

North Central chat

JANUARY 2014

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

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

It has certainly been a hot start to 2014. I hope you all managed to survive the record breaking heat wave and you are all prepared for another one this week!

The hot weather doesn't only affect people, it also makes life tough for many of our native animals. Just a few minutes of your time and a few simple actions could make this hot weather a little more bearable for our wildlife. Here are some handy tips for the days ahead:

1. Provide a source of cool water. This could be a bowl, bucket or bird bath.
2. Bury containers into the ground if you can as it helps keep the water cool.
3. Make sure whatever container you use allows smaller animals to escape. Placing sticks and rocks in the container can ensure animals don't drown while drinking or bathing.
4. Dams can prove hazardous as they begin to dry out. The water's edge can quickly become muddy and sticky. By placing boards, old carpet or something similar across sticky mud areas you will provide a safe access and exit point.

This month I was fortunate enough to meet up with two groups that are tackling the same issue - Wheel Cactus. On 21 January I headed down to Tarrangower with Anthony Gallacher, Facilitator with the Loddon Plains Landcare Network. At Tarrangower we met up with members of the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group and members of the Wychitella District Landcare Group. Both groups are trying to tackle Wheel Cactus in their own district with varying levels of success. Getting the groups together to talk about their experience on what has and hasn't worked was really valuable.

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While at Tarrangower we visited one of the sites where the Cochineal beetle is being trialled as a biological control agent. It is hoped that this tiny beetle may just be one measure that can be used in an integrated control program.

Over the last few weeks some of you may have spoken with Ann-Marie, a temp from our office who has called almost all of the groups on our Landcare database in an effort to bring it up-to-date. I just wanted to thank you all for your patience and co-operation in completing this task - it is greatly appreciated!

Until next time,

Jodie Odgers

Regional Landcare Coordinator
North Central Catchment Management Authority
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Weed of the month...

Shrub

WHEEL CACTUS

Opuntia robusta



(Prickly Pear)

Description: An erect succulent cactus to 3 m tall.

Flowers: 5-8 cm wide, yellow with red streaks on the back. Fleshy base attached to upper margins of top segments. Appear anytime of year depending on season.

Stems: A series of blue/green fleshy stems which are commonly thought of as leaves. Circular, to 40 cm diameter, flat and armed with tufts of sharp spines.

Fruit: Pink/purplish, barrel shaped, 8 cm long and 4 cm across with dark red flesh.

Note: Hardy, drought resistant, can form dense thickets.

Regionally Controlled Weed

Perennial



CONTROL OPTIONS



VECTOR OF SPREAD

J F M A M J J A S O N D

News...

Successful 2013 Communities for Nature grant recipients announced

The Victorian Government has announced \$4.1 Million funding as part of its Communities for Nature program for 115 projects across Victoria over the next two years. This comprises of small grants up to \$10,000 per year and large grants ranging from \$10,001 to 150,000 per year.

More than 380 applications were received for this round of small and large grants, and the high quality of the applications reflects the significant environmental works being carried out by community groups throughout the state. The grants are targeted towards local community groups and organisations, including schools.

The Communities for Nature grants program seeks to:

- support practical community action to deliver measurable environmental outcomes;
- support community groups and volunteers undertaking works of primarily an environmental nature;
- support communities with relevant and timely information to assess priorities at the local level to determine the best returns in undertaking on-ground works.

Successful projects will address local environmental issues such as:

- Biodiversity and habitat preservation (preservation of areas known for their biodiversity and habitat values)
- Threatened species recovery
- Sustainable management of native wildlife
- Revegetation (of areas that enhance existing habitat or connectivity)
- Cleaning up waterways (creeks, wetlands, streams, rivers and seas)
- Control of weeds and pest animals

Congratulations to all of the groups in North Central Victoria who were successful in securing funding – Well done! The groups are:

- Connecting Country (\$300,000)
- Cornish Hill Committee of Management Inc. (\$49,654)
- Harcourt Valley Landcare Group Inc. (\$86,108)
- Newham & District Landcare Group (\$157,500)
- Upper Campaspe Landcare Network (\$57,800)
- Axe Creek Landcare Group (\$6,800)
- Bendigo South East College (\$10,000)
- Campaspe River and Landcare Management Group (\$10,000)
- Friends of Campbells Creek Landcare Group (\$9,950)
- Langley Primary School (\$6,030)
- Longlea and District Landcare Group (\$6,330)
- Northern Bendigo Landcare Group (\$8,200)
- Post Office Hill Action Group (\$9,240)
- Sedgwick Public Hall, Recreation & Conservation Reserve Committee of Management Inc. (\$3,800)
- Swan Hill Primary School (\$4,000)
- Tylden Landcare Group (\$20,000)
- Wattleflat Pootilla Landcare Group (\$10,862.50)

For more information about the Communities for Nature program go to:

www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/community-programs/communities-for-nature-grants

Or email the Communities for Nature team: communitiesfornature.grants@depi.vic.gov.au

Rabbit Buster Month is on again

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is again coordinating 'Rabbit Buster' month in an effort to reduce rabbit numbers on private and public land near Kerang.

Mr. John James, Manager, the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands Protection project, said the aim is to reduce rabbit populations on both the Kerang and Central Murray wetlands and adjoining farm land. "Taking this co-ordinated, targeted approach to reducing the rabbit population improves habitat quality for native fauna, protects cultural heritage sites and reduces crop and pasture losses for local farmers."

In addition, the North Central CMA is subsidising 1080 baits for the Fairley Bael Bael and Lake Charm Landcare groups to enable members to control rabbits on their own properties.

"This will complement funding that Landcare groups in the area have already secured for pest control, through the Victorian Landcare Grants. Farmers will have the opportunity to update skills in the use of chemicals that require 1080 endorsement on their Agricultural Chemical Users Permit."

Mr James highlighted that the annual fox baiting program will also be undertaken around Lake Bael Bael and the Avoca Marshes, concluding in March prior to Duck Season.

For further information contact Fairley Bael Bael and Lake Charm Landcare groups or John James at the North Central CMA on 0459 077 061.

This North Central CMA program is a partnership with private landholders, Landcare Groups, Gannawarra Shire, Indigenous land managers, Trust for Nature, Department of Primary Industries and Environment and Parks Victoria.



The Australian Government is seeking public comment on the Green Army Draft Statement of Requirements

The Green Army is an Australian Government initiative. It is a hands-on, practical, grassroots environmental action program supporting local environment and heritage conservation projects across Australia. It provides young Australians aged 17-24 with training and experience in environmental and heritage conservation through projects that generate real benefits for the Australian environment.

The Department of the Environment, with the Department of Employment, is seeking public comment on the Green Army Draft Statement of Requirements. This document sets out the design features and proposed delivery arrangements for the program.

Comments are sought from potential service providers and training organisations, potential project sponsors such as conservation groups, Indigenous groups and local councils, as well as potential participants.

This consultation process provides an opportunity for all community members to provide practical advice about the future delivery of the program including recruitment, training, project management and administration.

Feedback will help fine tune the delivery arrangements for program and will be used to inform the final content of a request for tender to be released in coming months.

Further information, including the Green Army Draft Statement of Requirements document can be found at:

www.environment.gov.au/topics/cleaner-environment/clean-land/green-army.

You can also call 1800 780 730 or email greenarmy@environment.gov.au.

Invitation to comment: draft survey guidelines for Australia's threatened orchids

Source: Department of the Environment

The Australian Government is currently seeking public comment on its draft survey guidelines for Australia's Threatened Orchids: guidelines for detecting orchids listed as 'threatened' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The public comment period closes at 5pm on **28 March 2014**.

The Australian Government's Department of the Environment has developed draft survey guidelines for Australian orchids which are listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). These survey guidelines build on and complement the information and explanations in EPBC Act Policy Statement 1.1 (Significant Impact Guidelines) to provide more specific guidance on surveying for the presence of orchid species including those listed under the EPBC Act. These will assist assessment officers to judge whether appropriate methods and sufficient effort has been given to orchid surveys presented as part of the referral process as well as provide guidance to consultants and proponents on the effort and methods that are considered adequate.

