

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NEWS

Vol: 014 AUTUMN 2014

FEATURES

Our Native Plants Illustrated
Bird and Koala Monitoring
Salt Stories



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EVENTS UPDATE

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NETWORK

Newsletter production and design is driven by volunteers on behalf of the Landcare Community. We look forward to your input.

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Deadlines

May 16, 2014 is the deadline for Winter issue contributions.

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Eucalyptus regnans by Laurie Andrews

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EXHIBITION

"Our Native Plants illustrated"
Yarram Court House Gallery
Feb 27 ~ March 25 2014
Thurs – Tuesdays 10 ~ 4pm

YARRAM URBAN LCG MEETING

Yarram Botanical Gardens
March 18 – 5pm

WOODSIDE LCG MEETING

Woodside Hall
April 16 – 8pm

ANNUAL NETWORK BBQ

Yarram Showgrounds
March 30 – 12 noon

TARRA FESTIVAL

Commercial Road Yarram
April 19 – 11am

Pictured above: A small segment from Kelly Just's entry into the 'Our Native Plants Illustrated'

Summer by the Sea

When is a jellyfish not a jellyfish? What do you call an eleven armed seastar? Does grass really flower under the sea?

These were some of the questions asked and answered at the Summer by the Sea event held at Port Albert in January. Kids, parents, grandparents, and one Network Coordinator all gathered down at Stockyard Point at low tide to walk on the mud flats and explore the seagrass meadows of Nooramunga as part of the program run by Parks Victoria and DEPI.

The event highlighted the importance of protecting this essential and much undervalued resource. It is habitat for a huge variety of creatures, as was soon discovered with a bit of exploration and the help of a few nets scooped through the mud flat. It is the nursery for many fish species and permanent home for a huge variety of other animals from seals to snails, soldier crabs to sea cucumbers.

The day helped to reinforce just



This jellyfish like object is really the egg mass of the Moon Snail (the orange shelled snail beside it).

how important our Landcare efforts are for protecting our marine and coastal environment. For example; Excluding stock from a waterway, controlling erosion on a hill or gully, and replanting



a stream bank all contribute to trapping nutrients and reducing sediment that would otherwise go down our rivers and flow out to sea, ending up smothering the seagrass.

Controlling foxes and the weeds that harbour them, reduces the predation of wading seabirds on the Ramsar listed shores of Nooramunga,

Best practice pasture management and healthy soil structure reduce the chances of nutrients and sediments moving off farm and into the waterways, which negatively impact on the growth and reproduction of fish and other marine creatures. ■

White Mangrove - Avicennia marina var. australasica



FROM THE OFFICE

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NETWORK

By Sally-Ann Henderson



Sally-Ann Says:

G'day all and welcome to Autumn. I love autumn. It is my favourite time of year, warm days and cool nights. What more could you wish for. My overriding memory of my first

autumn in Yarram was of smoke. Smoke seemed to fill the air for most of autumn and to be honest it certainly detracted from the enjoyment. However it is a vital time for burning to be undertaken. This autumn we have combined with the CFA to run a project which will explore the ecology and impacts of burns on private land to promote a healthy ecosystem. It is a great new collaboration for Yarram and we are pleased to be partnering with the CFA.

Speaking of partners we have a couple of other new projects currently underway. We are partnering with all the Landcare Networks in West Gippsland

to deliver a new project to try to "Win the war on Weeds". Expressions of interest will soon be out for landholders in priority areas to tackle weeds with a cost sharing arrangement with YYLN. A number of weed forums will be held throughout the region and a weed wall planner-sized calendar will be published so everyone has the best information available to undertake weed control at the optimum time.

Another new project we will be undertaking is to support the work of Parks Victoria who conduct fox baiting on the Ramsar protected islands of Nooramunga and Corner Inlet.

YYLN will partner with South Gippsland Landcare Network to encourage people to control foxes. The focus will be on land managers who are adjacent to the islands. The objective is to spot foxes preying on wading and nesting shore birds and to protect the biodiversity of our patch of the world.

Enjoy autumn and enjoy your newsletter. ■

Sally Ann

Lyrebird Award - Congratulations to everyone!

Yarram Yarram Landcare Network (YYLN) was awarded the Lyrebird Award for Excellence in Natural Resource Management for our Community Leadership and Environmental Outcomes.

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority run the Lyrebird awards and this year they were held in Yarragon on December 5. The awards were begun in 1995 and are held every three years. A small contingent of YYLN people including board members, staff and JARR Committee representatives were invited to be present for the ceremony.

It was a nervous wait until the winners were announced as we were nominated in very good company including the two other eventual winners, Yarragon's John Poppins and

Archie's Creek's Paul Spiers. The Lyrebird has only been awarded to one other group since its inception. We are the first Landcare network to be given the award.

This Lyrebird Award is the culmination of the efforts of everyone within the Yarram Network over many years. The work of the JARR Committee was of particular note as they were nominated separately and the two entries were combined to win the award.

In his acceptance speech, David McAninly mentioned the three things he was most proud that YYLN had achieved were

- the replacement of native vegetation after willow removal along our waterways
- the connectivity of the landscape through the protection of remnant vegetation and establishment



of corridors

- the modelling and trialling of farm practices to increase the sustainability and resilience of primary industries in our region.

So take some time to pat yourself on the back and celebrate your own contribution to our outstanding effort.

We were given a beautiful framed photograph and medal as our trophy. It is now hung with pride in the YYLN office

foyer. The photograph is of Dog Island and was chosen because it is representative of the fact that whether you are high up in the hills or on the plains, the combined efforts of everyone in our network feed into the protection of our beautiful coastline including Nooramunga and Corner Inlet. Over the coming months I will ensure that it attends your group's meeting so that you can celebrate your efforts as part of our whole. ■



By Dallas Wyatt - Bird Monitoring Program coordinator and participating landholder

Hedley/Nine Mile Creek Restoration Project Interim Report - Feb 2014

INTRODUCTION

The first phase of bird surveys to regularly monitor selected sites on two participating properties as part of the Hedley/Nine Mile Creek Restoration Project has been completed.

