

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

SPRING 2022 Issue 85

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



LANDCARE – THE NEXT GENERATION

Love your Land attracts new volunteers

Resources for engaging with young people

Climate action unites youth



Victorian
Landcare
Program



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

SPRING 2022 ISSUE 85

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Cover photograph

Shane Carey participates in an environmental photography workshop run by Alison Pouliot for the Axe Creek Landcare Group Love Your Land event series. Photograph by Peter Weaving.



From the Minister

Many younger volunteers bring a great energy and new ideas to environmental volunteering. They also possess a strong passion for protecting our natural environment and being part of the solution. This issue highlights the ways Landcare and environmental volunteer groups and networks are turning their focus to attracting, involving and working with young people and harnessing their unique perspectives.

Young volunteers can play important roles in encouraging and supporting fellow young people to get involved in volunteering, coming from a place of shared experience and understanding of their generation. That is why it is important that the volunteering community empowers young volunteers to lead youth volunteering programs whenever possible. Member of Indigo Shire Youth for Climate Action (ISYCA) Ella Cheeseman shares her story on how she became involved in ISYCA. You can read how this group of passionate young volunteers has worked to help other young people take climate action by connecting them with different levels of government and holding a series of networking events to build their skills in addressing climate change.

To help volunteers and Landcare groups better engage with young people, another story highlights the many online resources available. The Youth Ready Guide and Youth Ready Assessment tools help groups to check how a volunteering project may appeal to young people and provide a step-by-step approach to involving them. This story also highlights the importance of creating opportunities for young people

to try out volunteering on a one-off, occasional, or short-term basis.

In terms of work experience for young people, Victoria's Regional Landcare Coordinators have established a Landcare facilitator mentoring program to support and encourage the development of Landcare facilitators, with support from DELWP. Mentee Landcare facilitators Bonnie Reeves and Kelsey Tong, and their mentors Matthew Crawley and David Tsardakis, share their experiences as mentors and mentees through the mentoring program.

You can also read about how the Wattle Flat Pootilla Landcare Group has ensured effective succession for its group with a whole of family approach that began when it formed 25 years ago. The young children of the group's foundation members who were actively involved in the group are now committee members and are involving their own young families in the group's working bees and social events.

This issue also features stories from the Gippsland, Upper Goulburn and Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare Groups, and the different ways they are each engaging people between 18-35 years in Intrepid Landcare. This includes running leadership retreats, and young people working together to organise on-ground activities that also have a strong social focus.

The Junior Landcare (online) Learning Centre is a free resource hub (developed by Landcare Australia) of dynamic, hands-on learning activities that has been

developed by education professionals to involve children of all ages in caring for their local environment. The resources are linked to the school curriculum and have been designed to encourage children's curiosity and provide them with positive experiences in the environment.

The Victorian Government is providing \$381,000 in 2022 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants for 110 projects that provide young Victorians in our schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, and Scouts and Girl Guides groups with opportunities to participate in biodiversity focused on-ground projects and/or learning activities. Through the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants, we are also funding 498 applications from Landcare and environmental volunteer groups, for a total of \$3.22 million for Project Grants and Group Support Grants.

Young people are the future leaders of our community. By providing more opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in Landcare and environmental volunteer groups, we not only ensure their succession, but also the renewal and reimagining of the environmental volunteer sector.

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy
Minister for Environment and Climate Action
Minister for Solar Homes



Reader survey – have your say

It's time for a new survey of Landcare magazine readers.

We are keen to learn more about our readers and get feedback on how the magazine can better meet the needs of the Landcare and environmental volunteering community.

Your suggestions on the themes for each issue and on specific stories and topics help us to plan future issues.

Please take a few minutes to tell us what you think of the Landcare magazine.

This simple, quick online reader survey is open until **Friday 9 December 2022**.

Email landcare.magazine@delwp.vic.gov.au with **SURVEY** in the subject line to receive a link to the survey in the reply.

Youth power – practical online resources for engaging with young people

By Jess Marshall and John Robinson

Creating space and opportunities for young people to get active in Landcare and environmental volunteer groups is critical for the renewal and reimagining of the sector. Young people bring new voices, experiences and approaches. They can add depth and value to groups' existing skills and ideas and provide opportunities for intergenerational knowledge sharing and learning.

The 2018 *Victorians Volunteering for Nature: Environmental Volunteering Plan* identified the need to support all Victorians to engage in acting for nature. It also acknowledged that environmental volunteers tend to be older than in the wider volunteering sector, and that environmental volunteer groups find it hard to recruit younger volunteers.

The plan recognised the need to create volunteering opportunities that appeal to young people, and to explore clear pathways for the employment of young people in the environment sector, such as university and workplace transition opportunities. It also identified the growing appetite for more event-based, spontaneous, and short-term opportunities.

Young people prefer shorter-term commitments

In 2020 DELWP commissioned social research, including an online survey of

1 000 people, to learn more about the drivers and barriers Victorians face when engaging in environmental volunteering.

One of the social research streams focused on people aged from 15 to 29, and those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who were open to the idea of doing environmental volunteering but weren't already actively involved. The findings revealed that the strongest barrier to participation was a fear of committing to volunteering on an ongoing basis, rather than a lack of time.

Forty-five per cent of young people surveyed didn't want to make an ongoing commitment. This highlights the importance of creating opportunities for young people to try out volunteering on a one-off, occasional, or short-term basis.

Words matter

The social research also showed that messaging to attract young people has the

biggest impact when it addresses people individually and emphasises the care factor for the environment. Young people respond to the idea that every action can make a difference and that they can be part of the solution.

Different messaging, language and communication channels are required to encourage and attract new volunteers who have not previously been involved in environmental volunteering. Messaging needs to be tailored for the target audience, be short and sharp, use simple language, and include how participation in an activity will have tangible benefits for our environment.

Another key finding of the research was that as a sector we could be louder and more coordinated in drawing people's attention to the need for volunteers. Among young people, 43 per cent had not really thought about getting involved.

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Survey identifies a growing appetite for more event-based, spontaneous, and short-term opportunities.

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Corangamite CMA citizen scientists Matt Daniels and Wendy Noble joined Dr Kavitha Chinathamby (centre) an aquatic scientist at RMIT, to find out more about pesticides in sediment and water samples collected from Barongarook Creek, Colac.



Reiko Yamada (left) Port Phillip EcoCentre Diversity Equity and Inclusion Project Manager, with Chenxin Tu Multicultural Bay Ambassador, at a pest sea star cull coordinated by Earthcare St Kilda.

Partnerships produce valuable resources

DELWP is keen to facilitate more opportunities for youth-led and inclusive projects in the Landcare and environmental volunteering sector. This includes encouraging bold new ways of engaging them. DELWP's approach has included partnering with peak bodies, supporting them with strategic funding, and including more young voices in the development of government policy.

In 2021 DELWP's Environmental Volunteering Team partnered with Volunteering Victoria and the Youth Affairs Council Victoria, to develop an online Youth Ready Guide and *Youth Ready Assessment* tool to assist organisations with increasing participation from volunteers from their teens to twenties.

These two resources help you to check how a project may appeal to young people and provide a step-by-step approach to involving them. This includes working with young people on project design, the importance of effective messaging and how to be welcoming and inclusive.

A recent collaboration between Parks Victoria and Scouts Victoria delivered an online *Into Nature Citizen Science Toolkit* to engage young people and help them participate in people powered research for biodiversity as well as taking action through a targeted Big Scouting Bioblitz. The toolkit provides practical ways, tips, and templates

for young citizen scientists to record observations on plant and animal species in our parks and reserves.

Parks Victoria's Youth Volunteering for Nature Fund seeks to empower Victorians aged 18 - 29 to create innovative answers to the challenges facing Victoria's natural environment. The fund looks for young people to have their say in what innovative project ideas they can champion for environmental volunteering, that will have a positive impact on Victoria's environment, historic and/or Aboriginal cultural heritage values, and encourage more young people to volunteer for nature.

The time is now for the next generation

Climate change and Australia's biodiversity crisis poses some of the biggest threats to our collective future and it is young people who will be most affected. More than ever, young people have a significant stake in protecting our natural environment and being active citizens in caring for nature.

Environmental volunteering can encourage active nature stewardship and connect young people with each other, so they understand the power of their collective voice. Being involved in on-ground environmental action is being part of the solution and it is healthy and hopeful. To get involved seek out volunteering opportunities with the Landcare and environmental volunteer groups in your local area.



Messaging to attract young people has the biggest impact when it addresses people individually and emphasises the care factor for the environment.



Jess Marshall and John Robinson work at DELWP in the Environment and Community Programs Branch. For more information email environmental.volunteering@delwp.vic.gov.au or landcare@delwp.vic.gov.au



Turn the Tide volunteers at Phillip Island.