These draft guidelines have been developed in consultation with orchid experts, ecological consultants and state government representatives. The public comment period provides an opportunity for wider consultation with stakeholders. Feedback is welcomed on all aspects of the guidelines and all comments received will be considered in the finalisation of this document.

Comments may be submitted in an Excel, Word or PDF format.

Comments can be submitted by:

Email: speciespolicy@environment.gov.au

Mail: The Director
Species Information and Policy Section
GPO Box 787
Canberra, ACT, 2601



Injured wildlife require special care

Article featured in AgScene 23 January 2014

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) is reminding people who find injured wildlife to contact an authorised wildlife carer.

DEPI Senior Compliance Officer Brady Childs said officers recently collected a joey from an unauthorised person near Bendigo.

It was assessed then handed over to a licensed wildlife shelter.

“Inappropriate care by members of the public, who think they are doing the right thing, can significantly decrease an animal’s chance of recovery,” Mr Childs said.

“In some cases, even if the animal recovers from the initial injury or illness, it may have developed behaviours that mean it cannot be released back into the wild.



An orphaned wombat. Photo: AgScene.

“Wildlife has specialised handling, dietary and housing requirements and cannot be treated in the same way as domestic pets or livestock.

“To give injured wildlife the best chance of survival and release back into the wild, it is vital they receive the right treatment and handling and they are kept in an appropriate environment.

“There are volunteer wildlife shelter operators and carers that have been registered and licensed by DEPI across the Loddon Mallee region.

www.depi.vic.gov.au

“These people have completed training courses and have proven experience in the care and rehabilitation of native wildlife.

“If you find a sick, injured or orphaned native animal, it should be transferred into expert care as soon as possible.”

Under the *Wildlife Act* (1975) the unlawful possession of protected wildlife can result in a maximum fine of \$7218 and/or six months’ imprisonment.

If you find a sick or injured native animal please call DEPI on 136 186 or RACV Wildlife Connect on 13 11 11.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council: Nest box program

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is interested in hearing from Landcare and Friends Groups who may be interested in installing and monitoring nest boxes in relevant reserves.

If interested in participating, please email William on wterry@mrc.vic.gov.au.

Australia Day honours for one of North Central Victoria’s newest groups!

Friends of Smeaton and the community of Smeaton were recognised by the Hepburn Shire Council at their Australia Day celebrations. They received Australia Day honours for the 175th Anniversary Celebration that they held in 2013. The ‘Back to Smeaton’ weekend was a fantastic event and it is terrific that all those involved have been recognised for their tremendous effort – well done!



Snaps of the month!

I returned to work after the Christmas break to an email from Brian Rebbechi with this great pic attached. Brian had read the December edition of the newsletter which featured an article titled 'Watch out! Turtles about'. The article talked about the turtles in the Gunbower Forest and how they are on the move over the summer months because it's breeding season.

Brian found this Common Long-Necked Turtle on the road that leads into the Welshmans Reef Caravan Park. Recognising the turtle he stopped and moved it off the road out of harm's way. Great work Brian!



This second snap was taken by North Central CMA's Bree Bisset at McDonalds Swamp this month. It is great to see a pair of Brolga's making themselves at home and taking advantage of the environmental water being provided to the swamp.

The Brolga (*Grus rubicunda*) is a light-grey coloured crane, standing about 1.8 metres tall. It has a long, straight bill, long dark coloured legs and a wing span of about two metres. Their appearance changes with age. Immature birds (up to 10 months of age) have a grey, fully feathered head while juveniles (11 to 22 months) gradually lose their head feathering and attain a pale orange-red head colouring.

The Brolga is an omnivore, utilising a diverse range of food items on a seasonal basis. They eat vegetable material, amphibians, sometimes small fish and a wide range of invertebrates, including freshwater molluscs, crustaceans and insects.

Brolgas breed between July to December and pairs bond for life. Pairs have been known to utilise the same nesting areas for up to 20 years (source: www.bird.net.au).



