

North Central Chat

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



April 2020

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

It's a very challenging time as COVID-19 and its impacts continue to spread across the globe.

Although Landcare is, at its heart, about bringing people together, now is the time to postpone planned events, face-to-face meetings and working bees. The advice is clear - no gatherings of people and to stay at home aside from travelling to work, or heading out to buy essentials. If everyone does their bit, we can and will limit the spread of infection.

We have closed our doors to the public but are still open for business. Please contact me or my colleagues directly, call our reception on (03) 5448 7124 or shoot through an email at info@nccma.vic.gov.au

For those of you seeking guidance for your own groups, the North Central CMA has made the following recommendations for staff to prevent potential impacts of COVID-19 on our organisation and our communities:

- a. Continue to practice good personal hygiene in the workplace and at home.
- b. Follow social (physical) distancing requirements at all times and in all places – ensure a 1.5m physical separation between yourself and others; ensure no more than one person per four square metres in all spaces; limit close contact to no more than 15 minutes or more and meetings to no more than two hours.
- c. Cancel all non-essential travel, in particular to areas where COVID-19 cases are known and avoiding high risk travel (e.g. planes and trains).
- d. If it essential for you to visit landholders/stakeholders/contractors at their home or property call ahead to seek their permission and ensure that you practice social (physical) distancing.



Identifying potential platypus habitat in established revegetation along Campbells Creek at the Friends of Campbells Creek Citizen Science workshop on March 15

Please also note several cancellations and the postponement of events previously advertised in the Chat, including the CMA's Regional Roundtables and Bendigo Sustainability Festival.

We understand there are likely impacts on groups engaging communities, schools and partner organisations as part of their 2019-20 Victorian Landcare Grant projects, so please get in touch if you need to discuss extensions or changes to your project.

Although we're no longer gathering together at events, there are still plenty of ways to continue to enjoy Landcare action via [Climate webinars](#), getting project inspiration through [YouTube](#), or reading the latest research and best-practice methodologies from [CSIRO](#) or the [Centre for Invasive Species Solutions](#).

Please look after yourselves and enjoy the read as it may be the last edition for a short while.

Tess Grievess

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North Central CMA
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News...



An update from ACSA staffer Amy Slocombe that includes a Bushfire Response article I thought I'd share..

"Early in the New Year we were waking up to the realisation of how awful and extensive all the bushfires across Australia were. We were also seeing a huge response from the public who wanted to contribute, to do something to help monitor recovery and resilience, and to do something to help the wildlife that may have survived the fires, but were now faced with a lack of water, food and shelter/cover.

"We also realised that none of us knew what citizen science we could usefully do that would help scientists and natural resource managers with information about what was happening. We needed to be guided as to what to look for so we could begin to understand the destructive and regenerative processes we were observing around us.



"ACSA established an informal working group to undertake an audit of post bushfire/wildfire projects which involve an element of citizen science in their data gathering. Our task was to collate what we could find and make it accessible to the whole citizen science community.

"We now have both an [Atlas of Living Australia Biocollect Bushfire Projects page](#) and a [Sci Starter microsite](#) to which we can continue to add suitable projects and where you can find relevant platforms and methodologies to work with."

You can read more about the Bushfire response projects audit and promotion [online here](#).



Did you know April is "Citizen Science Month"?

CitSciMonth is an annual event to celebrate and promote all things citizen science: amazing discoveries, incredible volunteers, hardworking practitioners, inspiring projects, and anything else citizen science-related! This global celebration includes events hosted by libraries, institutions, community groups, museums, and individuals all around the world.

Check out the [online calendar](#) of global events taking place to find out more.



Farm biodiversity certification scheme trial

In 2019 the Australian Government announced funding to implement the Australian Farm Biodiversity Scheme - developed and led by the National Farmers' Federation.

As part of the Agriculture Stewardship Package, the aim of the scheme is to reward farmers for managing biodiversity on-farm through market-based mechanisms and thus enable the continued provision of natural capital benefits to the wider community.