We held information stalls at local markets and placed flyers around towns to promote Intrepid Landcare in the community.



Intrepid Landcarers enjoying a social get-together while walking to Wilhelmina Falls in the Murrindindi Scenic Reserve in January 2021.

Bringing Intrepid Landcare to the Upper Goulburn

By Jess Robinson and Annette Cavanagh

Intrepid Landcare is a platform for people from their late teens to thirties to come together and create the change they want to see in the world.

It combines Landcare activities with social events to engage young people with the environment while connecting them with other like-minded people.

We were introduced to the concept of Intrepid Landcare in 2018 through an Intrepid Landcare Leadership Retreat and then embarked on starting a group in Murrindindi Shire and the surrounding Upper Goulburn area. There was a visible lack of young people in our local Landcare groups, so we were prepared for this to be challenging.

We held information stalls at local markets and placed flyers around towns to promote Intrepid Landcare in the community. We held our first expression of interest get-together in June 2019 and were delighted to attract a group of eight passionate young people who were keen to make a difference while also having fun.

Since then, we have hosted multiple events throughout the region that have combined Landcare activities and adventure. These included planting days, bonfires, social days at the snow, weed removal, fauna surveys, hiking, rubbish collection and documentary and movie nights.

One of our biggest challenges was keeping our group engaged during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Social media helped us to stay connected and we ran an online scavenger event during one of the lockdowns so that we could keep having fun with each other while isolated.

Four teams of people were given a week to tick items off the scavenger list. Some items were simple, some silly and others required a bit of imagination, but all were intended to get us out into nature and to share some fun. Some of the items on the list included finding four wildflowers, making someone smile, and tracking your walk or run route to spell out intrepid. The level of participation was great and there was lots of energy and enthusiasm.

We've been able to run several in-person events now the restrictions have eased and have welcomed some new faces to the group. It is an inspiring and supportive group to be a part of, and it has been very personally fulfilling for us to help connect young people with each other and our local environment.



Keen Intrepid Landcarers helping to remove box elder suckers along the Yea River in November 2020.

According to Bernadette Young, every person she's met through the group feels like a friend.

"I've loved how genuine and welcoming everyone has been. It's been great to meet people who share the attitude of giving and receiving, not just wanting to put your own wants first. A highlight was sharing burritos in a cabin near Marysville before tackling a holly invasion the next morning," Bernadette said.

Jess Robinson and Annette Cavanagh are co-leaders Upper Goulburn Intrepid Landcare Group. For more information email uppergoulburnil@gmail.com

Families are the backbone of Wattle Flat Pootilla group

By Anthony Murphy

Wattle Flat Pootilla Landcare Group is celebrating its 20-year anniversary. Our group started in 2002 when some neighbours came together wanting to have a positive impact on the local environment.

We cover public land, urban blocks, acreages and farms around Brown Hill, Glen Park, Wattle Flat, Pootilla and Dean in the area between Creswick and Ballarat. From the earliest days, the group encouraged whole of family participation.

Babies and children are regular attendees at group events and planting days. Many youngsters love to help get the plants into the ground, others take pride in being the 'official' forestry tube collectors at planting days. While work can be slower, all members help in keeping children safe and involved and we delight in their gleeful squeals as they splash in muddy puddles and leap over creeks.

When new families move into the area, neighbours will encourage them to join the Landcare group as a way of connecting with the local community. It builds a sense of belonging and pride that we love to share with our children.

Nine-year-old Carys from Wattle Flat said, "I like doing Landcare work. It feels like we are helping the creatures and animals on

the land, and I like how we get together with our neighbours to have a barbecue at the end."

Andrew and Sue Martin were on the founding committee of the group and involved their three daughters Emma, then nine, Kate, then seven, and Leah, then five, in all of the activities. Andrew's father, David, was also an active member in the early days. David was the head chef at the group's planting events until he passed away in 2021.

The three Martin girls grew up in Landcare and have stayed involved even after they moved away from the family property.

The next generation is now helping to keep the group going. Emma brings her two children James aged four, and Bella aged one to working bees and events. Kate joined the committee in 2016 and was president in 2018-19. To our great delight, Kate recently announced our youngest ever member had joined the group – her first baby is due at the end of the year.



Four generations of the Martin family: Andrew holding a photo of his father David and his daughter Kate holding a photo of her recent baby scan.

According to Kate, Landcare isn't just about environmental outcomes.

"For us, it's a big family group who put just as much time and effort into building a strong community. The group has supported and encouraged me to follow my passion in the environment and I value every minute I spend with them because of it," Kate said.

We look forward to seeing the latest batch of junior members at the helm of the group in another 20 years.

Anthony Murphy is President of Wattle Flat Pootilla Landcare Group. For more information email wfplcg@gmail.com



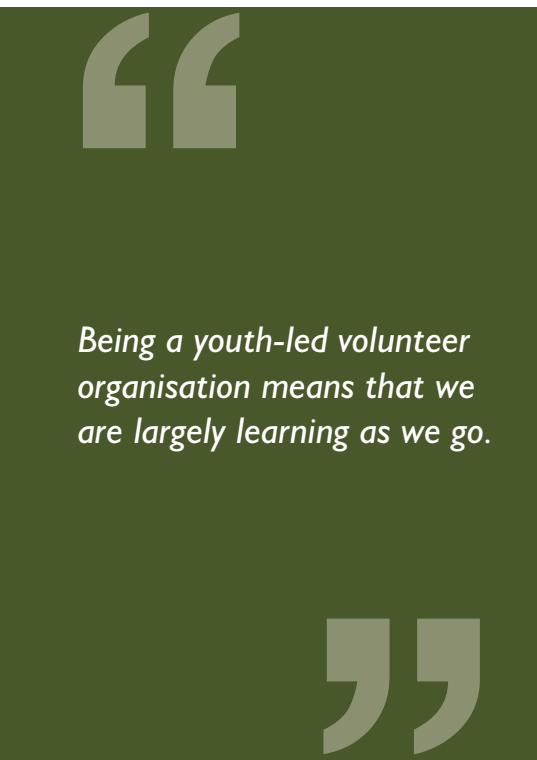
Young Alban was in charge of forestry tubes collection at a Fellmongers Creek planting in 2019.



Participants in the North East Youth Climate Summit in 2021 presenting their action plans to members of the community.

Climate action unites youth in Indigo Shire By Ella Cheeseman

Indigo Shire Youth for Climate Action (ISYCA) was formed in 2020 by a group of passionate young people from the area who wanted to provide feedback on the Indigo Shire Council’s draft Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan, and to have a voice on issues close to our hearts.



Being a youth-led volunteer organisation means that we are largely learning as we go.

We ran a series of consultations with young people around the shire and from these discussions made our recommendations to the council. These recommendations, including mandating more youth and First Nations consultation in climate decision-making, and supporting a Youth Climate Summit, were integrated into the final plan.

ISYCA has grown to be a small team of young people, mostly in our 20s, who were born locally. Although many of the team members have now moved away from the area to pursue university studies and careers, our projects and initiatives have enabled us to maintain a strong connection to our community.

The team has worked to help young people connect with government at various levels and to engage with young people in a series of events building their skills to address climate change.

We provide opportunities for young people to share their own ideas and concerns, and to share regular information and sustainability ideas with young people through our social media and communication network.

Our first major project was the North East Climate Series. These were virtual events for young people on government engagement, climate communications, policy and electoral processes, and climate change and mental health.

Our biggest project has been the 2021 North East Youth Climate Summit, which we ran in partnership with Indigo, Alpine, Wangaratta and Shepparton Shire Councils and with support from DELWP and OzGREEN. We had about 30 participants aged 12 to 30 from across the region, including students from Rutherglen, Wangaratta, Beechworth, Shepparton, Wodonga, and Mt Beauty. The summit



The first day of the Indigo Shire Youth Climate Summit included a brainstorming session where we moved around talking about what climate change can look like in the real world and for different people.

allowed the young people to share their concerns and experiences, collaborate to create a vision for the future of our community, learn how to be agents for change, and develop their own action plans to create this change. We have continued to support many of these groups to implement their plans this year.

The biggest difficulty we face at ISYCA is engaging with the community and young people on the ground. Although we are active on social media, having most of our team living out of the region makes it hard to run in-person events, which in turn means that gathering a community of passionate young people in Indigo Shire is challenging. We make sure to keep our Facebook and Instagram pages as active as possible. Every Monday we try to post a meat-free recipe to encourage our community to try to eat sustainability and reduce meat consumption. This is one way that we directly engage with the community when we cannot be in the Indigo Shire to run events in person.

Being a youth-led volunteer organisation means that we are largely learning as we go, and juggling ISYCA with our other commitments is not always easy. Despite these challenges, we are committed to

educating and empowering young people in the region to act on climate change at the grassroots level.