The two properties participating in this Bird Monitoring Program (BMP) are within the Nine Mile Creek catchment. The landholders have been funded to complete on-ground works that will lead in time to improved habitat for wildlife (see YYL News Vol13 p.5 for further background).

The main objective of the BMP is to record baseline information about the bird populations present at the selected sites with particular reference to species present (species richness) and the total number of birds present (abundance).

Also the current habitat at each site has been assessed and given a quality score (out of 20) using the Rapid Habit Assessment form. At each site the vegetation is scored for quality in a number of categories, for example, the presence or absence of large trees, canopy cover, under story species, weeds and patch size. Baseline habitat quality information will be used to monitor changes in the vegetation over time.

Of the two participating



TAWNY FROGMOUTH FAMILY - PHOTO BY SAMANTHA MONKS

properties, the bird surveys completed at Dallas & Jude Wyatt's property will be the subject of this report. This property is in the middle to upper region of the Nine Mile Creek catchment. Rainfall is 900 mm per annum and it is within the Strzelecki bioregion. Here five sites are being surveyed – three within the property and two others (a control site and

a benchmark site) are nearby, but downstream along the Nine Mile Creek. A large number of surveys have been completed at most sites (the control site was added into the program late on) over the last two years. Details of each monitored site, the number of surveys and the bird survey data in terms of species richness and bird abundance has been summarized as a table

(see Table 1) for the Wyatt's property and downstream sites.

Table 2 lists the most frequently observed birds at the five monitored sites.

DISCUSSION

The Welshpool H16 Bushland Reserve (site A) although only 4 hectares in area has the most diverse bird population with 69 species recorded over 23 surveys with an average of 24 bird species per survey. This benchmark site has a medium score (11/20) for habitat quality because it is infested with blackberry. However this site being on the Nine Mile Creek has the best patch of remnant riparian native forest in the immediate area. The 4 hectares of native vegetation is also buffered by three adjacent bush blocks (which are grazed) of similar size. Also, most of the Welshpool H16 Bushland Reserve is protected from being grazed by stock. Thus the habitat is structurally complex with tall trees, good canopy cover and a diverse under story of plants. This creates excellent habitat for many forest dependant species such as White-throated Treecreeper, Varied Sitella, Golden Whistler, Striated Thornbill, Eastern Yellow Robin, Scarlet Robin, Brown Gerygone and a number of honeyeaters. Also summer migrants such as Rufous Fantail, Satin Flycatcher, Rufous Whistler and Dusky Woodswallow are observed at this site.

Site C is the second best site for bird diversity with 63 species recorded and 20 bird species



KOOKABURRA SNACKING ON A STRZELECKI CRAY - PHOTO BY HELGA BINDER

per survey. This site is the house garden and scattered mature trees (cypress and gums) close by. This site has been included in the BMP to illustrate the importance of such locations for providing suitable habitat for birds. Small birds that require shrubs and dense patches of vegetation like Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, and Brown Thornbill are resident around the garden. Also, Grey Fantail and Grey Shrike-thrush are commonly observed birds. Other common farmland birds observed are the Australian Magpie, Red Wattlebird, Willie Wagtail, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Little Raven along with feral species like the Common Myna, Common Starling and Common Blackbird. Many honeyeaters and number of parrots and cockatoos visit

the garden. An Olive Whistler was present for a few days in May 2013.

The other three sites have lower bird diversity compared to the benchmark site and have low ratings for Habitat Quality. Wyatt's Bush Reserve (site B) has 12 bird species per survey (50% less than site A) with many of the common farmland birds mentioned above frequently observed. A pair of White-browed Scrubwren inhabits the patches of bracken fern at this site with Noisy Miner, Eastern Rosella and Grey Butcherbird being resident species. This site although having trees present was heavily grazed in the past and lacks a diverse understory of smaller trees and scrubs.

The Nine Mile Creek restoration site (site D) has had an average

of 15 bird species observed per survey (37% less than site A). The degraded habitat consists of several large old gums that have survived along the creek, clumps of blackberry (which have been sprayed), a few clumps of cumbungi (Typha sp.) and in a narrow band of remnant understory vegetation towards the eastern end. The creek has been always grazed in the past. Typically the creek flows during the wetter months, and it retains water in a small weir and in pools along its length during the summer. Surprisingly fifteen wetland species have been recorded at this site including Buff-banded Rail, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal and Chestnut Teal. Also Latham's Snipe (a migratory

wader from Eastern Siberia) has been observed along the creek with 11 individuals recorded in September 2013. A number of smaller birds such as Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill and Grey Fantail are regularly observed. Small flocks of Tree Martins arrive in August each year to breed in the old gums along the Nine Mile Creek.

Table 2 lists the most frequently recorded species at each site. The six most common birds observed over the five sites combined are: Australian Magpie, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Grey fantail and Grey Shrike-thrush.

CONCLUSION

Bird surveys will be continued at all sites over the next twelve months. The conservation works listed in Table 1 for sites B and D have been completed at the Wyatt property. Site D for example was fenced and planted with 4000 tubestock over spring 2013. The habitat on the Nine Mile Creek is already changing with long grass now dominant along the creek banks and aquatic vegetation such as Cumbungi clumps becoming reestablished along some sections of the creek bed due to the removal of stock. With baseline data for this site's bird population well established it can now be monitored for possible changes into the future. ■

The complete report, including all tables is available at the YYLN office or can be viewed or downloaded from the Binginwarri website.



AROUND THE TRAPS

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NETWORK

By our Landcare Groups

Albert River

Vale Geoff Charman



With the passing of Geoff Charman on the 16th of November 2013 Landcare lost a great friend and advocate.