The Australia Farm Institute has been appointed to conduct Phase 1 of the scheme, focused on desktop and consultative research, reviewing international best practice management standards for relevant agricultural biodiversity programs.

The project for this phase will assess commonalities in existing methods and determine their potential applicability in Australian agricultural systems, and these findings will then underpin the practical development and trial of biodiversity market mechanisms to be developed in Phases 2 and 3.

Another integral part of Phase 1 is a series of consultative webinars between March and May to identify critical success factors that will be required for implementation of biodiversity schemes in Australia.

Click the links below to register for a webinar. Webinars will run from 2pm-4pm AEST

- **WEBINAR 1 - 23/04/2020**
- **WEBINAR 2 - 4/05/2020**

Dung beetles and Lockington Landcare

Article by Wendy Sims, Lockington Landcare Group

On Sunday 8 December, 16 colonies of dung beetles were collected from John Feehan, Mr Dung Beetle expert of Australia based in Canberra.

The transfer took place at Gundagai. These colonies consisted of two varieties, *Alexis* and *Pecuarius*, bred especially for the climate around the Lockington district. Each colony had 850 dung beetles.



John with the newly arrived dung beetles

Sixteen farmers agreed to cover the cost of the beetles and then to release their given colony on to one cattle paddock on their farm. This will give a wide infestation of these summer dung beetles in our area. Instructions on the release and care of the beetles was provided.

The colonies will be monitored over the next three years to establish how they thrive in the area. It is hoped they will multiply over this time and provide a natural means of taking dung deep into the soil. Aeration of the soil from the tunnelling system together with buried dung creates microbial activity stores massive amounts of carbon.

The dung beetles relocate nitrogen and phosphorous in the dung to the grass root zone providing habitat and a food supply for earthworms. An added benefit is when it rains, water penetrations and groundwater retention is improved.



Wendy Sims meets Rodney Bacon to begin the distribution of the dung beetle colonies



Corey Mitchell providing a new home for his beetle colony

The best benefit to our district will be the reduction in flies - no dung means less source of food for flies!!

The Lockington Landcare group is seeking further funding so dung beetles can be purchased at a subsidised cost. Lockington Landcare wants to purchase dung beetles suited for winter conditions in 2020. If you would like to be part of this program, please contact Wendy Sims for further information via wendys1904@gmail.com

Farming and Community Group Drought Funding

The Victorian Government's Drought Support Program provides targeted support to Victorian farm businesses to increase skills and technical knowledge and to support decision-making during drought and dry seasonal conditions.

The Farming and Community Group Drought Funding Program is delivered by Agriculture Victoria under the Victorian Government Drought Support Program. The program will enable farmers to better prepare, respond and build resilience to drought and dry seasonal conditions.

The program is open to Landcare and land management groups, industry groups, farming systems groups, farming discussion groups and not for profit and community organisations in Victoria.

Preference will be given to projects that are in Wellington or East Gippsland shires, far north-west Victoria (Milawa and surrounds) and the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

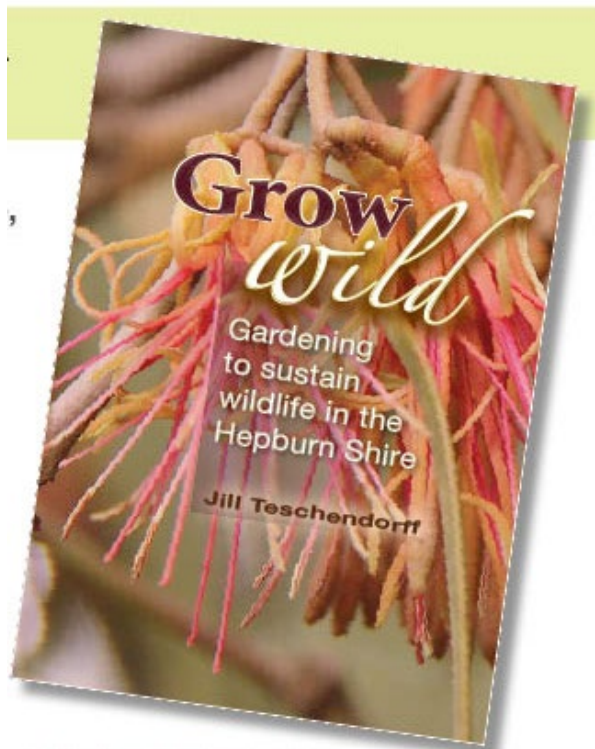
Grants of up to \$25,000 (excluding GST) are available for groups to engage technical experts and/or specialists to deliver timely, relevant and appropriate technical information to assist dryland and irrigated farm businesses and landholders to plan or manage the impacts of drought and dry seasonal conditions.