I got involved with ISYCA after I attended ISYCA's Youth and Politics event, which was a panel discussion with members of different levels of government. The event really sparked my passion for leadership and sustainability. I left the event feeling inspired and wanting to make change in the Indigo Shire, so I got in contact with ISYCA. I think it is really important for young people to get involved in communities that they feel passionate about in order to be the change they want to see.

My experience in ISYCA has taught me that there are plenty of young people that want to be involved, but often are not sure how to go about it. It is important for Landcare groups and networks to make a space for young people by outlining exactly how to get involved and ensuring that potential young members would be valued and listened to. We have plenty to say, but we just want to be listened to!

Ella Cheeseman is a member of ISYCA. For more information email isyca.info@gmail.com



Ella Cheeseman in Canberra where she manages her involvement with Indigo Shire Youth for Climate Action while studying at university.

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It is important for Landcare groups and networks to make a space for young people by outlining exactly how to get involved and ensuring that potential young members would be valued and listened to.
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Mentoring supports new Landcare facilitators to achieve their goals

Victoria's Regional Landcare Coordinators, with support from DELWP, have established a mentoring program to support and encourage the development of Landcare facilitators. Caring for Landcarers is a structured mentoring program where mentor and mentee pairs meet and work together on an agreed goal.

Bonnie Reeves, a new Agricultural Landcare Facilitator with the Maffra and Districts Landcare Network is partnered as a mentee with mentor David Tsardakis, an experienced Landcare Facilitator for the Lower Werribee and Little River Catchments.

David: "It was a fresh, wet, Melbourne winter morning for our first mentor program meeting. I walked to the venue, the Melbourne Museum, through the Carlton Gardens with my mind racing.

The event kicked off with a beautiful smoking ceremony, which made me feel welcome and my nervous thoughts melted away.

Once I was introduced to Bonnie we went and sat in the forest gallery and were in awe of the giant tree ferns. We soon found out that we shared a similar connection to the land. We both have a passion for the environment and a strong desire to inform

and educate the wider community to help them protect and enhance their natural environment.

Bonnie's holistic approach combined with her bubbly nature is a breath of fresh air. She instantly put me at ease. Bonnie's understanding of the environment and her approach is really energising. It made me reflect on how we can get overly caught up with the science, procedure, and processes of what we do.

This is a two-way process. What I've learnt from Bonnie so far is to take a step back. It's OK to look at broader issues outside the normal procedures and by doing this the problem at hand will become clearer. Watch out for Bonnie as she is going to be such a positive force in Landcare for many years to come."

Bonnie: "I'm still quite new to my Landcare Facilitator role and I was initially nervous about being a mentee. When I was paired



Bonnie Reeves on the family farm in Boisdale, central Gippsland.

with David, I thought we'd have little in common because he's from the big smoke and I'm from rural Gippsland. But I quickly learnt that I'd been too quick to judge, and I couldn't have been more wrong.

David and I had many similarities, not just in our work settings, but in our beliefs and in the demographic challenges in both of our areas.

I was so inspired to learn what David has achieved and also to hear about his challenges with being a Landcare Facilitator. This gave me a confidence and a clearer picture of how I can be successful in my role.

David and I regularly arrange Zoom and phone catch ups to discuss our challenges, achievements, and interests. We plan to visit each other's area in the future, which will be a great skill building experience. I'm keen to learn about the different demographics in his patch and visit his projects.

David's life is totally immersed in the environment. As well as being a Landcare Facilitator he works with native plants and is a volunteer leader. I am so grateful for my mentor relationship with David. He has a wealth of knowledge that I know I can learn from and apply to my own work in Landcare."



David Tsardakis on a five-day paddle down the Lower Glenelg River.



Kelsey Tong at Boolarra watching the installation of nest boxes for the Greater Glider Project.

Kelsey Tong, a young Landcare Facilitator with the Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network is partnered with mentor Matthew Crawley, Program Manager at the Bellarine Catchment Network.

Kelsey: "I walked into the room nervous about who my mentor who would be but Matt's beaming smile from across the room instantly put me at ease. We bonded over chats about hiking adventures and our families. Both of us have lived by the coast and have a strong connection to nature. It was clear we were going to get on really well.

The goal for our mentorship program was to plan for me to approach one of the local councils in my network to get them more involved in Landcare in the region. This has been a daunting task for me, so I was hugely relieved that Matt felt it was a strong and achievable goal. I feel I can be open and honest with Matt about my challenges – for example improving my skills at stakeholder engagement and time management – and feel no judgement in expressing myself.

We've only met a few times to chat about our mentoring goal, but I can already see the wealth of knowledge and experience that Matt has to share and I'm excited to learn as much as I can. Getting to know Matt's story of working in Landcare, or similar organisations over the years, gives me hope that I could be on such a rich and fulfilling career path."

Matt: "I hadn't met Kelsey before we were paired up at the workshop. We got to know each other by sharing our interests and hobbies. I'd brought a photo of hiking and Kelsey one of her dog. Before long we were swapping stories of various hikes, ski touring and Kelsey's love of Tasmania and nature. It felt like we were off to a good start. Then we got stuck into the specific work and why we had applied for the program. I learnt about Kelsey's recent experiences and previous employment. Then we discussed her current role, challenges, and areas for improvement.

For two people who had just met we were remarkably candid in our discussions. I guess that was the whole idea. We were both there for a purpose, to get as much out of the program and therefore we needed to be honest.

I instantly liked Kelsey and her approach to the challenge. She applied to become an even better Landcare facilitator, to service her community, network and the environment. Her approach was positive, and I liked the way she looked for improvements and solutions, rather than focusing of the negatives.

In many ways Kelsey reminded me of myself at a similar age. Her passion and commitment to Landcare was familiar and exciting. I can't wait to see how our time together unfolds."



In many ways Kelsey reminded me of myself at a similar age. Her passion and commitment to Landcare was familiar and exciting.



Matthew Crawley at Cunningham Pier in Corio Bay installing Caring For Our Bays bin wraps.

For more information on the Caring for Landcarers mentoring program email Regional Landcare Coordinators Barry Kennedy at barry.kennedy@melbournewater.com.au or Carolyn Cameron at ccameron@egcma.com.au

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Teachers at the school saw it as a wonderful socialisation experience as well as an opportunity to foster healthy outdoor activity and wellbeing among the students.

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Moorabool Landcare Network's Landcare Facilitator Roger MacRaild with students from Bacchus Marsh Grammar.

Grants for Junior Landcare projects promote local partnerships *By Angela Snowdon*

The 2021 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants provided opportunities for school students and youth group members to connect with Landcare and nature. More than 1800 adult volunteers or group members participated in projects and inspired the next generation of Landcarers to care for their local environment, through knowledge sharing and activities such as plant identification, nest box creation, and planting.

The 111 projects funded in 2021 collectively planted more than 20,000 indigenous plants to create and improve habitat for native flora and fauna.

The 2022 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants is the fifth year of this grants program, which is funded by DELWP and administered by Landcare Australia as part of its national Junior Landcare program.

The grants were open to Victorian schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, Scouts and Girl Guides, and youth groups.

The more than 11,000 students and young people who participated in projects funded through the 2021 grants improved their local environments through on-ground works, and experienced the social and emotional benefits of volunteering.

A group of year 9 and 10 environmental science students from Bacchus Marsh Grammar planted over 500 plants as part of their 2021 grants project. The project extended the students' knowledge of the importance of habitat restoration and provided them with practical revegetation experience and a connection to Landcare.

Moorabool Landcare Network's Landcare Facilitator Roger MacRaild assisted with the planning and planting phase of the project. His practical knowledge ensured the new plants had the best chance of survival and he was available for students to ask him questions along the way.

St Mary MacKillop Primary School in Bannockburn 2021 grants project included working with the Friends of Bannockburn Reserve to enhance habitat at the reserve. The students participated in weed identification, weeding, mulching, and planting. They also improved tadpole habitat through rainwater reclamation.

The collaboration between the school and the community group introduced students to the notion of voluntary environmental work. Teachers at the school saw it as a wonderful socialisation experience as well as an opportunity to foster healthy outdoor



Stuart McCallum from Friends of Bannockburn Reserve demonstrates tree planting skills to students from St Mary MacKillop Primary School.

activity and wellbeing among the students.

Grade 5 student Matilda, said she loved being able to help the local community. "It was amazing how a group of grade fives can change a little tadpole's life and make the natural habitat even better."