Geoff grew up on a family farm and worked in a variety of occupations mostly allied to the rural community such as herd testing, the powder room at the

Leongatha milk factory, with stints at Knights Motor Garage, Dunlop Tyres, Gippsland and Northern, and Brown Holt and Hannon.

In 1988 Geoff and Pam took on the Kats Corner store in Leongatha which they ran until 1994. Geoff then worked for Tarwin Bass Water and eventually working for the West Gippsland CMA on the willow removal crew. While doing all this Geoff and Pam owned several farming properties and reared a family comprising a daughter Michelle and son Darren.

In 2006 Geoff and Pam bought a grazing property at Alberton. From here Geoff put his fencing skills to use by establishing a contracting business providing a product of excellent quality. He and Pam quickly became involved with the Albert River Landcare Group with Geoff becoming President in 2010.



Geoff and David MacAulay hard at work on a walking path.

Geoff had a friendly and cheerful disposition with a most infectious laugh and an enthusiasm for Landcare projects.

We have fond memories of Geoff who will be sadly missed by the Landcare community and our sympathies go to Pam and their family.

Members of the Albert River Landcare Group have been busy with their JARR project work. A general meeting will be scheduled shortly. ■

Woodside

Woodside members and some special members from the Merriman Creek Landcare group gathered on December 7 for our annual Christmas function. This year it was held at Wildfish at Port Albert where we all had a good opportunity to catch up with each other.

Our next meeting is scheduled to be held at the Woodside Hall on April 16 at 8pm where we will be holding a small information session for members and interested landholders regarding a new project that YYLN and CFA are launching entitled "Firescape".

This project intends to provide landholders with information and assistance to develop a burn plan for native vegetation on their properties.

In light of recent events we are hoping there will be interest aplenty. ■

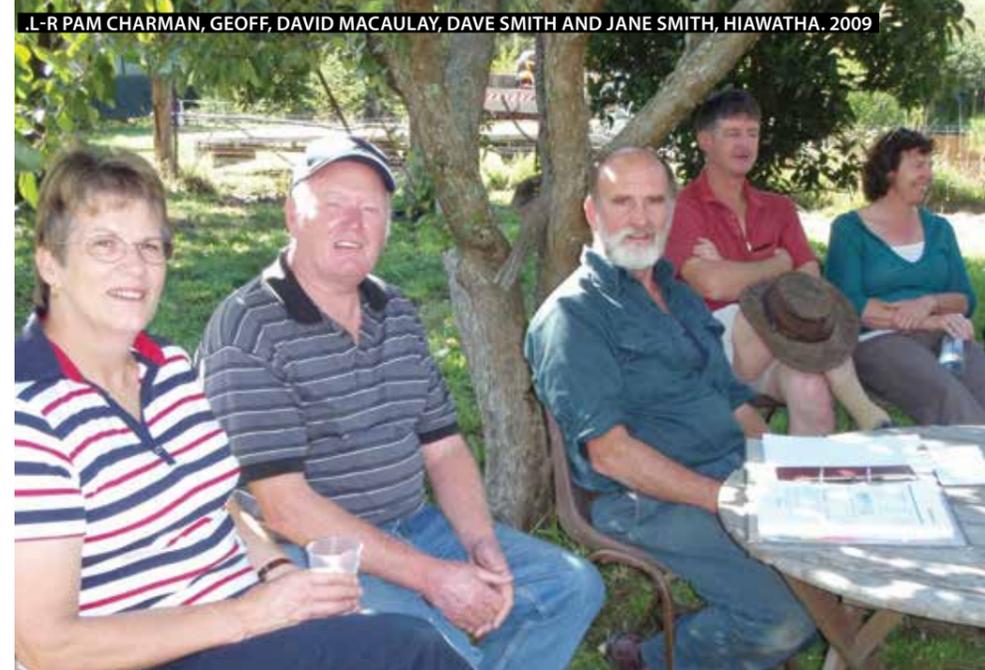
Merriman Creek

Members of the Merriman Creek Landcare Group recently met at a meeting held on March 2.

The Truck Stop opposite the Stradbroke Hall has been maintained for the past five months through the Adopt a Roadside program.

It certainly looks quite different to the eyesore it once was.

As a result litter has been greatly reduced as has the fire fuels surrounding it. Potential further works will be discussed at the next meeting. ■



AROUND THE TRAPS

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NETWORK



By our Landcare Groups

Yarram Urban Binginwarri

Come along on Tuesday March 18 and add your thoughts to how we develop the Yarram Botanic Gardens.

While this is a Yarram Urban Landcare Project and it does have \$5,000 in immediate funding, it really is a wider Landcare exercise and we would love your input.

The meeting will start at 5pm at the Yarram Botanic Gardens, next to the Nightingale Park Residential Care Home at the Eastern end of the town. We will then move nearby for a free meal and public meeting. We want to involve anyone and everyone in the Yarram community to have a say. More details will appear in the local paper and on ABC Gippsland, so keep informed and please put it in your diary. ■

Hedley/Nine Mile Creek

The Board, Staff and all the members of our Landcare community send Get Well Wishes to Maree Avery and Joan Wallis. Our thoughts are with you and we wish you both a speedy recovery. ■

The Binginwarri Group finished off a blistering year with a bit of a whimper. Our end of year break-up was only attended by eleven members but those who came along had a roaring good time! We ate good food, enjoyed great company and had a great time trying to answer the Music Trivia Quiz which Jude and Dallas Wyatt had organised bringing our old vinyl records to play for our musical accompaniment for the BBQ.