Grant applications will open on 13 March 2020 and close 1 April 2020 at 11.59 pm. Activities must be completed no later than 14 June 2020.

Evaluation, expenditure report, invoices, statutory declaration and, final report must be submitted to the department no later than 21 June 2020.

To access program guidelines go to www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons, email Drought.Support@agriculture.vic.gov.au or call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

New Book: Grow Wild: Gardening to Sustain Wildlife in the Hepburn Shire



Written by local Glenlyon resident and avid gardener, Jill Teschendorff, and published by Wombat Forestcare. This beautiful book aims to empower people to include indigenous plants in their gardens and provide the special habitat needed by local wildlife.

"At a time when Australian flora and fauna are under increasing threat, Grow Wild offers advice on how to create habitat on your property to protect local plants and wildlife and to help preserve the natural beauty of the region," Jill said.

The book includes valuable advice on gardening in the Hepburn Shire region as well as a list of readily available indigenous plant species selected for their willingness to grow under cultivation.

To purchase a copy of this newly released book, contact Jill Teschendorff: jt.bee@bigpond.com



What a rollercoaster of a month! Tess has already covered the virus in detail at the beginning of this newsletter, so I won't say anything more other than please stay well over the coming weeks and months.

Getting out in the fresh air is a wonderful thing for our physical and mental health and wellbeing and we encourage our volunteers to keep up with water quality monitoring (while following the physical distancing and gathering rules of course).

Having said that, I understand if you don't feel comfortable being out and about so please don't feel pressured about continuing your monitoring for the next little while. We are all in this together and can pick up where we left off once things return to normal.

Until further notice previously discussed Waterwatch and River Detectives events are postponed.

To our wonderful volunteers, their families and loved ones, please look after one another and stay safe.

Britt Gregory

[Waterwatch Project Officer](#)

[North Central CMA](#)

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Barapa Climate Change Event

Waterwatch Project Officer, Rohan Potter

North Central CMA staff had the great privilege to be invited along to the Barapa Climate Change event.

The event was about engaging school children on the topic of climate change and to help them understand the connection between the land and their actions.



The CMA's Rohan and Tammy attended the event and talked to local high school and primary school children about waterbugs and soils

The event started with a Smoking Ceremony. It was great watching the children letting the smoke wash over themselves. From here Uncle Ron told a fantastic story about Reedy Lake and its connection to the Barapa Barapa people. We then had a chance to hear Uncle Ron play his udaki (didgeridoo) and Sarah Murray played her violin, a very surprisingly enjoyable combination.

Following the Smoking Ceremony, the group was separated into smaller groups and had the chance to go kayaking, basket weaving with Aunty Maryline Nicholls, planting trees with Kerang Landcare, singing songs or learning more about waterbugs and or making soil ribbons.

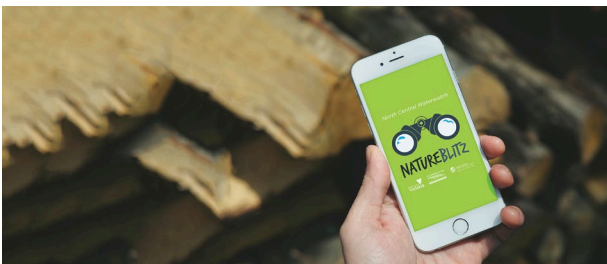
The waterbug event was very popular with questions like "how does the murkiness of the water effect waterbugs?", from a very keen six-year-old. Everyone had a passionate understanding about the importance of waterbugs and the role they play in the environment.