Ongoing opportunities for engagement between schools, students and Landcare or community groups can be found year round on the online Junior Landcare Calendar of Environmental days at www.juniorlandcare.org.au/events

Angela Snowdon is Environmental Grants and Volunteering Program Manager at Landcare Australia. For more information email angela.snowdon@landcareaustralia.com.au

Online learning activities to inspire Junior Landcarers

By Esther Etkin

The Junior Landcare online Learning Centre is a free resource hub of dynamic, hands-on learning activities developed by education professionals to involve children of all ages in caring for their local environment.

The resources can be used by teachers and educators, parents and carers, youth groups and Landcare groups. They are designed to spark curiosity, link to the school curriculum, and create positive experiences.

The learning activities focus on four key areas: food production, First Nations perspectives, waste management and biodiversity. Each learning activity includes a narrative featuring Suyin, the biodiversity champion; Amir, the waste management warrior; Beth, the food production ambassador; and Jarrah, Junior Landcare's Indigenous perspectives leader. These Junior Landcare characters help children to navigate through the activities and create formative memories.

From creating a wildlife habitat to understanding water sustainability; from making a wicking bed to growing healthy plants using natural pesticides, the learning activities all come with step-by-step instructions with background information including seasonal notes (when best to carry out the activity) and suggested age range. Videos explain why the learning activity is important before students get

started and there are educator notes and printable activity sheets.

The 10 curriculum-linked First Nations perspective learning activities include topics on local seasons exploring First Nations weather, creating an Indigenous plant use garden, and whose Country, exploring First Nations peoples languages map. Developed with First Nations educator, Wiradjuri man Adam Shipp, the activities assist educators in the classroom when teaching First Nations perspectives, but are also useful for caregivers and children to learn more about how they can have a connection to Country.

All the activities aim to inspire curious minds and include suggestions for extension activities, reference lists for further information and a did-you-know section with useful facts to stimulate discussion.

An online Educator Hub has been developed to help educators and Landcare groups to get the most out of the Junior Landcare Learning Centre. There are many targeted resources including project planning tips and First Nations perspectives language guidelines.



And for those rainy days, school holidays or to provide a fun challenge for independent learning in any setting, the just for kids section offers printable sheets including frog dot-to-dots, soil word challenges and how to make your own seedling pots. The Junior Landcare online Learning Centre is supported by Woolworths.

Esther Etkin is Communications and Public Relations Manager at Landcare Australia. To visit the Junior Landcare Online Learning Centre go to www.juniorlandcare.org.au



Designed for all age groups, the Junior Landcare Learning Centre activities make it easy to bring Landcare into the home, community, or classroom.



Making seedling pots is a popular activity. A printable instruction sheet is available at the Junior Landcare online Resource Centre.

My story of working on Country

By Annalise Varker

I was born in Bendigo and have been living and working here my whole life. My favourite thing to do is just being on Country and spending time walking around the bush. Every time I'm out on Country I feel safe and positive about myself.



Annalise Varker testing water from waterways around Bendigo for salinity.

I've always been an outside sort of person and didn't enjoy being in the classroom. Being on Country is always different. From the reason we are out, to being in a new environment and often meeting new people, there has never been a day the same while being on Country.

In 2019 when I was in year 11 and skipping classes and not really going to school, the opportunity to join the Indigenous School Based Trainee Program came up. What I loved about this program was that I was able to complete school, work at the same time, and be out on Country with the Elders and community members.

Trainee program builds friendships and connections

Once I was placed at the North Central CMA, I was really focused on keeping the traineeship. It meant I only had to go to school four days a week. I spent every Tuesday at the CMA learning about horticulture and natural resource management. I learnt so much about how important the CMA is and what their role

is in the environment and how they work in partnership with other organisations.

I got to work with Chase Norfolk, another student in the Indigenous School Based Trainee program. We were at the CMA together, and I can definitely let you know that no Tuesdays were the same when Chase and I were around. We also caught up with other students in the program. The big take away for me was to learn that I wasn't the only one struggling in school and that I could still be passionate about my culture and want to learn more and to take up opportunities. I didn't feel alone or isolated. I felt safe with the people I was around.

A special day for Elders

One of the absolute best experiences was when I worked with the other trainees, Chase Norfolk and Ruby Norman, a trainee with Parks Victoria, to organise a special event for our Elders. Elders Day was a way of us meeting and learning from our Elders and showing them how much they mean to us. If there was another opportunity, I would do this again for sure.



What I loved about this program was that I was able to complete school, work at the same time and be out on Country with the Elders and community members.



Annalise Varker standing under the shade cloth at a wetland revegetation day at Reed Bed Swamp in May 2021. "The soil was very hard clay so digging was a pain in the behind. We were very happy to complete the job at the end of the day. We had two Traditional Owners out in the field giving us a hand."



Annalise Varker at Bendigo Creek collecting a sample for water quality testing.

I went on to work at the North Central CMA as a Water for Country Support Officer.

I helped the CMA be more efficient and organised when it came to holding Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba Steering Committee meetings. I also helped the CMA get on track with streamlining processes and have had positive feedback from the Traditional Owners.

In 2021 I got into a La Trobe University course for my Certificate IV in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management that I was able to complete while working.

I did lots of different things at the CMA including facilitating events for kids, helping other staff with their projects and fieldwork in the Gunbower, Kerang and Swan Hill area. I prefer being out in field than be in the office. I like the vibe and energy you share with the crew. When we work with Traditional Owners you hear their sadness and their happiness. You can really hear their emotions as they are talking to you. They answer your questions and there is so much to learn.

Engaging young people in Landcare

Last year I went out with Tess Grieves, the North Central CMA Regional Landcare Coordinator, on site visits for the Victorian Landcare Grant Projects. The places we went were amazing and we got to hear about the work that might happen and to meet people that told us how much the environment had changed up until now.

It made me understand why people become passionate about the environment, getting to know all the plants

and animals, and working together to create a place where there is just peace and quiet. When all you can hear are the birds going off, the water rushing, and yourself breathing calmly, you feel at peace.

I think there are some good opportunities for involving more young people in Landcare. One of my suggestions would be to try to have a young person on your team. A young person can help get the word out, keep your message engaging, and help to make your point really clear.

Young people love social media, so you can definitely use that to your advantage. I'd also say it's good not to bore people, keep it fun and don't make everything so formal.

I would definitely encourage young people to take that first step into a career in natural resource management and see where it takes them. At first, I didn't really know exactly what I wanted to do, what I really liked, but once I took my first step in this area, it opened up so many different doors and opportunities, and you make strong connections within yourself, and with the community.

The support I've had from family, friends and co-workers has been huge and it just keeps coming. They all push me to do my best. They keep me in line as well as let me learn from my mistakes and stop me from falling too far backwards. They all keep pushing, encouraging me to continue to stand up for what I believe in.

The future – we need to do better

When I think about the future, I feel positive about the work we are doing



I think there are some good opportunities for involving more young people in Landcare. One of my suggestions would be to try to have a young person on your team.



caring for the environment, but sometimes overwhelmed because there's some really big and urgent problems we need to fix. Global warming, land degradation, the loss of our native animals, water quality and pollution are serious problems.

I know that organisations and agencies like the North Central CMA, Parks Victoria and DELWP are doing what they can, but everyone needs to be involved and it's going to take time. We need to take a stand and make changes, even if it's a small change, I don't care. Everything we do in the environment is a step towards healing Country.

For more information on the North Central CMA go to www.nccma.vic.gov.au Annalise Varker is currently undertaking a new traineeship in the Natural Reserves team at the City of Greater Bendigo Council.



Annalise Varker having fun with the youngsters at Golden Square Kindergarten during a waterbug identification session.

The social, emotional and learning benefits of bush playgroups

By Melinda Bito

Children are born with a sense of wonder and an affinity for nature. Properly cultivated, these values can mature into ecological literacy, and eventually into sustainable patterns of living. Zenobia Barlow, environmental educator.

There are many different models for bush playgroups, bush kinder and even forest school in Australia. They can run in all sorts of diverse environments including bushland, the beach, parkland, reserves and even near creeks.



It's amazing what you can discover under a strip of bark.

Some sessions are run informally by groups of parents, keen for their children to spend more time in nature. However, at facilitated bush programs, children attend a slightly more structured program that is led by a trained facilitator.

As the children eagerly arrive at bush playgroup each week, the facilitator greets them and gently invites them to investigate the activities they have prepared that week. There's usually a different theme that focuses on acknowledging and learning about important environmental days, significant dates for First Nations People and connecting to our place – the land, the animals, plants, and the seasons. In Victoria, we talk about the seasons of the Kulin Nation which encourages children to stop, listen, connect, and notice the changes occurring at their bush playgroup site each week.

Some weeks may involve bringing out tools or having a campfire and making damper or whittling a bow and arrow at forest school.