McDonalds Swamp was dry before receiving a fill. The swamp has received 30 megalitres (ML) a day from 30 September to 28 November. A top up was delivered between 5 December and 19 December to return the wetland to target level. To date a total of 1,420 ML has been delivered. Currently the wetland is now drawing down and is likely to be dry again in the coming weeks.

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



Hello everyone,

Welcome back, there are a lot of activities on the agenda for 2014. I particularly am looking forward to another great year of monitoring with our community water quality monitors and getting wet with our River Detectives students. I am also looking forward to engaging community members in a range of very exciting upcoming events including; A breakfast with the Birds, a wetlands tour, A waterbird forum, Salinity snapshot across Victoria, Platypus mapping in the Campaspe River and Water Quality training events.

A quick update - North Central Waterwatch currently supports 58 community water quality monitors who monitor 108 sites across the region. In 2013 a couple of our monitors decided to move on from the program, however, we have some very keen new members eager to get set up and monitoring this year. You will hear all about them over the coming months. There are nine primary schools participating in the River Detectives program engaging over 810 students in water quality monitoring, salinity investigations and macroinvertebrate studies throughout the year. I am also looking forward to the Annual Water Science Forum focusing on: waterbirds' and the release of North Central Waterwatch - Waterbirds Field Guide.

Enjoy the read, and I hope to see you at some of the upcoming events being held across the region in 2014.

Until next time,

Cass Davis

Regional Waterwatch Coordinator
North Central Catchment Management Authority
PO Box 18 Huntly, VIC 3551
Phone: 03 5448 7124

Waterwatch - A short film

Over the past couple of months I have been working with Apex Imagery's - Julian Fischer. Julian and I have been working hard, pulling out all the stops, to produce a short film highlighting the Waterwatch program and what it means to those involved! The film delves into the history of Waterwatch, but importantly explores the opportunities it provides to individuals who participate in the program across the North Central Region. It tells a story of the community's experience with monitoring, the drought and the floods and changes in their local waterways. I believe it is important to share these messages and I am looking forward to seeing the final cut over the next few days! Watch this space, as it will be coming to a computer screen near you! Very soon!

I'd also like to thank everyone who has been involved in the making of the film, both in front of the camera and behind the scenes. A lot of work has gone into the film and it wouldn't have been possible without your dedication, passion and enthusiasm.

Things to look out for in February!

- Frogs calling - especially the Growling Grass Frog
- Platypus swimming
- Quality Assurance and Quality Control results from 2013 (Community Water Quality Monitoring Network)
- Black Water and Blue Green Algae events
- Environmental watering events near your local waterway

World Wetland Day Bus Tour Postponed...

Due to the extremely warm weather forecast for Sunday 2 February the North Central CMA's bus tour exploring how to integrate wetland conservation with agriculture has been postponed. When a new date is determined we will let you all know!

Events

Macedon Ranges Sustainable Living Festival

The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group (MRSRG) is a local organisation intent on promoting solutions to the environmental challenges we face and each year MRSRG showcases products, services, skills and attitudes from the local area at its annual Sustainable Living Festival.

On Saturday 8 February, the 5th annual Sustainable Living Festival will be held in the Woodend Neighbourhood House Garden, 47 Forest St. Woodend from 10:00 am til 4:00 pm.

Ralf Thesing, MRSRG President, said: "the festival is a welcoming and informative event for all the family. It allows residents of the Macedon Ranges to engage with community groups and organisations and to hear from experts about environmental and social issues associated with modern living."

According to Festival Co-ordinator Alastair Fleming the 2014 event will be bigger and better than ever.

"There will again be more than fifty exhibitors, showing products for renewable energy, energy efficiency and green building practices. There will also be information on recycling, local consumption and ethical purchasing and the ever popular MRSRG permaculture garden will be open for inspection" Alastair said.

"There will also be talks and presentations and workshops on a variety of subjects to help motivate and inform visitors to what can be done at home to grow a healthy and sustainable local economy."

As in other years there will be lots of supervised activities for young children and a new live music format to showcase local talent.

The music and great food in the garden setting provides for a relaxed and enjoyable ambience. Entry is just \$5 per person, with children under 16 free of charge.

The Festival complements an ever increasing range of energy, food and education initiatives being developed through community participation.