This year we again have a busy calendar with many interesting events or outings, which you will have received by the time you're reading this magazine...it was late getting out - hot weather, bushfires and editor-laziness. The Bingi Babbler editor apologises for that. Please note that members of other groups are more than welcome to attend any of our events listed but please ring or email and let us know you're coming. ■



Wonyip

On December 28 Wonyip Landcare Group landholder Cameron Stone generously opened his property for locals to inspect and enjoy his military vehicle collection. Temperatures in the high 30's made riding in Cameron's personnel carriers extra adventurous. Cameron and his fiancée Shari are both keen Landcare members and are currently undertaking extensive weed control and stock exclusion fencing on their property. Those vehicles are surely a great way to keep his tracks clear too!

Wonyip Landcare Group members Melissa Webb, Peter Webb and Ruth

Williams have regularly spent evenings up on their "top 8 acres" revegetation area, removing emerging blackberry bushes by hand. The seed bank regrowth is so dense that spot spraying is not possible, so they have developed techniques of loosening the surrounding soil with a hand held tool then teasing the roots out slowly. It sounds laborious but two people can easily remove a couple of hundred seedlings in a few relaxed hours. There's a nice view from up there so it's a great way of mixing business with pleasure. And it's incredibly rewarding to see the healthy and vigorous growth of native plants not having to compete with the blackberries. ■



RUTH WILLIAMS AND MELISSA WEBB HARD AT WORK REMOVING THOSE PESKY BLACKBERRIES





Warren the Wise



The question received this edition was from Slippery Sam who asked -

"Can you tell me what this is please Warren? I photographed it on the Ninety Mile Beach near McLoughlin's Beach after an easterly storm in June 2013."

Dear Slippery,

I was very vexed by this photo as it obviously came from a marine area - what with all that sand and the tiny little goose barnacles all over it - but just what does a wombat know about beachside finds I hear you all asking?

As it happens, I often take holidays at the beach and was there last May for a family reunion (remember all my cousins, aunts and uncles Dillie, Relly, Tollie, Kellie, Sully, Gillie, Collie, Elly, Skinny and Fatso?) Yes of course we wombats have reunions; we are more like you humans than you think we are!

So I got to thinking about this photo; marine - yes, but not necessarily of marine origin, been in the sea awhile, washing ashore at McLoughlin's, probably after a big storm,



looks fibrous like a plant-based something or other.

Hmmmm...hollow, was it always this way? Did it perhaps once contain something? Was it solid and hollowed out by some critter? A conundrum!

Hollowed out Grass-tree trunk - not likely, it has a bottom. And its insides look too even and smooth to have been chewed by any creature. What could it have contained then? No other reason I can think of to be hollow than it had something in it once. Sap, seed, or water? Sap usually flows in thin tubes so probably not that, plants don't 'save up' sap. Seed it could be but why so much of the fruit would be handed over to the purpose of just seed? So possibly not that. Which leaves

GALAHS EAT TREES!

Well Now that I have your attention, galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) don't really eat the trees, it just looks like they do!

This distant, fuzzy photo was sent to me with a query... "why do galahs do it?"

Galahs are known Australia-wide to be a destructive bird - I prefer to think of them as inquisitive, some-times leading to destructiveness. They are very playful and this can lead to what we see as harmful activities.

They eat sprouting shoots of some cereal crops, nut crops, sunflowers, they can defoliate trees and dig up roots on racetracks and sporting



ovals and chew wiring and household fittings.

Galahs are also well known to chew the bark off around their nesting hollows (just why is not so clear) as well as line the nest hollow with green eucalypt leaves,

so if there is no visible sign of a nesting hollow....

....the answer may be that they are just frustrated, would-be parents! ■

water...or...or...or some other liquid.....aha!

Some other liquid - of course! It's been staring me in the face all this time!

It's an old coconut!! Broken-topped and minus its milk, washed up on these southern shores where coconut palms do not grow. It may have come from further north in Australia where many have been planted in the past or even possibly from some exotic South Sea island, how romantic that would be!

So there you have your answer Slippery, I do believe.

Yes, dear readers, Warren is definitely part human, and a romanticist at that!! ■

Warren the Wise

Come and celebrate a year full of fun and activity at the YYLN Annual Barbeque

- Share stories with other landcarers;
- Listen to tales from the Antarctic;
- Meet people from other groups;
- Talk to Board members about any issues that concern you.

Eat, drink and be merry!



By Nicole Walsh - Project Officer - Friends of the Strzelecki Koala, South Gippsland Landcare Network

Koala Scat Collection Workshop at Woodside

On a balmy Wednesday evening in early December last year, 23 enthusiastic Woodside locals turned up at the Woodside Hall for what was to be the first of three Koala scat (poo) workshops.

The purpose of the workshop was to show volunteers how to identify and collect Koala scat from the local area for genetic analysis. These scats will be compared to samples collected from around Gippsland to see if the Koalas found in South Gippsland are genetically distinct from other Koalas found in Victoria.

As it turned out one of the local Koalas put in an appearance just a short drive away, so after participants were welcomed and introductions made, we all hopped back into our cars and headed down to where a mother Koala and her joey sat in a mature Blackwood tree, having been spotted earlier that afternoon (thanks for the tip off Graeme). After Mum Koala had obligingly dropped a few fresh scats, Nicole used the opportunity to give a talk on the biology and behaviour of Koalas. Half an hour of observing later we headed back to the hall for the two presentations of the night.