The freedom to take risks

There are no walls in the bush, so the children are free to explore, play and get messy and muddy. The children create, build, investigate and learn outdoors, at their own pace through hands on, experiential learning. The facilitated programs are based on values of respectful interactions, with each other and the environment. It's in this place of deep connection with the natural world that learning takes place.

Parents are keen to eliminate risk from childhood, but the philosophy of bush programs is to help children improve their confidence and develop new skills, as well as help them evaluate and navigate risk. Bush playgroups run in all types of weather. Children learn about how to stay safe around snakes in summer, while in winter they enjoy splashing in puddles and getting muddy as they discover worm and snail trails along the paths. These sorts of experiences help children to become more resilient adults.



Children learn about how to stay safe around snakes in summer, while in winter they enjoy splashing in puddles and getting muddy as they discover worm and snail trails along the paths. These sorts of experiences help children to become more resilient adults.



Bush playgroup facilitators are trained to gently introduce children to what's happening in the environment.



A bush playgroup session at Braeside Park. Parents, carers and siblings stay and participate.

I've certainly found that outdoor playgroups have had a benefit on my own mental health as well as improving my children's confidence, social skills and learning.

Nature play improves understanding of STEM

A recent Deakin University study that ran from 2015-20 found that pre-schoolers who spend time in nature-based programs, such as bush kinder, enter primary school age with a stronger understanding of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM).

The study also found children who spent time outdoors were more confident and inquisitive when exploring the natural world around them.

Tips for running outdoor programs for youngsters

There are a few important things to consider before running outdoor programs. A site needs to be found that's accessible, safe and that offers a diversity of activities in nature.

The agencies that oversee the park or reserve must approve it to be used for a bush playgroup program. It can take many months to apply for and finalise permits. It's important to work with local rangers and councils, so they are engaged and on board. Most agencies are keen to support projects aimed at raising a generation of nature loving, environmentally aware children who will grow up to be advocates passionate about caring for the environment.

Learning about and acknowledging how nature play activities may impact on the environment is essential. Sometimes the activities that connect families to nature may actually harm the environment. Cubby building, rock stacking, digging and moving logs can change the ecosystem and damage flora and fauna habitat. Having an environment impact policy is critical for any bush playgroup, bush kindergarten or forest school activity.

The other important factor for getting kids outdoors is clothing. Australia is blessed with relatively mild winters. Children dressed warmly and with waterproof overalls and gumboots are ready for outdoor play in winter. In summer hats,

sunscreen, seeking shade and staying hydrated are just as important.

So, no matter what the weather is, all families can get outdoors and connect to their local parks and green spaces. By learning about the local plants and wildlife, connecting to our First Nations culture and embedding a love for the outdoors in our children they will grow up to love and care for the environment, a bit better than we have.

Melinda Bito is the founder and director of Eco Explorers – a team of early childhood, environmental professionals who develop and run nature-based bush programs for children. For more information go to www.ecoexplorers.com.au



Children are encouraged to play freely in all weathers – the right clothing is important.



Young Somers resident Amy Henson is the founder of the Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare Group.

Valuing young people on the Mornington Peninsula

By Chantal Morton

It is no secret that Landcare volunteers traditionally come from an older demographic of landowners and retirees. Involving more young people in Landcare is vital for many reasons, including the longevity of the Landcare movement.

Younger volunteers bring energy and enthusiasm as well as a high level of concern about the environment – and they want to be part of the solution.

The Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network (MPLN) recognises that involving young people in Landcare will help its member groups to achieve their environmental goals now and into the future and is committed to including them in its many projects.

Partnerships are critical

This has mainly been achieved through active partnerships with local youth groups, scouts and guides, and primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions. MPLN works with schools on biolink, planting days, weed control in reserves and State parks, and fauna monitoring programs. We make sure the activities are age and skill appropriate and that they complement the curriculum.

Exposing younger students to the natural environment can offer a sense of purpose and hope in the face of environmental challenge and crises. Witnessing the sheer delight of a child seeing a kangaroo in the bush for the very first time is wonderful.

Older students can make a real contribution to Landcare projects. In May this year, a group of year 8 students from Balcombe Grammar cleared more than 500 square metres of sallow wattle from Arthurs Seat State Park in just one hour.

According to Mark Fancett, President of the Sheepwash Creek Catchment Landcare Group, their interest was reflected in the many questions that were asked.

“It was great to see the enthusiasm of the students. With Landcare dominated by older participants it was pleasing to see the passion in the next generation,” Mark said.

MPLN also works with TAFE students to provide them with opportunities to develop real world skills that align with training outcomes while building networks to assist them in their goal of working in the environmental sector.

Certificates of participation recognise effort

It is important that young volunteers are valued and recognised for their efforts. MPLN issues each young participant with a certificate of participation, thanking them for their contribution to their local environment.

When working with young people it is essential that they are safe, and that the legal obligations of maintaining Child Safe Standards are met. As a bare minimum MPLN requires that all Landcare supervisors at youth events hold current Working with Children Checks and that photo consent has been obtained prior to any media releases.

Intrepid Landcare group fills a gap

In 2021, with a small amount of seed funding for insurance purposes and Landcare facilitator support, we formed a new Intrepid Landcare Group for people between 20 and 30 years of age from the Mornington Peninsula.

The group’s founder, Amy Henson, grew up on the peninsula.

“We spent countless summers hiking through national parks, surfing at our clean beaches, and mimicking the calls of our colourful bird life. We live in paradise, and we want to help protect that. Volunteers

and community are the backbone of environmental protection, so we want to help support the next generation of environmental warriors,” Amy said.

Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare Group has also launched a series of educational workshops in partnership with Parks Victoria. The Coolart Conversations series has helped increase community knowledge of environmental issues while simultaneously reconnecting people with nature.

The group is working on a funding application to support a next generation project to up skill its members through a series of practical bushland training sessions. If successful, the participants will work alongside an experienced bushland restoration specialist to learn plant identification, sensitive weed control techniques, and nest box ethics and monitoring.

Chantal Morton is Landcare Facilitator at MPLN. Her position is funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email chantal.morton@mornpen.vic.gov.au

For more information on the Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare Group go to www.mplandcare.org.au



Members of the Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare Group at a working bee at Devilbend Reservoir in March 2022.

Drone technology attracts young people to Landcare

By Henry Marszalek



Technology is having an increasing impact on our lives. Some of this is welcome as it helps us to do more, save time and money and have fun. The South West Goulburn Landcare Network (SWGLN) hatched the idea of acquiring a drone after a demonstration field day held in 2021.

SWGLN consists of six central Victorian Landcare groups in the upper catchment of the Goulburn River south of Seymour. One of our network groups, Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare Group, had been successful in securing funding for a drone project to spray blackberry along Sunday Creek. SWGLN organised the drone demonstration field day so members, local landowners, and natural resource management agency representatives could see this new technology in action.

The drone we have purchased will be used as one of the many tools at our disposal in our war on weeds. It is a dedicated spray drone with a 10-litre capacity that can spray up to eight hectares a day. This type of drone is very accurate as it uses GPS technology and meets Australia's strict standards in spraying. The cost of the drone and associated equipment was \$25,000 so it's a significant investment.

The drone will improve landowner safety as they won't need to scramble up steep slopes or through thick undergrowth to treat weeds. In areas where there may be large weed infestations the drone will be able to access the entire growth area which would otherwise be totally inaccessible for land-based equipment.



From left, Will Nguyen, Matthew Giannarelli and Lachlan Thompson from Assumption College Kilmore are keen to get some real life field experience using the drone.

Real-life field experience for young drone pilots

According to Paul Fleming, a long-time member of Glenaroua Landcare Group the drone will make weed control safer and more effective.

"The drone is also a way of getting more young people involved in Landcare. As in many rural areas we are faced with an ageing population. We are on the northern edge of Melbourne and being peri-urban this presents a great opportunity with young couples and families moving out of suburbia into a rural or semi-rural area."

SWGLN has established a collaborative partnership with local schools to provide real life field experience in the use of drone technology. Assumption College Kilmore runs a Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) course for students from Assumption College and surrounding secondary colleges, who are studying the Certificate III in Aviation (Remote Pilot) in their senior secondary school years. This course provides students with the education and legal licensing requirements to become drone operators.

SWGLN, Assumption College Kilmore (ACK) and an agricultural drone company, Field Master Systems, will work together to provide students with enhanced drone operating skills.

Sam Hubbard from ACK said he was really excited that students would be able

to gain hands-on experience of using an agricultural drone out in the field in a real work situation. Students who have begun working with the drone were impressed by its capabilities and how advanced the technology is.

In order to make full use of the drone SWGLN members will need training to obtain their remote pilot licence, a requirement of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority. Members who achieve their licence will then provide a number of days on a voluntary basis to assist students and members of other Landcare groups and networks in our region.