The farmers market, Movies that Matter, and the development of renewable energy projects provide scope for new members to get involved.

You can find more information at www.mrsgonline.org.au.

Come along with the family, have fun and be informed.

For all enquiries contact Alastair Fleming on 0412 178 408.

The Mt Pleasant Creek Catchment Landcare Group Annual General Meeting

The Mt Pleasant Creek Catchment Landcare Group AGM will be held at the Toolleen Recreation Reserve on Tuesday, 18 February 2014 at 7:30 pm.

Following the AGM guest speaker Phil Dyson will present to the group. Phil is a hydrogeologist and geomorphologist who will give a presentation on the evolution of the Mt Camel Range and explain how it formed and how the soil developed.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Supper will be provided. For catering purposes please RSVP to landcare@toolleen.vic.au or phone Jan Webster on 03 5433 6333 by Friday 14 February.



Farm Tree and Landcare Association 2014 Annual Forum and AGM

The FTLA Committee of Management invites you to the 2014 Annual Forum and AGM to be held on Wednesday, 26 February at Marland House, Level 16, 570 Bourke St, Melbourne.

Invited speakers will include:

- 2013 Heather Mitchell Fellow, Anthony Dufty presenting on Analog Forestry
- Lisette Mills from Basalt to Bay Landcare Network presenting on the group's Native Shelterbelt project.

When: Wednesday 26 February 2014

Time: 10:00 – 4:00 pm

Where: 24 Collins St, Melbourne VIC 3000

RSVP by calling 03 9207 5527 or email ftla@vff.org.au

For more information, please see the event flyer on the Victorian Landcare Gateway - www.landcarevic.net.au/ftla/events/ftla-annual-forum-and-agm.

Ian Lunt to Talk on Natural Regeneration

Regenerating bush on old farmland is a common sight around central Victoria and according to popular ecologist and author Ian Lunt “it’s the biggest positive change for conservation in south-east Australia”.

Ian will be giving a free talk for Connecting Country at the Newstead Community Centre on the topic of natural regeneration in central Victoria - why it’s happening and what the impact of it might be on the environment.

Ian is an Associate Professor in the School of Environmental Sciences at Charles Sturt University, Albury, and the author of popular online blog Vegetation Ecology for Southern Australia (www.ianluntecology.com). He has been described as “one of the best ecological storytellers going around” and has made appearances on ABC TV’s Catalyst and Landline programs to talk about his research. He’s also co-authored the book ‘Plains Wandering: Exploring the Grassy Plains of South-Eastern Australia’.

The talk is part of Connecting Country’s Improve Biodiversity on Your Property Education Program 2014. It should be especially interesting to landholders who are trying to re-establish native plants and wildlife on their properties.

When: Sunday 2 March 2014

Time: 4:00 pm onwards

Where: Newstead Community Centre

Please RSVP for catering to max@connectingcountry.org.au or phone 03 5472 1594.

Ian’s presentation will be followed by a BBQ dinner to celebrate the start of the 2014 Education Program.

This event is part of the Connecting Landscapes across the Mount Alexander Region project, supported through funding from the Australian Government’s Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund.

2014 Future Farming Expo

The 2014 Future Farming Expo will provide farmers with both new ideas and the latest information on farm management. Hear from a range of expert speakers and view practical demonstrations including visual soil assessments, measuring and utilising soil moisture, optimising animal health and crucial techniques involved in finishing livestock. Regular Weekly Times columnist and farm business consultant, Mike Stephens, will be presenting on the future of Australian agriculture and the keys to farm business success.

When: Thursday 6 March 2014

Time: 8.30 am – 4.30 pm (including lunch)

Where: Central Goldfields Community Hub, 48 Burns St, Maryborough.

What to bring: Hat, sunscreen and a soil sample from your own property.

RSVP is essential so please contact the North Central by email info@nccma.vic.gov.au or phone 03 5448 7124.

On-Farm Composting Field Day

Learn how to undertake on-farm composting to improve crop yield and pasture productivity. This free field day includes:

Declan McDonald (Soils Specialist, DEPI) discussing the compost making process, suitable components and potential benefits.