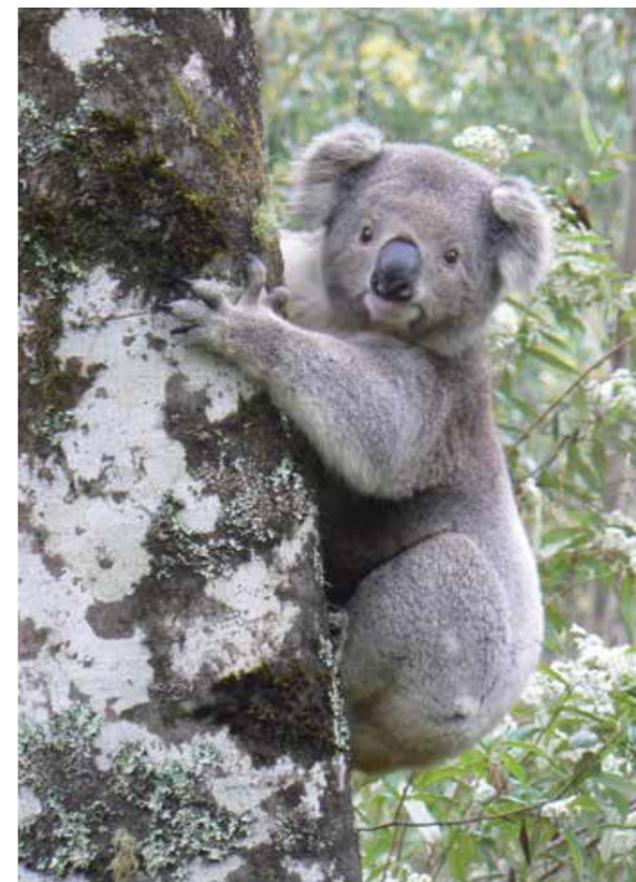
The first talk was given by Faye Wedrowicz, a PhD student at Federation University at the Churchill Campus. Faye gave some background on the history of Koalas in Victoria - how their

numbers were hammered by a combination of hunting to supply the fur trade, habitat loss and fragmentation and major bushfire events.

During the 1930's it was thought that less than 1000 Koalas remained in the state but there were reports of Koala colonies surviving in South Gippsland in places like Carrajung, Yarram and Yinnar.

Faye also outlined how Koalas from Phillip & French islands in Westernport Bay were translocated to a number of sites through-out Victoria to increase numbers. This translocation program was incredibly successful; however due to the low number of Koalas that formed the original source population from the islands, the genetic diversity of these Koalas is quite low which makes them susceptible to disease, much like what has happened to the Tasmanian Devil. Low genetic diversity may also impact on the animals' ability to adapt to climate change. In South Gippsland the original Victorian gene pool survives due to a strong remnant population and few releases of translocated Koalas from Phillip and French islands.

Faye gave a run down on how to recognise fresh scat and the correct collection method. It's very important to use toothpicks when collecting the scats as human DNA can contaminate the sample. Scats need to be stored in a well-ventilated and rigid container and the collection location recorded. Faye is keen to obtain as many scat



samples as possible. Two further workshops were held at Foster and Boolarra to recruit volunteers from these areas as well.

Nicole then followed Faye and gave a rundown on the Habitat for Life Project - Friends of the Strzelecki Koala and how Woodside locals can record their Koala sightings via www.fosk.org.au website and how to recognise typical eucalypt species that are the preferred diet of Koalas in the area, as well as other signs of Koala, apart from scat as the base of food trees, such as scratches on tree trunks (easier to see on

the smooth bark species), smell (males give off a musky smell) and vocalisation. She played some sounds clips of both male and female Koalas.

The presentations were followed by a supper of pizza and chips (not very healthy but tasty) and lots of questions for the two presenters. Koala scat collection kits were given out on the night but more kits are available from the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network Office. Scat samples can also be dropped off at the office too. Scats are best collected when fresh but can sit around for 1-2 weeks (in the kits) if you can't get into town. ■



By Libby Balderstone

Saltland Genie supports change of heart

With a coastal property located not far from the sand dunes of the Ninety Mile Beach, salinity has been a longstanding challenge for Libby Balderstone, Darriman, Victoria. Added to this challenge is a boundary that lies against the Jack Smith Lake State Game Reserve – highly valued for its biodiversity.

While initial recommendations during the early 2000s supported the establishment of tall wheatgrass as a salt-tolerant pasture option, the species has since been identified as having a high weed risk across the State. With the potential weed-infestation impacts on the State Reserve in mind, Libby and her manager Simon Baker have re-evaluated their saltland management with the financial and technical support of the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network, the former Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Victoria, Yarram Salinity Group, University of Melbourne's Mackinnon Project and the Future Farm Industries CRC SaltCap team.

"The property is situated adjacent to a wetland reserve, bordering the Ninety Mile Beach in south-east Victoria and as such we are affected by primary coastal salinity," Libby explained.

"During 2004-09, we participated in the Sustainable Grazing on Saline Lands (SGSL) project, establishing a demonstration site on our property with support from the Yarram Salinity Group and the Woodside Landcare Group.

The project aimed to demonstrate the use, and assess the viability, of a range of potential pasture species on saline land.

We established four plots – a control, two recommended salt-tolerant species mixes and a more locally-used phalaris mix – of about 2.5 ha each. During the five years of the project we measured the dry matter and dry sheep equivalent (DSE) grazing days for each plot.

key points

- Tall wheatgrass has been used to revegetate saline areas for many years, but in some regions can pose a weed risk.
- In areas where tall wheatgrass is a high-risk species, puccinellia is proving to be a suitable salt-tolerant pasture option.

farm info.

Farmers: Libby Balderstone (Owner)
Simon Baker (Assistant Property Manager)
Location: Warrigal Creek, Darriman, Victoria
Property size: 1580 ha
Average annual rainfall: 580 mm
Soil types: Mostly sandy loam over clay and coffee rock
Enterprise: Fine wool, beef, prime lamb and irrigated lucerne



Concerned about the weed risk posed by tall wheatgrass, Libby Balderstone (pictured above in tall wheatgrass-based pasture) combined local experience and Saltland Genie SaltCap decision tools to find a suitable alternative

Of the two salt-tolerant mixes recommended by the DPI at the time (2005), one contained a tall wheatgrass/clover mix and the other a tall wheatgrass/summer-active tall fescue/clover mix.

I must admit I had seen tall wheatgrass established in the Corangamite area, and also at Strathfieldsaye near Stratford, and knew it would cope with our conditions and probably thrive.