As well as helping to educate students about technology and Landcare the SWGLN drone will also be used to promote the use of technology in other Landcare networks and in the rural sector more broadly.

SWGLN acknowledges Australian drone agents C.R. Kennedy who donated the drone, and Field Master Systems, a company of pilots and aeronautical engineers specialising in weed spraying by drone who donated their time to mentor Landcare members in achieving their remote pilot licence.

Henry Marszalek is treasurer of SWGLN. For more information email Sonia Sharkey@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au



From left, John Davison from Field Master Systems, Jacqui Fulton President of Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare Group, Jeff Bethell from C.R. Kennedy and Sonia Sharkey SWGLN Landcare Facilitator at the hand over of the drone.



People's motivations for engaging with the Axe Creek Landcare Group varied, but the one thing they all expressed was their love for nature.



From left, Florence Smith, Billy Knight, and Audrey Smith in the Sedgwick Forest for a Love Your Land event.

Axe Creek attracts new volunteers with Love Your Land events

By Kristie Smith

Volunteer numbers are declining – this is the early finding of an analysis conducted by Volunteering Australia and the Australian National University in May 2022. The findings confirm what many Landcare groups are experiencing – that volunteers have become even harder to engage since COVID-19.

Despite this, Axe Creek Landcare Group is having its busiest time in years. The group has engaged with 200 new people so far in 2022. The new volunteers are younger and from more diverse backgrounds. People's motivations for engaging with the Axe Creek Landcare Group varied, but the one thing they all expressed was their love for nature.

Most of the audience growth came through a series of events under the title of Love Your Land. Our aim was to connect non-traditional Landcarers with the Bendigo forests through events that create a buzz in the community that leads to awareness. The events were especially targeted at women from 28 to 50 living around Bendigo and interested in hobby farming, art, nature, or health and wellbeing. We recognised that these women are often busy and would not always be able to attend regular events.

Volunteering Australia's national volunteering research provided some useful insights. We learnt that volunteers are attracted to flexible, event-based and short-term opportunities, that virtual volunteering has potential and

that environmental volunteers are often motivated to contribute when they have a personal connection to the environment.

We also conducted our own community surveys. Each time a new membership form is received we respond with a quick survey, and at the start of each event we circulated a two minute survey asking what sorts of topics participants were interested in and how they see the role of our Landcare group in their community.

Responses indicated that tree planting was popular, but education rated as being equally important. Our event program included online sessions on Indigenous cooking and conversation and building a native bee hotel; and in-person events on nature journaling, environmental photography, fungi foray, nature photography, birdwatching, watercolours in the forest, and leaf litter art.

For the online sessions we hand-delivered pre-cut bee hotel kits and mailed out cooking ingredients. All of the events were free, had minimal preparation, were on the weekend and easy to participate in.

Our target audience was most accessible through Facebook so we put effort into social media sharing and online advertising. This is cheap and allowed us to easily link-in with advertising partners.

The Indigenous cooking demonstration,



Kate Powell participates in the environmental photography workshop run by Alison Pouliot.

native bee hotel and environmental photography events were picked-up online by the National Sustainable Living Festival. Attendees registered from across the country and even from overseas.

The events were booked out almost immediately, causing greater demand than supply. By the end of the program the event releases were being watched online by hundreds of younger people and there was pressure to pre-release tickets to members only.

A future of engaged, knowledgeable and passionate volunteers is exactly what we want to create.

Kristie Smith is the Eastern Bendigo Landcare Facilitator. Her position is funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email kristie.smith@nccma.vic.gov.au

Working with children on Landcare is working for our future

By Oliver Kerr



The Southern Otway Landcare Network (SOLN) is a grassroots community organisation dedicated to protecting and restoring our environment so that we can live, work and find joy in a healthy, productive and balanced environment.

Located between the iconic Great Ocean Road and the beautiful cool temperate rainforests of the Otway Ranges, SOLN is an umbrella network for four Landcare groups extending from Wye River in the east to Lavers Hill in the west. We also support the Shrub Club Community Nursery, Otway Ocean Care, Otway Mushroom and Fungi Group, and the Southern Otway Beekeepers.

SOLN has had some recent interest from school groups who run camps in the area and were keen to undertake environmental activities as well as give back to the local community.

On Clean Up Australia Day in March, we worked with two groups of 20 students from Ballarat's Clarendon College to clean up the Apollo Bay foreshore. The students did a great job and learnt to dodge snakes and seals along the way. Some of the best finds included chairs, cricket balls, a boogie board, and plenty of underwear.

Clarendon College has an annual camp at Yuulong where groups of year 7 students

spend eight weeks doing outdoor education and environmental activities. SOLN organised to do a couple of days of environmental weed control with the students.

According to student Neha Reddy, the experience was fun, and she would love to do it again: "We were removing coast capeweed (*Arctotheca populifolia*) and there are quite a few of them along Johanna Beach. Taking them out of the sand was so satisfying. We would dig up and around the weed with gloves on to find where the root of it was. Once we found it, we would pull it out of the sand, making sure we got each little root and leaf. We carried many garbage bags that we put the weeds in to get rid of them.

"The crew from Landcare and Parks Victoria that showed and helped us around the weeds were very kind and enthusiastic about it and I think they were really appreciative of our work," Neha said.

SOLN tackled the emerging weed, fishbone fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*), with another group of students. The weed was on the boundary of Parks Victoria land and private

property. The students removed most of the infestation and we were able to have a good discussion with them about the work involved, why it was important, and how they could get involved in the future.

SOLN has also been working with local schools through the Junior Landcare and National Science Week programs doing workshops on seed collection and propagation, weather, burrowing crayfish, insects and fossils. These have all been popular and the only minor difficulty was trying to line up schedules as the schools have busy timetables.

We are looking forward to working with Clarendon College and other school groups in the future to do more weed control, tree planting, educational workshops and propagating work across the southern Otways and hopefully recruit more young people to Landcare in the future.

Oliver Kerr is Landcare Facilitator at SOLN. His position is funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information go to www.soln.org



Year 7 students from Apollo Bay P-12 College learning how to take cuttings of local native plants at the Shrub Club Community Nursery as part of the college's Junior Landcare program.



The students removed most of the infestation and we were able to have a good discussion with them about the work involved, why it was important, and how they could get involved in the future.





We developed a promotional campaign about experiencing the wilds of Gippsland to attract our participants.



Heading through the Strzelecki Forest above Trafalgar to find presence of deer and install camera traps.



Brad Blake explains the best location to install camera traps to record footage of deer.

Introducing young people to the

Gippsland Intrepid Landcare (GIL) is a group that provides opportunities for people between the ages of 18 and 40 to get involved in Landcare in Gippsland.

In 2019 GIL received funding from Agriculture Victoria to undertake a deer monitoring project. We wanted to make young people aware of how bad deer are for Gippsland's environment. We figured by getting young people out into the bush and assisting with deer monitoring we could show them how much havoc deer were causing, creating advocates for better deer control and future deer managers. We also wanted to promote the issue of deer on social media through Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

We developed a promotional campaign about experiencing the wilds of Gippsland to attract our participants. Our posters and Facebook posts used imagery and text that suggested escape, adventure, and wilderness.

The target audience was university students from Melbourne and Gippsland, so we held the events on weekdays during the university calendar. Our big

pre-COVID-19 dreams were to run three monitoring events across Gippsland during 2020 in Trafalgar, Yinnar and in Woodside. However, COVID-19 restrictions meant we had to cancel the Woodside event and cap the number of people who could attend the Yinnar event.

Strzelecki hike reveals red and fallow deer

Our first event was the Magic Strzelecki Foothills Rainforest Hike held in February 2020. We got super lucky with perfect weather to head into the misty Strzelecki rainforest to set up trail cameras to monitor deer at a private property behind Trafalgar.

Lead by the legendary Shannon Dwyer from Gippsland Water and pest and wildlife management professional Brad Blake, the 25 participants cruised over waterfalls and under massive trees ferns to see the impact feral deer are having on the bush and learn about management of deer in the area.



Looking at an area of burnt forest in Yinnar South that is often used by deer.



The 25 participants cruised over waterfalls and under massive tree ferns to see the impact feral deer are having on the bush and learn about management of deer in the area.



impact of deer

By Kathleen Brack

Some patches had been absolutely trashed by deer and the trails they had created through the bush. Participants learnt how to set up wildlife monitoring cameras and were excited about what they might record.

The hike was a great social day with lots of new friends being made including several people who had made the trip from Melbourne. As this event was before COVID-19 we were able to share lunch together – a vegan chocolate cake and a bucket of fresh-picked apples were a hit. When the wildlife monitoring cameras were retrieved a month later, we found both red deer and fallow deer at the site.

