and Jan Dods were lucky enough to have some extra help with their monthly Waterwatch monitoring. Their two granddaughters, Maddison and Eleanor were up from Melbourne for the school holidays.

Twelve year old Eleanor is very aware of water pollution however living in the city she rarely gets a chance to see what happens on the Avoca River. Nor did she know where the water came

from that was used to grow the food that she ate for breakfast. But Eleanor did understand about water quality, why we monitor it and how important a healthy waterway is to the species that call it home such as frogs.



Eleanor, Maddison and Jan checking the water quality on the Avoca River at Low Water Bridge. Photo: John Dods.

Eleven year old Maddison, Eleanor's cousin was very interested in all things scientific and the accuracy of the readings and measurements we were taking. Maddison lives in Knoxfield and has a love for the outdoors. She too knows just how important it is to provide a clean environment for our amphibian friends.

Sounds like John and Jan had some great help this month and it is great to see the next generation of monitors giving Waterwatch monitoring a go!

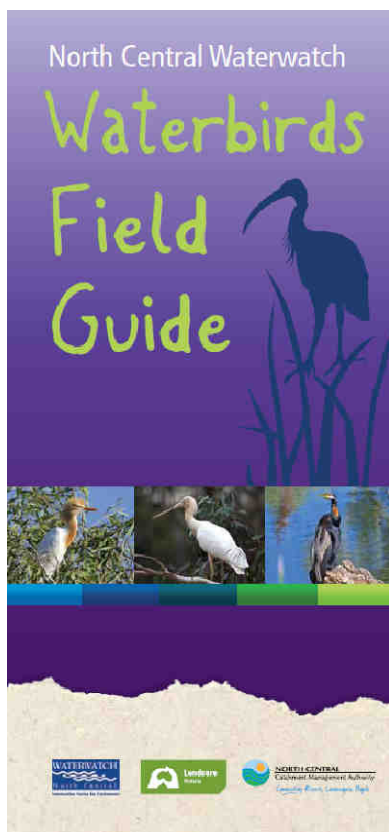
The North Central Waterwatch Waterbirds Field Guide

Did you know there are 74 Waterbirds that live in or visit north central Victoria? Some birds even travel great lengths to visit our wonderful wetlands.

Who are they? Well, in a couple of weeks you will be able to explore the wonderful world of waterbirds that can occur right here in our region.

A new field guide hot off the press, is a handy pocket sized reference guide developed by the North Central Waterwatch program for anyone interested in learning more about the waterbirds that inhabit our region's rivers, creeks and freshwater wetlands.

Each bird listing within the guide includes a description, conservation status and notes on habitat, feeding, breeding, and its voice. Symbols are provided throughout the guide as a quick way to identify species that appear on important state, national and international conservation status lists. To get you excited here is a sneak peak at the front cover!



State Waterwatch 20 Year Report Card

Sarah Greenwood-Smith, of the State Waterwatch program, is developing the Waterwatch Victoria 20 Year Report Card. Sarah has been pulling all the resources together from across the state to tell a story about Waterwatch and our Community Water Quality Monitors.

The report card will highlight regional (CMA region) stories, timelines around major events and/or activities. It will include statistics of the number of volunteer groups that are currently active, the total number of volunteer groups engaged since 1993 the number of sites currently active and the number of sites monitored since 1993. The report will also display a sample of the hundreds of faces involved in Waterwatch from across the state.

I am really looking forward to sharing this report card with everyone when it is complete.

Saltwatch Week is here!

Saltwatch began in 1987 and is Australia's longest running community environmental monitoring program. It helps communities understand the salinity problems in our waterways and is coordinated through the Waterwatch program. The Waterwatch Victoria website hosts the Saltwatch historic maps and allows online entry of data.

Saltwatch Week this year is from Monday 5 May to Sunday 11 May, 2014.

I will be entering your data this year and will be sending out an email very soon to ask you to forward your salinity results to me when you are uploading your site visit results into the statewide database.