Students were very quick at using the sorting trays to identify bugs and were able to tell us what bugs they had and the importance of that bug. Even pointing out introduced snails they had found in their sorting trays.

The bugs found and identified included millions of boat men, hundreds of thousands of backswimmers, and several glass shrimp and a few may and damsel flies.

It was a great pleasure seeing children connecting the dots of the importance of these small little waterbugs and the role they play in the food chain.



Keep up your Citizen Science observations through NatureBlitz

The NatureBlitz app and website allow you to maintain your record of species sighted around the catchment

If you're out on a walk or taking some more time out in nature during April, remember to take your phone or make note of your bird, fish, mammal, frog or reptile sightings and upload the information details through NatureBlitz. This information provides us with a snapshot of the biodiversity from around the region.

**Please note, the App is currently only available on Android devices. The website is available via <https://natureblitz.net.au/#/app/home>*

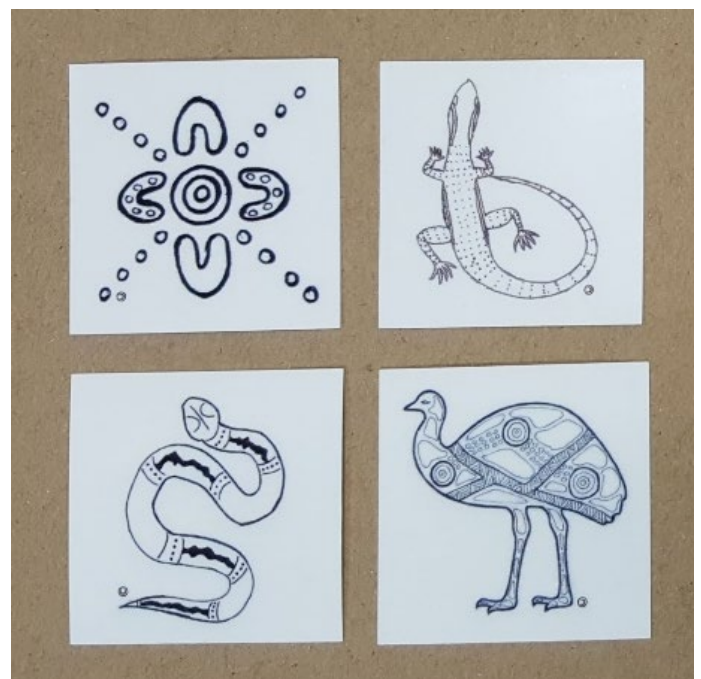
Check out our new tattos

Aboriginal school-based trainees, Chase, Annalise and Ruby, together with Rochelle Patten, mentee for the Barapa Wamba Water for Country project, have produced some awesome artwork for temporary tattoos.

These mini, limited edition tattoos will be handed out at special events and will no doubt be in high demand.

Chase (pictured below) and Ruby tell us a what it's like being at the North Central CMA and what inspired their artwork.

Chase is undertaking his school-based traineeship with the North Central CMA. The traineeship allows him to complete his year 11 and 12 studies at Castlemaine Secondary College while gaining useful skills and experience in the workplace and qualifications in Certificate 2 in Horticulture.



“I’ve learned a lot about the CMA and how much they do to fix up the environment. My job is really varied. I get to work with lots of different people so learn about the different roles,” said Chase.

Networking and meeting past Aboriginal trainees and seeing where they have ended up in the workforce is another part of the traineeship Chase enjoys.

He’s also had the opportunity to work with our partners including DELWP and Parks Victoria which adds to a range of different work experiences. Chase has set his sights on working with Parks Victoria or becoming a firefighter with Forest Fire Management Victoria.