Group records sambar deer at Yinnar South

Our second event held in May 2020 was into tallest tree country – a deer monitoring day at Yinnar South. We trudged along muddy long tracks, between bursts of sun and drizzling rain to learn all about deer. COVID-19 restrictions meant the event was capped at 10 people, giving the group a great opportunity to chat and bond with one another during the day.

Experts Matt Bowler and Brad Blake again shared their stories and knowledge about

the negative impact of deer on the bush and tips on how to find them. We found lots of evidence of deer, including deer tracks and broken branches on trails in areas likely to be regular tracks for deer. We installed wildlife cameras to monitor deer so we could enter our findings into DeerScan.

GIL committee members collected the cameras in December 2020. Unfortunately, several of the cameras were stolen – we'd had to leave them out longer than intended due to lockdowns – but we still managed to capture footage of sambar deer at the site.

Despite the project being disjointed and the timelines blown out by COVID-19 the events were still a success. Ten wildlife cameras were set up (two were stolen). GIL gained two new committee members and hosted 30 young people who were introduced to five deer experts in the field. These young people are now engaged, educated and informed about the damage deer are doing to the environment.

Damage Control, a deer monitoring documentary about the project, has been produced and can be viewed on the GIL website. We have reached more than



Intrepid Landcare participants are guided by deer expert Brad Blake.

2000 people on social media with posts about the issue of deer. Stories about the events and the deer problem were featured on WIN news, ABC Gippsland and the *Sentinel Times*.

Kathleen Brack is a co-founder of Gippsland Intrepid Landcare. She now sits on the sidelines and watches the committee in action. For more information visit www.gippslandintrepid.com

Nature walks engage youngsters at local reserve

By Irene Perkin



UL Daly Nature Reserve is a four-hectare bushland reserve close to the centre of Gisborne. The reserve is named after Ulick Lord Daly, the last European owner of the land before it was transferred into the care of Macedon Ranges Shire Council. The Friends of Daly Nature Reserve acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the traditional custodians.

The reserve's natural bushland displays colourful flora, especially during spring, below a canopy of mainly acacias and eucalypts and offers beautiful views to the Macedon Ranges. The early 1900's kitchen garden features 100-year-old fruit trees, giving a glimpse into early European use of the site.

It is not uncommon to encounter kangaroos grazing in the reserve, and many locals walk the tracks, but the Friends group were keen to encourage

the younger generation to visit so they could appreciate its historic and environmental values.

We came up with the idea of organising guided nature walks for year 3 students from the nearby Gisborne Primary School.

We ran the first walk in the spring of 2018 with an average of 75 students attending. The students asked questions about moss, mushrooms, spiders, anthills and the many



Friends of Daly Nature Reserve guide students in their hunt for tiny carnivorous sundew blooms.

natural processes they were witnessing. They learned to befriend the local magpies, heard the call of the kookaburra, and observed that cockatoos are left-handed.

During the spring walks they identified many species including native orchids, lilies, acacias and eucalypts. They saw the strange fruits of cherry ballart, and the tell-tale shape of leaves on the kangaroo apple. We, the Friends group, had to answer some pretty tricky questions from the enthusiastic youngsters.

In 2021 a cool burn was conducted in Daly Nature Reserve by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's Narrap Team. The students rambled through the charred remains looking for new signs of life, which were plentiful. On another occasion they were down on their hands and knees looking closely at carnivorous sundews and spotting the insects the plants had caught.

We carry litter bags on the walks to pass on the lesson of the dangers of plastic and foil wrappers to wildlife. The children, with their keen eyes, find tiny items hidden in the grass and are delighted in filling the bags.

Our spring and autumn walks have become an established part of the school calendar and we have been fortunate in managing to avoid COVID-19 lockdowns. Our original year 3 students are now in secondary school, and we hope we have contributed in a small way towards their understanding of the environment around them.

Irene Perkin is Secretary of Friends of Daly Nature Reserve. For more information email dalynaturereserve@gmail.com



Friends of Daly Nature Reserve enjoy a recuperating tea break and chat during a recent mulching working bee.



Dr Beth Gott at a Koorie Heritage Trust exhibition in 2017, featuring 'Murnong: Yam Daisies', an artwork by Wadawurrung artist, Deanne Gilson.

A life in indigenous plants – vale Dr Beth Gott

By Cathy Olive and Bev Dick

Dr Beth Gott AM, ethnobotanist and researcher, died in Melbourne recently, a few weeks short of her 100th birthday. Beth dedicated her life to the study of Australian flora. The co-author of *Koorie Plants, Koorie People* (1992), she contributed enormously to documenting and preserving knowledge about south-eastern Australian plants and their traditional uses for medicinal, food and fibre purposes.

Held in high esteem by Aboriginal people and respectfully referred to as Auntie by many, Beth also inspired generations of botany students and land managers. During her long career teaching at Monash University, she created an Aboriginal garden of 150 native plant species, which continues as a living classroom and legacy.

Artist and horticulturist, Penny Algar, from the Strathbogie Ranges Conservation Management Network (SRCMN), first met Beth when visiting Monash University's Aboriginal garden.

"I realised Beth's comprehension of cultural plants went beyond nutrition and medicine when Beth excitedly explained that the plant they were looking at was used by Aboriginal people in children's play," Penny said.

In 2013, at age 91, Beth spoke at a bush tucker event in Euroa hosted by SRCMN and the Euroa Arboretum. The venue was full to capacity and many Aboriginal

people travelled long distances to pay their respects to Beth.

According to Dean Stewart, a proud Wemba Wemba and Wergaia man, cultural and ecological educator, and principal consultant on the Monash University's Gardens Revitalisation project, Beth contributed to a renaissance of Victorian Aboriginal culture and connections.

"For me, Beth has been the true idea of an Elder – a holder of deep knowledge and wisdom, and a holder of deep humility and honour. A great sharer of that knowledge – not a keeper. Beth worked at the intersection between academic botanical understanding and traditional First Nations knowledge – merging the two, with both being enriched and strengthened by the other.

"Beth's work helped me create the Aboriginal Heritage Walks in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne in the late 1990s, a cultural experience that still continues today. Like all the best Elders, no matter what culture, no matter what country, for those rare Elders, their legacy lives on and on, nurturing generations," Dean said.

Beth's research, in identifying the use of tubers as one of the most important food sources for Aboriginal people, brought knowledge of the Aboriginal food economy into the public eye. Biologist and researcher

Held in high esteem by Aboriginal people and respectfully referred to as Auntie by many, Beth also inspired generations of botany students and land managers.



Dr Beth Gott in the Aboriginal Garden at Monash University with Tess Holderness, who is researching Beth's life and work.

Tess Holderness sees Beth as a quiet achiever and a woman ahead of her time.

"Beth simply got on with the work she regarded as important. Just 'following her nose,' as she would say, delving into the archives and historical records, conducting field work and respectfully consulting with Aboriginal people. Describing not just the uses of the plants from a botanical perspective but also the deeper relationships between First Nations people and nature, the impact of her life's work will continue for decades to come," Tess said.

Cathy Olive is Executive Officer at the Euroa Arboretum. Bev Dick is a committee member of the Rubicon Forest Protection Group.

For more information about Beth's life and work go to www.monash.edu and search for Dr Beth Gott. Tess Holderness is keen to hear from people who have been informed, influenced or inspired by Beth's work. Please email tessholderness@gmail.com

Landcare news from across the State

Landcare Victoria Inc.

Welcome to Ana Pimenta who will be leading our Advancing Landcare Project. Co-funded by the RE Ross Charitable Trust and DELWP, the project will address the governance and management development needs of our more than 600 member groups and networks. Ana has operated a beef cattle enterprise and served as a Landcare facilitator and committee member on King Island. We are excited that she is joining the LVI team.

The consultation report that forms a foundation for the Victorian Landcare Plan is available on the LVI website. We are looking forward to a strong grassroots contribution to the planning work that lies ahead in the next few months.

LVI is keen to support the professional development of Landcare staff. We had a strong response to the recent survey seeking feedback on our planned knowledge and skills framework. Thanks to all who contributed.

For more information on LVI or to become a member visit www.lvi.org.au or (03) 9034 1940.

Corangamite

Kylie McLaren was welcomed to the role of Regional Landcare Coordinator in August.

The new Corangamite Landcare Support Plan has been published and local chairs and Landcare facilitators have been working with the CMA to develop an Annual Action Plan. We are excited to continue this collaboration, building on our existing work to enhance our communication, provide additional training and development opportunities, advocate for the work of Landcare, build resilience and undertake landscape-scale activities across the region.

For more information visit www.ccma.vic.gov.au (Get Involved/Landcare) or contact Kylie McLaren on 0455 673 537.

