Community Network News

Mid Loddon-CMN & West Marong, Upper Spring Creek, Ravenswood Valley, Nuggetty, Baringhup, Eddington, Kangderaar/Murphy Creeks Landcare Groups & other community friends

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MEETINGS & EVENTS- 2013

Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday 9th July at the Lockwood South Primary School This meeting will a catch up on monitoring projects such as our infra-red cameras with an update on the Save our Curlews' project.
Special Speaker will be Frank Steele who will enlighten us with a report on environmental issues in China.

West Marong Landcare Group meeting will be held at 8.00pm Tuesday 20th August (3rd Tuesday, by-monthly) at the Woodstock Hall
Update on the Save our Curlews and Farming for Sustainable Soils Program, including the Green Manuring Trials, followed by a presentation by ……from Telstra, to follow on from the excellent information provided at the previous meeting by Mary Todorov from the NBN Co.

Baringhup Landcare Group meets second Thursday of every second month at the Baringhup Hall Supper Room: Next meeting Thursday 8th August..

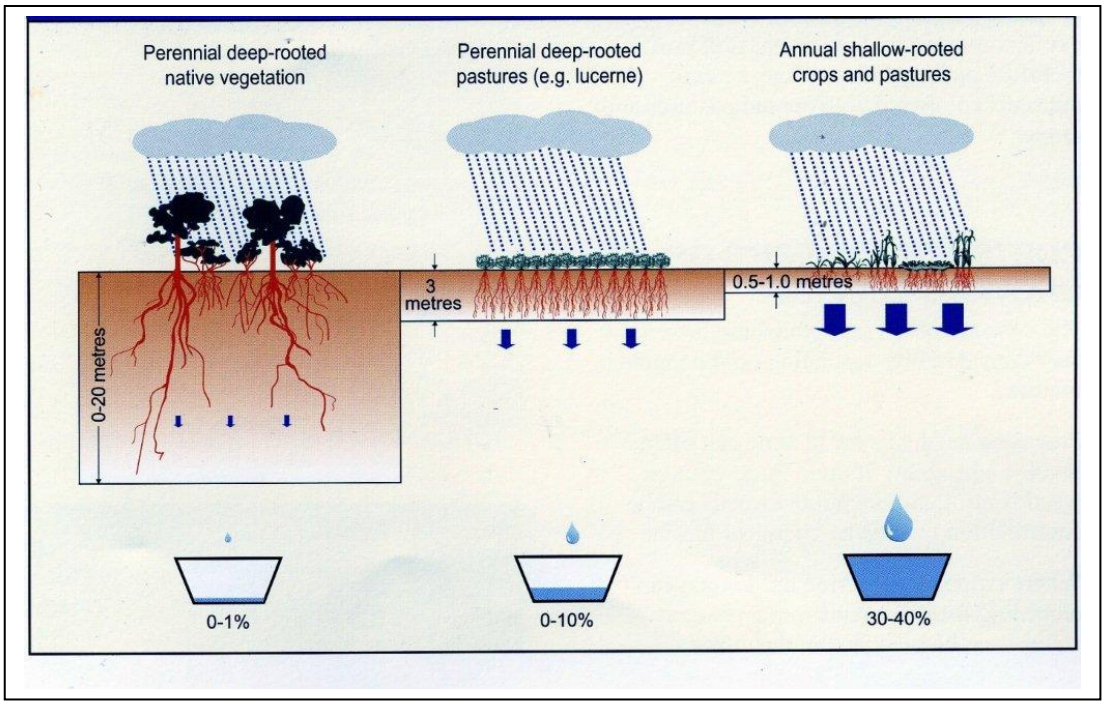
Mid Loddon Landcare Network Committee meeting will be held on Monday 26th August at the Lockwood South Primary School. Meets bi-monthly on the last Monday

Ravenswood Valley Landcare Group meets on the last Wednesday of every second month.
Next meeting 31st July

Eddington Landcare Group- meet in the Red Gum Forest as needed.

Words of Wisdom:
Decisions about the use and management of land and its resources should favour the long-term advantage rather than the short-term expedience that may lead to exploitation, degradation and possible destruction of soil.

The value of our native vegetation remnants and perennial pastures in protecting our local water tables.



Lucerne:
Lucerne is high-producing nutritious legume that is well adapted to a range of climates throughout the world.

Originating in the middle east it was introduced to NSW before 1906, and in time spread throughout Australia. It grows in conditions ranging from tropical to temperate and will tolerate frosty winters.