Chase’s artwork is a fine design of a goanna, his favourite animal. “I just came up with the design in my head. I’m pretty creative,” he said.

For North Central CMA staff, Tuesdays are lots of fun and a chance to encourage Aboriginal job pathways into natural resource management. Chase is also getting some valuable driving hours out and about on his Ls!

The traineeships meet the one of the objectives of the North Central CMA’s Reconciliation Action Plan to offer practical work experience opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, and importantly facilitate future employment in caring for the environment.

Supervisor Robyn McKay said “It’s fantastic having Annalise and Chase in once a week. They really bring out the best in each other and remind me of the best parts of my job”.

Ruby (pictured below) has just completed the first year of her traineeship with Parks Victoria. “I like that it’s a culturally safe workplace and that I get to work on Country most days”. Ruby feels supported in what she wants to do with her future – to become a Park Ranger.

The traineeship has helped with her identity too, and she feels she has found herself, partly due to the work and opportunities.

Perhaps her tattoo design highlights this. The Emu is Ruby’s totem animal and the design reflects meeting places within that totem.

Thanks to Ruby and Chase for sharing their inspirational stories and their stunning artworks.



Upcoming events and special days

April	
<u>World Heritage Day</u>	18 April
<u>Earth Day</u>	22 April
Anzac Day	25 April
May	
<u>International Composting Awareness Week</u>	3 – 9 May
<u>OZ Water</u>	5 – 7 May
<u>World Migratory Bird Day</u>	9 May
<u>National Volunteer Week</u>	18 – 24 May
<u>International Day for Biological Diversity</u>	22 May
<u>World Turtle Day</u>	23 May
<u>National Sorry Day</u>	26 May
<u>National Reconciliation Week</u>	27 – 3 June
June	
<u>World Environment Day</u>	5 June
<u>World Oceans Day</u>	8 June
<u>Global Wind Day</u>	15 June
<u>World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought</u>	17 June

Water storages update

Region	Water Storage	% full at 25 Feb	% full at 18 March
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	46.79	↓46.74
	Hume Dam	17.11	↓16.44
	Torrumbarry Weir	100.02	100.02
	Third Lake	64.90	↑74.49
	Reedy/Middle Lake	96.81	↓96.22
	Kangaroo Lake	95.99	↓94.97
	Kow Swamp	87.02	↓81.80
	Lake Boga	69.52	↓67.38
Loddon Storages	Lake Charm	94.69	↓94.59
	Cairn Curran Reservoir	40.87	↓39.54
	Tullaroop Reservoir	68.47	↓66.46
Bullarook Creek Storages	Laanecoorie Reservoir	42.50	↓40.06
	Newlyn Reservoir	68.50	↓61.38
Goulburn Storages	Hepburns Lagoon	64.69	↓59.74
	Lake Eildon	37.51	↑39.79
Campaspe	Waranga Basin	58.34	↑60.24
	Lake Eppalock	60.2	↓27.44
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Reservoir	86.3	↓86.10
	Lauriston Reservoir	75.3	↓74.00
	Malmsbury Reservoir	18.3	↓11.3

Sources: www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels

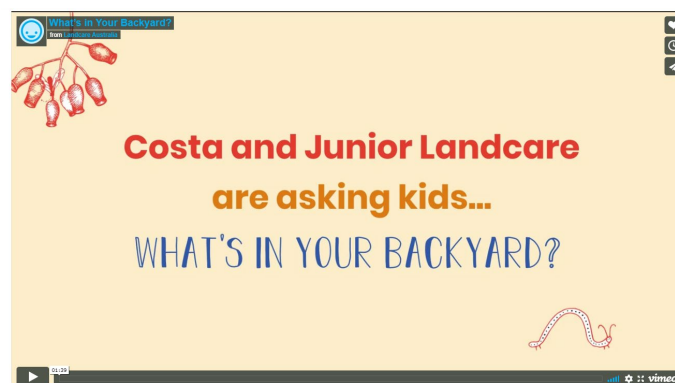
www.coliban.com.au/about-us/reservoir-levels

Courses and Resources...