However, shortly after we established the trial plot I learnt by both experience and wider reading how quickly it could spread. We saw evidence of it moving out of the plots in no time.

This concern grew, and towards the end of the SGSL project Nick Edwards from the CRC became involved. With ongoing support from Samantha Monks from the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network and Nick Dudley from the former DPI Victoria (now Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI)),

we investigated our options for removal of the tall wheatgrass and revegetation with less aggressive species. Lisa Warn, Agricultural Consultant for the Mackinnon Project, analysed soil test results and provided advice on pasture species selection and sowing rates.

While the other species in the trial plots were working well within their own niches, the phalaris was terrific on the higher bank, and the fescue going well on heavier country – we still needed a solution for the more salty areas.

The first step was to tackle the eradication of the tall wheatgrass, which was no easy feat as my manager Simon will attest. And more recently we have adjusted the fencing and layout of the area where the four original plots were located.

We have now fenced off the saltiest 4 ha area based on soil and vegetation type, and the remainder of the original project area will be absorbed back into the two neighbouring



Nadia Bazihizina from the University of Western Australia measures the groundwater levels under the original tall wheatgrass-fescue pasture

paddocks once the resown pastures are established."

Removal and revegetation

Assistant Property Manager Simon Baker hails from South Australia where tall wheatgrass remains a popular tool for managing salinity and poses less of a weed-risk in a different environment. While Simon remains enthusiastic about the species, he has been vigilant in his approach to removal and revegetation.

"I have to admit I'm at odds with Libby and Nick – we love tall wheatgrass in SA, it grows anywhere, stock love it and it is hardy under challenging conditions," Simon explained.

"However, in this situation, where it poses a weed risk we have had to come up with a more manageable alternative.

Basically we want to return the trial plots to pasture matching the paddocks on each side – one side is phalaris-based, the other is fescue-based. The phalaris-based pasture is concentrated on the higher ground and the fescue-based pasture on the heavier ground.

Both existing pastures are doing well and fit into our overall grazing rotation.

We have re-fenced the trial plots pretty much to foliage and soil type – the salt scald is several inches lower than the other areas.

The tall wheatgrass has needed to be hit several times to get an effective kill (once at 6 L Roundup/ha plus Pulse and a year later at 5 L/ha plus Pulse) and we have gone back and spot sprayed to try and get on top of rogue tall wheatgrass plants.

Eradicating the tall wheatgrass has taken a couple of years, which we were prepared for. We don't get a lot of production off that particular country anyway, and we have crash grazed the area after spraying, so it hasn't greatly affected our overall production.

Even when the new pastures are established we will need to keep managing these regenerating tall wheatgrass plants by spot spraying, including in a fenced off drainage line planted with trees, shrubs and groundcover, which was part of the original project area.

We have re-sown the salt scald area to puccinellia (*Puccinellia ciliata*) at 20 kg/ha and strawberry clover at 1 kg/ha, and after a delay due to heavy rain, we have sown the other two areas to a Siroso phalaris/clover mix and Flecha Max tall fescue/clover mix matching their adjoining paddocks.

As with tall wheatgrass, puccinellia is a species commonly used in SA to manage salt-affected country. It grows in water-logged salty country and gives you fairly good protein and energy where nothing (not even tall wheatgrass) will survive. It will remain alive completely submerged for up to three months. The sheep and cattle love it.

In saying that, the puccinellia is particular about where it grows – it's very specific to salt scald. In terms of management it requires rotational grazing along similar lines to lucerne – you can't graze puccinellia right down to the crown. You must be able to see a little tuft of growth of plant.

There are no particular establishment tricks – just pour it on – you don't want it any more than five millimetres maximum seed depth.

In SA we used to broadcast with a super spreader and harrow it in. The best time to sow is during February, if you do get any rain you have lowest risk of germination from any other plants, reducing competition during establishment.

Now it is just a matter of time to see how the new pastures will emerge across the plots. We know we will have to keep an eye out for tall wheatgrass for some time to come, but hopefully we have the mix right now to maintain good groundcover and enhance productivity on this marginal land, without the weed risk." 🌱

contact

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Puccinella (left) has successfully replaced tall wheatgrass (right) in a salt-affected landscape without posing a weed risk to the surrounding environment





...continued from previous page

science behind the story

By Nick Dudley, DEPI, Victoria

Libby Balderstone and Simon Baker are a fantastic example of learning about salinity from local and interstate experts – and by trial and error; with the latter often being the best teacher. While the initial recommendations for their saline site back in 2004 were appropriate with the information available at the time, in hindsight and with experience, they would probably not have planted this particular species – and nor would Saltland Genie recommend tall wheatgrass (*Lophopyrum ponticum*) for this area.

This hindsight comes from both personal experience, with Libby identifying the weed risk of planting this species in a water course and in close proximity to wetland areas, such as Jack Smith Lake, and a formal weed risk assessment* carried out by the FFI CRC and former DPI Victoria during 2008-09. This weed risk assessment revealed tall wheatgrass to be a "very high" risk for Victoria. As a result the species is no longer included in research projects or promoted for use on saline grazing across these regions.

On a positive note, the outcome is that Libby and Simon have demonstrated it is possible to eliminate tall wheatgrass from a site and establish a less invasive – yet productive – species, by using a combination of local experience and Saltland Genie decision tools.

This site was classed as Salinity Class 3 with an EC_e of 8-16 deci seimens per metre, meaning few pasture species could potentially survive under

these conditions. The team conducted a saltland capability (SaltCap) study of the site, noting ground cover and species present, the EC_e (soil salinity) at a range of soil depths and soil pH changes through depth. There was a groundwater observation bore, which showed an EC_e of 8000 and depth to surface of less than 0.5m. The site is located in a recharge area and the water table had risen by about 0.5-1m since the drought broke during March 2009. The site was also subject to intermediate waterlogging.