After May anyone can hop on the website and check out the varying ranges of salinity across the catchment or even the state. It's very interesting and lots of fun. Go to: www.vic.waterwatch.org.au

Things to keep a look out for in May:

- 21 Years of Waterwatch film
 - The new Waterwatch Waterbirds Field Guide
 - Salinity Snapshots across the state
 - Platypus swimming in a creek near you.
- Don't forget to report your sightings by downloading the Platypus sightings report at : www.nccma.vic.gov.au/Water/Waterwatch/Platypus_and_Water_Rats/index.aspx



Events

3rd Annual Water Science Forum: A Focus on Waterbirds

Guest speakers will explore and discuss topics such as waterbird conservation, monitoring methodologies and identification of waterbirds found in north central Victoria.

When: Saturday 10 May 2014

Time: 10.00 am - 3.30 pm

Where: Koondrook Cricket Club, Penglase Street Koondrook, VIC.

RSVP is essential by: Thursday 8 May 2014. Contact North Central CMA reception on 03 5448 7124 or info@nccma.vic.gov.au.

There is no cost to attend this event. Morning tea and lunch will be provided. A bus will be leaving from and returning to Bendigo Train Station. (Morning departure is 8.00 am sharp).

Campfire and Culture

A family day on the northern grasslands of Victoria sharing culture, stories, bush tucker and bush knowledge will be held as a Reconciliation Week event.

You are invited to come together and spend time on Country to enjoy a range of family friendly activities. Renowned Indigenous chef and guest speaker Mark Olive will prepare a bush tucker inspired gourmet BBQ. Hear the sounds of didgeridoo and story-telling with Ron Murray and discover the natural and cultural values of Trust for Nature's beautiful property, Wanderers Plains. Be welcomed on to Country by Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wamba people.

Activities include:

- Campfire and bush tucker meal
- Cultural and nature walks
- Music and stories
- Painting and traditional crafts

When: Sunday 25 May

Time: 1:30-6:30 pm

Where: Wanderers Plains, on Lake Charm-Quambatook Rd, Budgerum East (follow the field day signs). Approx. 20 minutes from Kerang.

Travel in your own vehicle or buses will leave from:

Gateway to Gannawarra Tourist Info Centre, King George St. Cohuna 12.30 pm.

Kerang Aboriginal Centre, 9 Nolan St. Kerang 1.00 pm.

Swan Hill Visitor Information Centre, cnr McCrae & Curlewis Streets, Swan Hill 12.30 pm.

Free event: Includes afternoon tea and evening meal.

Bookings are essential

Numbers are strictly limited. RSVP by 20 May to North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or email info@nccma.vic.gov.au.

Courses and resources

Webinar on climate outlook

Do you want to hear the latest on Victoria's climate?

DEPI's Dale Grey will explain the atmospheric, oceanic and soil conditions and the predicted El Nino trend during a 30 minute webinar on 7 May.

The webinar will help you find out what this might mean for Victoria's climate over the next few months.

To join the webinar all you need is a computer with a reliable internet connection and a headset or, if you don't have a headset you can phone in.

Topic: Seasonal Climate Outlook

Date: Wednesday 7 May 2014

Time: 12pm

Meeting Number: 866 491 492

Meeting Password: Daleupdate

BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB - 2014 Conference

The BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB annual conference will be held in Bendigo again this year.

The conference dinner will be held on the evening of Tuesday 24 June with a full day of conference proceedings the following day on Wednesday 25 June.

The conference will be held at the Prince of Wales Showground in Bendigo.

Program details will be released soon, but until then, put the date in your diary so as not to miss out on Victoria's premier sheep event.

The 17th Box-Ironbark Ecology Course Nagambie, Victoria 6-10 October 2014

This course is for those interested in gaining a general understanding of ecological processes and principles. The course comprises five absorbing days of field studies in the heart of Box-Ironbark country.

This five day residential course commences on Monday 6 October and concludes on Friday 10 October, 2014.

Topics to be covered during the course include:

- Distribution and history of the ecosystem including Indigenous use and post-settlement impacts.
- Introductory sessions on geomorphology, soils, fauna and vegetation communities.
- Flora and fauna of the region - how to read the landscape, search for and identify the plants, reptiles, birds, mammals and invertebrates that inhabit Box Ironbark communities.
- Detailed study of ecological interactions between landscape, soils, plants and animals and implications for management.
- Survey skills and property assessment.