East Gippsland

The Landcare community welcomed the opening of the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants with groups and networks keen to undertake projects to improve the local environment and to re-engage people with their communities.

The Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator from East Gippsland hosted a dinner for women in agriculture in Lakes Entrance in September. More than 100 attendees gathered to network and learn from each other. The keynote speaker was

Frauke Bolten-Boshammer who spoke about her life in the Kimberley region of WA. The dinner was the first in a series of events featuring inspirational women.

Landcare and community natural resource management volunteer group members attended two sessions of cultural heritage awareness training in August to increase their knowledge and understanding of Gunaikurnai culture. The sessions involved presentations and field visits to places of significance.

For more information visit www.egcma.vic.gov.au (What we do/Landcare) or contact Carolyn Cameron on 0419 892 268.

Glenelg Hopkins

Landcare groups and members have been busy completing their 2021 Victorian Landcare Grants projects. Included in the outputs is fencing and revegetating over 300 hectares of indigenous plants. The CMA had a massive response to applications for the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants. It was a difficult task for the grants assessment panel with such a long list of good projects. The CMA was able to fund 20 projects.

Kristy Brewer, the Landcare Facilitator working out of Portland, successfully organised a Bush Regeneration Workshop series for Landcare facilitators and Landcare group members. The 15 participants increased their skills and knowledge on how to harvest and propagate native seeds.

For more information visit www.ghcma.vic.gov.au (Get Involved/Landcare) or contact Tony Lithgow on 0418 180 996.

Goulburn Broken

It's full steam ahead with the Victoria Landcare Grants in the region with groups either finishing off current grants or planning and applying to support projects in the 2022 grants round.

It was great to see Gecko CLaN's wild dog fencing and the river connect projects highlighted through presentations at the 2022 National Landcare Conference held in Sydney in August.

At a recent CMA Board meeting members of the network chairs groups took the opportunity to discuss the successes of community networks and areas where the partnership can continue to develop.

Over the coming months we will be delivering training for both Landcare facilitators and the community in first aid, cultural engagement and food handling

along with some targeted professional development for individual Landcare facilitators.

For more information visit www.gbcma.vic.gov.au (The Region/Community natural resource management) or contact Tony Kubeil on 0408 597 213.

Mallee

The region received good rainfall over autumn and winter, with crops starting off exceptionally well with the potential for a good harvest. However, wet conditions also bring the risk of diseases, which many farmers are currently dealing with.

Spring brought ideal breeding conditions for a number of local native animals and the often-dry Mallee has been looking quite green. It's been great to see myriad bird species scoping out tree hollows along the Murray, including the beautiful red-rumped parrots as well as the entertaining white-browed babblers.

For more information visit www.malleecma.vic.gov.au (Get involved) or contact Nelson Burand-Hicks on 0427 540 469.

North Central

The 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants assessment process is now complete. We would like to thank all the Landcare volunteers who took the time to apply. The Regional Grants Assessment Panel commended applicants on the quality of their submissions. We look forward to supporting volunteers through the delivery phase of their projects.

The 2022 National Landcare Conference was a great professional development opportunity with an excellent program of speakers and panel sessions. The hybrid event allowed for virtual and in-person delegates to participate and view the session recordings, as well as a live stream of the 2022 National Landcare Awards.

Chicks in the Sticks celebrated a decade of activity with an event on 8 October in the Spring Hill gardens of Camp David Farm. Thanks to all of the incredible women who have shaped our flagship rural women's event. The event continues to introduce new audiences to Landcare and catchment management, and showcases opportunities to get involved at an individual, property or community level.

For more information visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au (Get involved/Landcare) or contact Tess Grieves on 0438 357 874.

North East

Landcare has been an enthusiastic supporter of National Tree Day events held at the end of July. Many thousands of trees were planted in the region, and we have also partnered with other organisations, including Ambulance Victoria, to assist them in planning their own National Tree Day events.

Our Landcare groups and networks have been busy discussing, planning and submitting their applications for the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants. This year saw a record of 49 applications submitted which demonstrates the enthusiasm and dedication of the community to enhancing our biodiversity and environmental values.

Four delegates from the region attended the National Landcare Conference in Sydney during August 2022. Landcarers from across the Australia came together to share and learn about a great range of innovative projects and partnerships. The second night of the conference included the presentation of the 2022 National Landcare Awards. It was inspiring to see the contributions Landcare is making to the Australian environment and biodiversity.

For more information visit www.necma.vic.gov.au (Solutions & Resources/Landcare & community groups) or contact Richard Dalkin on 0409 683 467.

Port Phillip and Western Port

Melbourne Water has completed its administration of the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants with 28 project grants to be supported from a strong field of 45 applications. A 13-member Regional Grants Assessment Panel including partners from Parks Victoria, DELWP, LVI and Hume Council, combined with a cohort of new Melbourne Water assessors from work areas including Regional Services, Rural Land Program, Incentives, and Customer and Strategy.

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation will be facilitating another round of Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training. Landcare professionals and volunteers from across the region will also participate in a Natural Capital Accounting training day.

In November Landcare facilitators will join colleagues from East and West Gippsland



Nature sound recordist Andrew Skeoch (left) with gardening personality Costa Georgiadis were two of the exceptional speakers at the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar held at Pomonal in September 2022.

for a two-day training event. At the end of 2022 a cohort of Landcare facilitators will also complete their involvement in the first Caring for Landcarers mentoring program for Landcare facilitators that was launched in May.

For more information contact Barry Kennedy on 0447 821 559 or email barry.kennedy@melbournewater.com.au

West Gippsland

Landcare groups continue to innovate to improve land management in our region. The South Gippsland Deer Action Group has been established to facilitate the control of deer on private land. The group will get underway by focusing on Cape Liptrap and Mt Best. The group has released videos, undertaken monitoring, and released a digital resource pack.

Bass Coast Landcare Network has launched its Climate Adaptation Plan tool. The web-based tool helps farmers identify future climate impacts relevant to their enterprise and provides guidance on possible actions to help mitigate effects (see page 28 for more information.)

For more information visit wgma.vic.gov.au (Getting involved/Landcare) or contact Kathleen Brack on 0428 619 671.

Wimmera

The annual Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar returned to an in-person format after several years online. The gathering at Pomonal in early September was a sell-out. The theme of the seminar was the image of biodiversity and speakers included Costa Georgiadis from ABC's *Gardening Australia* program. It was also an opportunity to celebrate 25 years of the event. The seminar is one of the longest running events of its kind in Australia and looks like it will continue well into the future.

There is a lot of energy and enthusiasm for Landcare in the region with groups putting together a diverse mix of project ideas as part of the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants. We are excited to see new partnerships and opportunities unfold over the next 12 months.

For more information visit wcma.vic.gov.au (Get involved/Landcare) or contact Joel Boyd on 0429 949 196.

Online climate planning tool for southern Gippsland

Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) and its key partners have launched an online Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP).

The CAP tool has been designed to enable farmers to identify the climate impacts relevant for their enterprise and provide guidance for identifying specific on-farm solutions. The user-friendly tool assists land managers to develop an individual plan with the adaptation and mitigation actions needed to take the first steps towards having a climate resilient farm.

The CAP focuses on four climate drivers – temperature, wind, water, and seasonality and looks at what can be done as these drivers are changing. It is designed to encourage self-guided information collection and research. Advice on how to gather information and conduct your own research is provided along the way.

The BCLN is also planning a series of workshops in the future to help more landowners develop their own CAP.

The CAP can be accessed via the Growing Southern Gippsland website at www.growingsoutherngippsland.org.au/DevelopingMyPlan. For more information email info@basscoastlandcare.org.au



Beef cattle grazing in Hallora on multi-species pasture. Sowing a multi-species pasture crop is one of the actions in developing a climate adaptation plan for your property.

The *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management* magazine is published three times per year by the Victorian Government's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and distributed in partnership with Landcare Victoria Incorporated. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare and natural resource management among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



Mailing list enquiries and to receive your copy via email alert

Contact Landcare Victoria Incorporated
Phone: 9034 1940 Email: info@lvi.org.au

Read the magazine online

To access the *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management* magazine online as web pages since the Spring 2016 issue (#67) go to www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/
Back issues of the magazine since the Spring 1996 issue (#1) can be accessed online as pdfs.

Next issue

The next issue of the magazine, to be published in Summer 2023, will feature stories on Landcare support roles. We are interested in how Landcare and environmental volunteer groups and networks are attracting and working with Landcare facilitators, coordinators, project officers and other support roles – both professional and voluntary.

Our readers are keen to learn about the experiences of those in Landcare support roles including the successes and the challenges. The magazine fills up very quickly so please get in touch well before the contribution deadline.

Contributions to the Summer 2023 issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 25 November 2022.

Email: editorviclandcare@gmail.com