Using this information and the Saltland Genie's 'Genie's Advice' decision tools Libby, Simon and I agreed the best replacement option was puccinellia (*Puccinellia ciliata*). This species tolerates salinity and waterlogging better than tall wheatgrass and does not pose the same weed risk.

Libby and Simon sourced seed from Echuca and South Australia and the paddock was sown as described by Libby and Simon.

While puccinellia may not be as successful across all salted-affected sites, due to the harsh environment usually found in these areas, the approach we took with Libby and Simon is the important lesson. It is not uncommon for saline sites to require aggressive plants such as tall wheatgrass in order to make a difference, but this always needs to be tempered by environmental considerations, particularly with species such as tall wheat grass.

* Part of Future Farm Industries CRC's mission in promoting the use of perennials to improve productivity and sustainability within broadacre agriculture in southern Australia is to raise awareness in

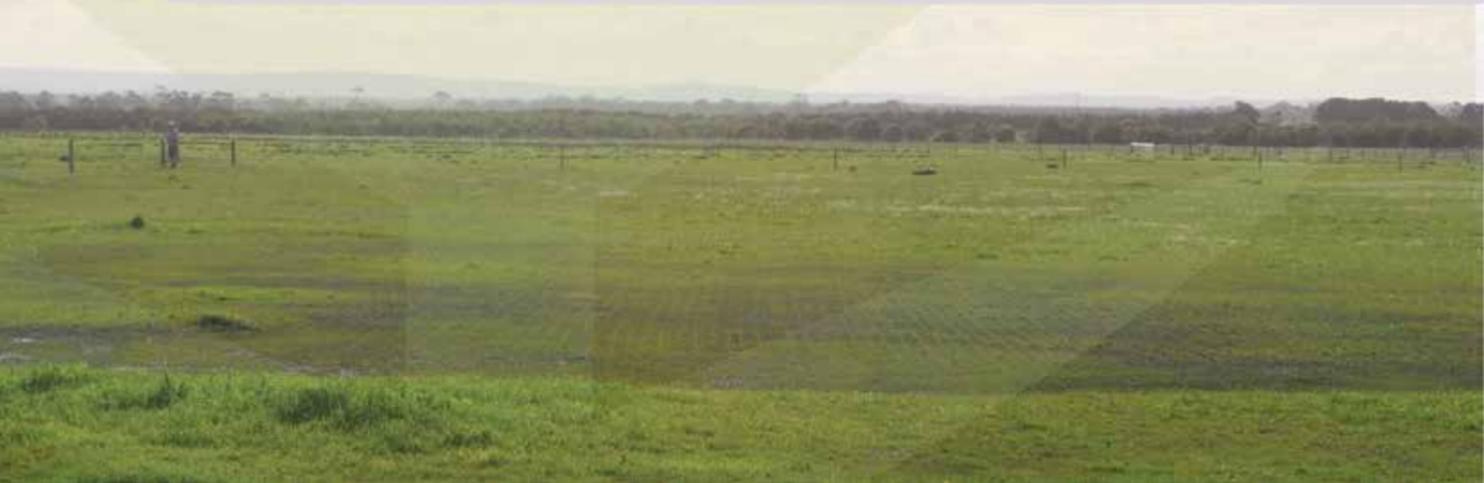
potential adopters of the opportunities and risks they pose. One such risk is weediness. The CRC has adopted an Environmental Weed Risk Assessment (EWRA) protocol that guides its decisions on species for field assessment and field site management. The EWRA protocol assists potential adopters in making informed decisions about a perennial's suitability to a particular locality. Accordingly Tall Wheat Grass is now not recommended for use in Victoria or Tasmania, should not be placed in areas close to waterways and should not be left ungrazed so it can set seed.

More information about the potential weed risk of a range of pasture species can be found on the CRC's website: <http://www.futurefarmonline.com.au/about/weedrisk.htm>

Nick Dudley is the team leader for Meat and Wool Services with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Victoria.

contact

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By Bronwyn Johnson

Our Native Flora Illustrated

I love our local flora. I love looking at it, walking amongst it, taking photos and running my fingers through its seed. But let's be honest, some of it is quite modest and manages to go about life largely unnoticed by those wrapped up in their busy-ness.

Placing these plants at eye level in exquisite artistic detail brings them into focus. Suddenly, what was under our feet or way above our heads and easily ignored, is captivatingly in our faces and hard to walk past. So, I've been really happy to be involved in instigating and co-ordinating an exhibition of botanical illustration being held at the Courthouse Gallery in Yarram over March.

The artworks will be used to illustrate our online revegetation guide to be completed by mid-year. A Community Assistance grant from the Wellington Shire Council made both the guide and holding the exhibition possible. Generous sponsorship from Hedley Range Services encouraged many local and regional artists to produce high quality representations of a variety of species.

The judging panel was headed by Celia Rosser, world renowned for her life-long dedication



JUDGES: ANDREA MCCALLUM, CELIA ROSSER AND KAYE PROUDLEY



WINNER: LAURIE ANDREWS, EUCALYPTUS REGNANS

to magnificently illustrating every banksia in Australia. She was assisted by Andrea McCallum and Kaye Proudley. The winning entry from Laurie Andrews graces our newsletter cover whilst the second and third prizes by Sally Armfield and Kathryn McGuire are reproduced here with Kelly Just's highly commended work.

Congratulations to the winners and a big thankyou from the Yarram Seedbank to the artists for taking the time to bring us closer to our floral neighbours.

The Seedbank is sponsoring the people's choice prize which is awarded at the end of the exhibition, so make sure you vote for your favourite work when you visit the gallery. ■



Bronwyn Johnson, Seedbank Project Officer.