Participants will gain:

- a better understanding of the distribution, natural values and ecological processes of Box Ironbark landscapes, past and present;

- an understanding of the impact of human use on the ecosystem, past and present;
- practical skills in observation, description, survey, analysis, interpretation, map reading and ecosystem monitoring of flora, fauna, geomorphology and soils;
- the opportunity to apply new skills and to collate and communicate information collected from the field;
- access to resources to help plan for enhanced ecologically sustainable management outcomes for Box Ironbark remnants on private and public land.

Instructors

- Cathy Botta is a soil scientist and educator who works with communities in agricultural landscapes. Her special interest is in helping people better understand their own soils and the effects of land management on soil health.
- Andrea Canzano is an entomologist with experience in insect conservation and invertebrate biodiversity assessment in Victoria. She is particularly interested in the ecology and conservation of the Eltham Copper Butterfly.
- Garry Cheers is an experienced naturalist who lives and works in Box Ironbark country. His special interest is in birds in fragmented landscapes.
- Paul Foreman is a botanist and forester with a particular interest in Box Ironbark, Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands ecosystem flora, and private land conservation.
- Lindy Lumsden is a wildlife biologist who has a special interest in Box Ironbark ecosystem fauna. Her passion is bats, their ecology and introducing them to people.
- David Meagher is an environmental scientist with a special interest in the ecology of mosses and liverworts of south-eastern Australia.
- Neville Rosengren has surveyed the geomorphology and geology of conservation sites in most parts of Victoria. He is particularly interested in the modes and dynamics of landscape evolution.



- Kate Stothers is a landholder in the Box Ironbark region. She is interested in private land conservation and management, and environmental education.
- Lance Williams is an ecologist with 30 years experience in fauna survey, assessment and management. He has a particular interest in woodlands, their ecology, conservation and restoration.

Location details - The course is based at Nagambie in Victorian Box Ironbark country. Accommodation will be shared, in comfortable on-site units at the Nagambie Lakes Leisure Resort with en suite facilities. Catering is inclusive of all meals.

Course Fee - The 2014 course fee is \$1600 (plus GST) which includes accommodation, meals, transport, instruction, and course notes.

Numbers - The course is limited to 30 participants. Further details, including the course notes, will be mailed out to registered participants, closer to the date.

All enquiries can be made to **Kate Stothers, Course Coordinator**, email katelance1@gmail.com or phone 0458 680 990.

Funding

Expressions of Interest closing 5 May for the Northern Eco-connection project

The North Central, Goulburn Broken and North East Catchment Management Authorities, invite landholders to express their interest in the Northern Eco-Connections tender process.

What is the Northern Eco-Connections project?

- The project will support landholders to undertake work that improves native vegetation on private land.
- It focuses on improving connections and linkages across the diverse landscapes of northern Victoria.
- Priority properties will be identified through a conservation tender process.

Am I eligible?

Properties must be fully or partially within the defined project area. Sites must contain remnant native vegetation for protection or improvement through revegetation with indigenous flora.

Why should I get involved?

You will learn more about the natural values of your property, gain advice on how to manage them and be able to determine your own environmental management costs.

Express your interest via the **Northern Eco-Connections website** or by calling the **Northern Eco-Connections project team** on 1800 097 220.



Call for Green Army Projects - Round 1 applications close 9 May 2014

The Australian Government is seeking applications from community organisations for potential Round 1 Green Army Projects. Applications for Round 1 close on Friday 9 May 2014.

The Green Army Project guidelines and application form are available on the Green Army website: www.environment.gov.au/cleaner-environment/clean-land/green-army/call-for-green-army-projects

Eligibility - Projects involve teams of 10 (up to nine participants and one team supervisor) engaged for a period of 20-26 weeks to deliver a suite of activities that support environmental and heritage conservation outcomes. Applications can contain a proposal for more than one Green Army project where each project contributes to a shared conservation outcome. Projects may be carried out across urban, regional and remote Australia on public land, Indigenous-held lands, or private land where there is a clear community and environmental and heritage benefit.

For more information please contact Green Army Programme Team at Department of the Environment on 1800 780 730 or email GreenArmy@environment.gov.au.