Growing Lucerne produces many benefits:

- Economic gains stem from both improved livestock production and increase in the yield and quality of subsequent cereal crops. Savings in application of nitrogenous fertilisers to subsequent crops and benefits in the area of weed control are significant.
- Environmental benefits can be very significant. The ability of Lucerne to lower water tables, thereby reducing the potential effects of salinity is outstanding. Lucerne also assists in improving soil structure, and in controlling erosion, especially as a pasture mixture with grass species. Lucerne has also been used effectively as a fire-break, and because of its drought tolerance, it enhances the stability of grass swards

Our local 'Save our Curlew project' has taken a leap forward again with another much appreciated Corporate donation offer. (Citipower Powercorp).
Our band of local volunteers who are dedicated to not only saving our small remnant population of curlews, but are working towards re-building their numbers, firstly by increasing the number of protected areas for feeding and nesting (our 5th site will be completed later this year) and secondly by moving on to a local breeding and release program.

As few locals have seen a curlew or understand what a unique bird they are, a 'Save our Curlews' promotional program is about to begin with the construction of a pen at a local property to keep a pair of curlews for community educational purposes.
YOU may be interested is assisting with the construction of the pen or alternately keen to donate time or funds to the program.

We soon may be able to photograph our own local curlews

Mouse Spiders:
These large and attractive spiders are still on the move locally, looking for a likely mate. So be observant. They don't seem to be aggressive, just busily getting on with being a male spider looking for a female peeping out of underground home. Such a shame the story has such a sad ending.

A Shelbourne Mouse Spider

Pre-thinning and restoration Bird Surveys completed in the Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve. (Ben Goonan)
A total of 213 birds were sighted and they included -
Australian Magpie, Musk Lorikeet, Red Wattlebird, White-eared Honeyeater, Grey Fantail, Weebill, Spotted Pardalote, Yellow Thornbill, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush, Golden Whistler, Red-capped Robin, Yellow Thornbill, Rufus Whistler, Golden Whistler, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-winged Chough, Flame Robin, Little Raven, Brown Tree-creeper. Varied Sitella,
The list variety did surprise locals and we wait with anticipation t see how long it will take to increase the numbers following the forest restoration work.
Detailed lists are available via email or as hard copies.

Do we really appreciate our local lifestyle?
A home among the gum trees - more dream than reality for many Australians

Released in the lead up to National Tree Day on Sunday 28 July 2013, a research report, titled *Missing Trees – The Inside Story of an Outdoor Nation* and sponsored by Toyota, builds upon previous research commissioned by Planet Ark that shows a direct link between childhood contact with nature and a range of health and wellbeing benefits.

The research reveals that a house with a backyard is still held up as the ideal Australian home. While 72% of people would prefer to live in either a separate house with a large backyard or on a farm or rural property, only 53% of us currently do, and government policies and population pressures mean the number of houses with large backyards is only going to get smaller.

Since the early 1990s, backyards have been shrinking due to new houses covering a bigger proportion of the lot, a proliferation of sub-divided blocks with townhouses and apartment complexes, and a reduction in average lot sizes in metropolitan areas, mainly as a result of decreasing supply and rising land costs. Furthermore, changes in the working hours of parents, the use of childcare, time pressures on families and proximity to the CBD have all contributed to many Australians placing less value on having a backyard, despite the fact that they still see it as an important part of the Australian identity.

The survey results clearly show that, for both adults and children, the larger their backyard, the more time they spend doing outdoor activities. On average, those living in units or flats spend only 3.5 hours per week doing outdoor activities, while people living in separate houses with large backyards spend 5.1 hours per week doing outdoor recreational activities.

"This research indicates that while most Australians over 30 are likely to have clear childhood memories of playing in their backyard, for the first time in a number of generations, many children today are likely to have a very different set of memories," said Planet Ark Spokesperson Rebecca Gilling. The shift to smaller backyards in suburban Australia has been swift, and in many areas, quite dramatic, yet there has been little discussion among the public or media about this issue.

The survey found that more than 3 in 4 people (77%) are concerned about Australia's shrinking backyards, including 83% of parents with young children.

The top concerns about the loss of backyards are the loss of safe, outdoor play spaces for children, loss of Australia's outdoor lifestyle and culture, loss of privacy and reduced opportunities for children to learn about nature and the environment.