SALLY ARMFIELD



KATHY MCGUIRE



KELLY JUST

For further information on Seedbank please contact: Bronwyn Johnson, YYLN Project Officer - Ph. 03 5175 7895, Mob. 0429 808 130 or Email bronwynj@wgcma.vic.gov.au



PROJECT PLANNING

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NETWORK

By Bronwyn Johnson

FOX CONTROL

What's your motive?



Parks Victoria has spent substantial funds and resources on conducting annual fox control programs on the islands of Nooramunga and Corner Inlet within the Marine Coastal Parks.

These islands are vital habitat for a number of wading and shore birds, providing food, shelter and breeding sites. However, these islands are close to the mainland and foxes have access to them during low tide predated our threatened bird populations.

Is it possible for landholders, especially those in coastal areas, to assist Parks Victoria in their efforts? There are numerous benefits to maintaining an annual fox control program on any property. Foxes kill livestock and wildlife, introduce weeds such as boxthorn and blackberries, disease, all of which affect biodiversity and productivity.

We are seeking input from landholders who regularly undertake fox control measures, in whatever form, to tell us what motivates you to do this work? We also want to hear what impedes you from maintaining or even beginning any sort of control measures.

A forum will be held in conjunction with South Gippsland Landcare Network in late March and anyone with input into the discussion is welcome to attend. Details to be released soon.

We are also seeking expressions of interest from any landholders in the Hedley/Gelliondale/Alberton areas who may be interested in participating in an Action Group to assess what is being done and what could be done to improve fox control on private property in coastal areas. As an incentive for their participation, group members will enjoy a day trip (in November) with Parks Victoria staff to see the benefits of this work for themselves. **Contact Bronwyn Johnson for further details.** ■

INFORMATION SHEET FOR FIRE IMPACTED RESIDENTS

SERVICE	ORGANISATION	CONTACT
EMERGENCY - CALL 000 (Police, Fire and Ambulance)		
Recovery Information	Wellington Shire Council	1300 137 218
Current Bushfire Information	Victorian Bushfire Information Line	1800 240 667 www.cfa.vic.gov.au
	VicEmergency	www.emergency.vic.gov.au
	FireReady App	FireReady is available for download in the Apple Store or Google Play Market
Road conditions and traffic hazards/closures	Vic Roads	131 170 www.vicroads.vic.gov.au
Animal assistance, agricultural recovery information and fodder assistance	Department of Environment and Primary Industries DEPI	1300 799 232 (Victorian Emergency Recovery Line)
Fodder enquiries	Victorian Farmers Federation	1300 882 833
24 hour wildlife emergency	Wildlife Victoria	1300 094 535
Nurse on Call – 24 hr service	Nurse On Call	1300 606 024
Food, clothing and material aid	Salvation Army	03 5144 6374 (Sale)
Lifeline	Lifeline	13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au
Financial assistance and advice for farmers and businesses	Rural Financial Counselling	03 5147 0855
Assistance with legal matters	Victoria Legal Aid	1800 113 432 or www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au
Telstra Phone Faults & Emergencies	Telstra	13 2200
Electricity Faults and Emergency	SPAusnet	1300 360 795

PARTNER ACTIVITY

YARRAM YARRAM LANDCARE NETWORK



By Richard Appleton

Use of fire for protecting biodiversity and assets on HVP Plantations land

With over 35,000 hectares of native forest on HVP managed land in Gippsland and smaller areas across other parts of Victoria, applying appropriate controlled burning strategies to protect biodiversity as well as adjacent plantation resources is a major issue for HVP.

Unfortunately, until now there has been very little opportunity for HVP, like many other private land managers, to tap into the necessary expertise and resources to professionally manage such a program.

Our long standing expertise is in fire suppression, not managing fire for biodiversity. That is why we are keen to be a part of the FireScape project being delivered through the CFA in the Yarram area and hope this can be extended to other parts of the estate.

The bulk of our native forest



Senescent Heathy Woodland on HVP land near Calrossie. Note over-mature trees, lack of recruitment and heavy ground fuel load.

in the Strzelecki Ranges is Wet Forest, with lesser areas of Damp Forest, Riparian Forest and other vegetation communities with very long natural fire intervals, often in very steep and inaccessible terrain, where introducing fire is undesirable or impractical.



The same patch of vegetation is up against and to the west of pine plantation, creating a significant risk to this asset.

Cool Temperate and Warm Temperate Rainforest, which are fire sensitive,

also need to be excluded from burning. Drier forests on foothill areas of the Strzelecki Ranges and the Gippsland Plain, however, need to be considered and some are currently long overdue for burning. These include Lowland Forest, Heathy Woodland and other vegetation communities with relatively short natural fire intervals. Most of the species within these communities are fire dependent.

If the fire interval is too long they will senesce and disappear without an opportunity to regenerate, if too short they will not have a chance to set seed.

Understanding the complexity of all species' requirements and optimum fire intervals within each vegetation community has taken a significant research effort by DEPI which can now be applied to private land under the coordination of the CFA. In consultation with Mike McStephen HVP has selected a couple of initial sites near Yarram to begin the process. ■

Calling for Expressions of interest

There will be a number of vacancies on the Board of the YYLN Network this year with elections being held in August at our Annual General Meeting.

We look forward to the renewal of our Board with committed members from our Landcare network. If you would like to contribute please contact our Secretary, Melissa Ainsworth on 5146 8328 or 0437 640 635 or ainsworths@activ8.net.au for a nomination form.



EXCERPT FROM RONNIE CLARKSON'S ENTRY INTO 'OUR NATIVE PLANTS ILLUSTRATED'

Contacts for Individual Active Landcare Groups

Albert River Landcare Group

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Carrajung and District LG

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Woodside Landcare Group

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Wonyip Landcare Group

Contact: Werner Lange
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Email: longiewl@optusnet.com.au

Binginwarri Landcare Group

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Merriman Creek Landcare Group

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Won Wron Devon North LG

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Hedley/Nine Mile Creek LG

Contact: Maree Avery
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Yarram Urban Landcare Group

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