YouTube- useful channels for Landcarers

Did you know many of the organisations who support Landcare have YouTube channels?

- [Landcare Australia](#) feature projects from across Australia, Junior Landcare project ideas and Landcare Award winners' stories.
- [Agriculture Victoria](#) feature climate, weather, high risk invasive plants and digital agriculture videos which are aimed at engaging community, farmers and land managers, presented experts in their field.
- [Parks Victoria](#) focus on their volunteers. Volunteering with Parks Victoria is good for your parks, your community and your health and it's fun! There are many activities and experiences available, which means everyone will find something to suit. Keep an eye out for a familiar face, Ranger Trent Nelson in his [Connection to Country feature video](#).
- [Gardening Australia](#) has gathered lashings of great gardening inspiration, with tips and tricks and stacks of gardening projects to get stuck into! It's a one stop shop for all your gardening advice, including great step by step DIY garden projects.



“The entire environment is your backyard” Costa, Junior Landcare Ambassador

Costa is asking kids across Australia to grab a camera and snap photos of the flora and fauna in their backyard.

Joining forces with Junior Landcare, the popular TV star and Landcare champion has launched ‘What’s in your Backyard?’ campaign to encourage the next generation to get outside and document what’s in their local environment.

Your backyard might be a garden. If you live in an apartment, it could be the plants on your balcony. You may live near a park or bushland area, or a river or wetland. You may live on the coast close to the sea, or on a farm. Your local environment is your backyard!

You can submit a photo as an individual or as a school under four categories:

- Biodiversity – birds, bees, insects, flowers, trees and more!
- Food production – your food garden may include vegetables, fruit and herbs
- Indigenous perspectives – bush tucker gardens
- Waste management – worm farm, compost, recycling bins

If you enter as a school, you will automatically be entered into the school prize category in addition to any of the four categories that you select.

ENTER NOW

Get Involved

It is easy to get involved and you can submit as many photos as you like. Closing date is Monday 20 April 2020.

Step 1. Simply submit your photo to Junior Landcare in the form below

Step 2. Select a category that best suits your photo

Step 3. Tell us why this photo is important to you

Step 4. Fill in your contact details so we can get in touch with you if you win!



Funding opportunities...

2020 Gallagher Landcare electric fencing grants

With the success of the 2019 grants and a continuing commitment to support projects aligned with the priority areas of conservation, grazing management and feral exclusion, Gallagher and Landcare Australia are proud to offer the 2020 Gallagher Landcare Electric Fencing Grants. A total pool of \$100,000 (ex-GST) is available.

Up to 12 grants are planned for 2020. Eligible applicants are invited to apply for an individual electric fencing project grant of up to \$8,000 (ex-GST) for fencing materials – with costs to be determined in consultation with your local Gallagher Territory Manager.

Grant submissions close on **Friday, 15th May 2020**.

You can find out more via the [Landcare Australia website](#).

A note from North Central CMA CEO

Over recent weeks we have put informed and measured precautions in place to respond to Coronavirus (COVID-19) and we have spent time preparing for an escalated response. Because of this work and the changing advice from government we have moved quickly to a new way of operating that involves:

- Restricting public access to our office
- Encouraging our staff to work from home
- Further restricting travel and meetings

Despite the disruption, North Central CMA remains 'open for business'. We continue to have important work to do for the North Central CMA region and its communities and we have put in place different working arrangements to allow us to get it done. Most importantly though, we have a 'can do' but caring culture and we are well practiced at responding quickly, confidently and supportively to the things happening around us and I'm sure that the way we all respond will be no different this time around.

If there is something we can do for you, please get in touch and let's work it out together – all of our staff can be contacted on their mobile or email or if you are unsure how to get in touch call or email our reception on (03) 5448 7124 or info@nccma.vic.gov.au.

Stay safe, stay connected and keep the conversations going as we all work in a different way over the next while.

Brad Drust, CEO North Central CMA