Slobodan Vujovic (Compost Victoria) and Matt Stanelos (Veolia) presenting on emerging markets for recycled organic compost and composting processes explained.

A visit to a local farm trialling compost production and use will follow the presentations at the Yarrawalla Hall.

When: Thursday 13 March 2014

Time: 9.30am-3pm (including lunch)

Where: Yarrawalla Hall, Yarrawalla South Road, Yarrawalla.

What to bring: Hat and sunscreen.

RSVP is essential so please contact the North Central by email info@nccma.vic.gov.au or phone 03 5448 7124.

Courses and resources

New Eyes on Nature - Introduction to Environmental Photography & Photopoint Monitoring

Photography is a powerful tool for capturing the wonders and curiosities of nature, but also for recording environmental change over time.

This workshop introduces participants to the principles of camera operation and photographic technique for photographing environmental subjects including systematically documenting environmental change through the method known as Photopoint Monitoring.

It will explore both the art and science of effectively visualising and communicating environmental issues and eco-stories. Post-photography image management including metadata and workflow protocols will also be discussed. The workshop includes an interactive and illustrated theoretical component followed by a field trip to put principles into practice.

Presented by Ecologist & Environmental Photographer, Alison Pouliot; along with Swiss Press & Cultural History photographer, Valérie Chételat.

When: Saturday 5 April 2014

Time: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Where: Woodend Neighbourhood House, 47 Forest Street, Woodend.

Cost: \$85

Bookings: 03 5427 1845 or reception@woodendnh.org.au

Further Info: alison@alisonpouliot.com

Autumn Fungi Workshops and Seminars

Discover the curiosities and delights of the fungi kingdom this autumn through a variety of seminars, workshops and forays.



The forests, woodlands, grasslands and other Victorian environments are home to a huge diversity of fungi. How do fungi underpin terrestrial ecosystems and how is their conservation important to that of all biodiversity?

Learn about the significance and ecology of fungi, how to identify local species and more!

Further workshops and more detailed information can be found at www.alisonpouliot.com.

Website has all you need to know about Serrated Tussock

Landholders looking for information on Serrated Tussock – one of Australia's most wanted weeds – should head to the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) website.

The website incorporates many features allowing visitors to learn about Serrated Tussock and navigate easily through different management tools.

Serrated Tussock Engagement Officer Alison Head says the website is user-friendly, with visitors able to access up-to-date best practice information.

“The website also provides information to the public about what the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party does, and the importance of community-led action when tackling Serrated Tussock,” Ms Head said.

The website includes dedicated sections to house electronic copies of research articles and the working party's educational brochures, which are available for download.

Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Chair Jim Seager said the website “provides a one-stop shop for land managers to access all the up-to-date information available on Serrated Tussock management.”

“We invite land managers, both public and private, to explore the site,” Mr Seager said.

Serrated Tussock is a weed of national significance and has been said to cause a greater reduction of pasture and grazing capacity than any other weed in Australia.

Serrated Tussock is a weed that can cause many complex issues within the communities where it occurs and requires long-term management with community involvement.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website can be found at www.serratedtussock.com

Funding

Macedon Ranges Shire Council Environmental Grants

Information about Council's 2013-14 grants program has been sent out to local Landcare and Friends Groups in the Macedon Ranges. Groups this year can apply for up to \$800 dollars to cover things like insurance, administration costs or on-ground works in local environments.

All groups should check their PO boxes to ensure that they are able to complete the application form before the due date of 28 February 2014.

For more information contact William Terry at wterry@mrsc.vic.gov.au.

Reminder: Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) Community Funding Program

A reminder that the EPA Community Funding Program is open all year round to community groups for a range of environmental projects. Applications are invited across three main categories: water, land conservation, and air.

Funding from the EPA comes from fines collected for offences in which the environment has been harmed. When a prosecution is pending, the EPA recommends to the court that the fine imposed be directed to a project on their register of environmental projects.

Project funding ranges from \$25,000 to \$100,000 dollars.

For more information read the guidelines: www.epa.vic.gov.au/-/media/Publications/1419.pdf.