Backyards play an important role in Australian cities and towns, for both the environment and the health and wellbeing of individuals and wider communities, especially given the well-documented shift from outdoor to indoor activities such as television and electronic games over recent decades.

As a result of the research report's findings, Planet Ark is encouraging Aussies to participate in a National Tree Day event in their community, or to plant at home, in their backyard, on their veranda, rooftop or street as a way to connect with nature and the great outdoors.

"As lifestyles change and the ¼ acre block is no longer the norm, it's more important than ever for families to foster and maintain that important link with nature, which provides direct health benefits," said Gilling. "Events like National Tree Day are a fun community-focused way to get back outside, and this year we are encouraging people to register events in their own green spaces as well as get involved in public plantings."

A Study focusing on nitrogen reduction:
As part of a four year DAFF project, DEPI, BCG and the Low Rainfall Collaboration Group have been looking at soils under low rainfall cropping as important emitters of nitrous oxide. The study is focusing on how N20 effects the agribusiness of a farm, and aims to increase farmer knowledge and improve NUE on farm. With an aim to "use it,

don't lose it", preliminary results show that using strategic applications of N can reduce emissions without yield penalties.
Read more: Stock and Land, page 22, Thursday, 23 May 2013

Algae could fuel multi-billion dollar energy industry for Australia
A new energy sector based on algal biofuels could guarantee Australia's transport fuel and food security far into the future, a new report, *Food and Fuel forever*.
Potentially worth $50 billion a year, the industry would produce fuel, food, stockfeed, plastics, textiles, paper, fertilisers, chemicals and pharmaceuticals and employ up to 50,000 Australians in new jobs, according to the report, released last week by Perth-based think-tank Future Directions International (FDI).

'At current yields we could produce enough oil for all our transport needs from just 6000 square kilometres, the area of a single big sheep station,' says author, science writer Julian Cribb.

'Furthermore it can be done without competing for good land, wilderness or water with any other sector of the economy – in fact it will use many of the things we now waste or throw away.'

More than 20 countries – including the US, China, India and Israel – along with leading airlines and aviation corporations are currently investing in research into algal biofuels as the next big energy resource.

'Oil from algae is liquid solar energy,' says Cribb. 'The main thing you need to grow it is sunshine – and Australia has more of that per square metre than any country on Earth.

'That makes us potentially the world's largest fresh oil province – the Saudi Arabia, if you like – of the 21st century.

'Fossil oil comes from algae that died millions of years ago. Today it makes far better sense to grow the oil fresh, using living water plants – and create a new industry that will invest its profits back into Australia, instead of offshoring them.

'Such an industry would not only save us $40 billion a year in foreign oil imports, but guarantee our fuel supplies into the future, and create spinoff local industries worth $10 billion or more in aquaculture, health foods, biodegradable plastics, textiles, paper, fertiliser, chemicals and many other areas.
'Furthermore this would be an industry owned and run by Australians, for Australians – not by globalised resource giants.

'Instead of exporting jobs, we would be importing tens of thousands of them. It would pay for new nation-building infrastructure in transport, energy and other areas key to economic growth.

'It would help green our cities by devouring their waste streams, cleaning their water and reducing their garbage. It would turn the emissions from power stations, cement works and factories into valuable products and exports.

'Because fish and water plants are healthy to eat, it would help to bring down the burden of degenerative disease and premature death across the entire community, giving rise to a new national diet and a novel cuisine.'
Mr Cribb says he wrote the report after more than four decades of analysing agricultural and resource opportunities and issues.

'Of all the opportunities I have seen algae culture is one of the most promising. Not only does it offer major benefits – but it also solves major problems.
'For example it can cut national greenhouse emissions by 15-20 per cent at a single stroke. It can cleanse our badly polluted waters. It can improve our health as a nation.'
See more – May 2013 Ecos Magazine

Book of the Month:
Crops for a Future Climate *Functional Plant Biology* Special Issue Volume 40, Number 2.
This issue of *Functional Plant Biology* reports on plant biology research making contributions towards solving one of the most burning issues faced by humankind: Provision of food security for an ever growing human population in the face of climate change. The papers evolved from presentations given at two symposia at the International Botanical Congress in Melbourne (Australia), in July 2011, and one symposium at the ComBio meeting in Cairns (Australia), September 2011. The papers highlight current research on elevated CO2 and climate change factors such as increased temperature and drought from a number of leading research groups and facilities worldwide. The presented research covers experimental and modelling work on major grain and root crops as well as trees.