# *Community Network News*

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

**NEWSLETTER VOL.20 . No. 5 June 2014 - Incorporation No: A0011936S**

**Contact information : c/- Secretary, PO Box 2197 Bendigo DC. Victoria**

## MEETINGS & EVENTS - 2014

**Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group**
**General meeting** to be held at 7.30pm Tuesday 10th June at the Lockwood South Primary School
**Agenda:** Facilitated group planning & inter-group relationships & Shelbourne forest restoration presentation.

**West Marong Landcare Group** meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 17th June at the Woodstock Hall. Agenda: Future funding options and actions required to strengthen hopes for continuation of project support. Shelbourne Forest Reserve presentation.

**Baringhup Landcare Group** next meeting will be held at 7.30pm, Monday 4th August at the Baringhup Hall supper room.

**Nuggetty Landcare Group** next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 2nd July at the

**Eddington Landcare Group**- meet in the Red Gum Forest seasonally. The next meeting is on Saturday 7th June at 10.00am followed by morning tea and a walk in the forest. Bring your own chair. Note - Maryborough Road signed entrance gate.

**Mid Loddon Landcare Network Executive Management Committee** The next meeting will be held at the Lockwood South Primary School at 7.30pm. Monday 28th July 2014.
The Committee is being upgraded with increased member group numbers and participation. Specialist advisory support will be provided. All Network groups are currently working independently on documenting their histories, their local landscape values/problems and current and future project directions. This information will be included in the Network's updated Action Plan.

**Wise Words:**

Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people. "
Franklin D Roosevelt

**Bush Stone-curlew Annual Australian Summit**
This year to be held in Albury on Wednesday 20th and on the morning of Thursday 21st August. Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group & CMN members and all interested in the survival of the Bush Stone-curlew, have been invited to attend We will be providing a presentation about our local 'Save our Bush Stone-curlews' project.

**Meetings planned for 2015:**

Alison Pouliot will return again next year to talk further with our Network groups about the importance of fungi in our forests and private properties. There will also be more Fungi Field Forays in both the Shelbourne & Lockwood forests

**A brief report on the Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve Restoration Project:**

The current phase of the project will wind up over the next few weeks as the crew moves down slope on the second catchment and our diminishing funds will dictate whether we complete the second catchment.

As the project work has progressed, so much has been learnt about the condition of the forest and I wonder at the stupidity of removing the top layer of quartz surface in the 1960's for road making material after the site was clear felled. This action removed drought protection mulch (gravel makes good mulch) and also allowed underlying

disturbed soil surface to continue to move freely down slope in seasonal storms and at the same time remove any soil binding leaf and wood litter . So the forest has had a continual loss of much needed nutrients and moisture protecting organic matter for many years.

The thinning prescription has been continually adapted to create variances in the final result. Some thickets of saplings have been left untouched, some groups of large trees have been un-thinned and some stumps have not been poisoned to allow for bushy coppicing and a greater variance in the final result. Forest walks will be organised in Spring.
Judy

**The Fungi Field Day** last month proved to be more successful that we imagined. We did actually find some fungi at the very edge of our degraded forest, including the example shown below.

*Onphalotus nidiformis (luminescent)*
Common Name: Ghost Fungus This gilled toadstool has fruit bodies which are typically funnel-shaped, with a white cap which often becomes darker yellow, brown, blue or purple (especially in the centre). The gills and spore print are white. Ghost Fungus usually grows in clusters at the base of trees. The most distinctive feature of the Ghost Fungus is its strong luminescence, the purpose of which is unknown. It is poisonous, causing severe vomiting.

The Tafe students with the help of their teacher, mapped and recorded all fungi that were found in the leaf litter and fallen timber at the edge of the forest. We will return to these sites next season to note if there are any re-fruiting in the same areas**.**

**Just for fun** –Check out the Web for 'Glowing-Ghost Mushroom growing kits'

As our forest work crew have worked through the thinning of the forest catchments the only visible fungi noted has been the Bracket Fungus shown below.

Bracket fungi

The brackets release huge quantities of wind blown spores which germinate on wounded wood and penetrate into the heartwood, where the fungus forms an expanding pocket of rot. Any pruning which exposes heartwood will increase the likelihood of infection. Most of the fungi described as 'brackets' only live on and decay the heartwood, they do not infect and kill the living parts of the tree.
A bracket fungus is a fruiting body that sticks out from the trunk of a tree like a shelf. They can be many colours & some look very beautiful. Unfortunately, there is nothing you can treat a tree with once it has bracket fungus & the chances of structural failure becomes more likely as time goes by.
The Australian National Botanic Gardens website says –
*"The heartwood is dead wood, with the living tissue confined to a relatively thin skin under the bark. As long as the fungus is not harming that living skin the tree can go on living quite happily. In fact, there are numerous old, healthy, hollowed-out trees in existence. Moreover, an empty cylinder (such as a hollowed trunk) can resist some stresses better than a solid cylinder (such as a solid trunk). If you're a possum or a parrot, then you'd probably look very favourably on that fungus because it is helping to create potential nesting hollows*

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**Australian Honey Fungus**

**The down side -** The Australian honey fungus is a mushroom that is found in the Physalacriaceae family. It is found all over southern Australia, and is responsible for Armillaria root rot. This root rot is the primary cause of forest dieback and Eucalyptus tree death. Unfortunately, it is also known as the most pathogenic and widespread out of all of the Armarilla species that are found within Australia.

**The up side -** Honey fungus has an important role in the world. By breaking down lignum in wood into glucose, which insects can digest, it prevents the world being piled high with the corpses of dead trees.

**Koala sighted in Shelbourne :**

Photo Noreen Gill

There has sightings in the area for quite a few years and it is not known if it is a lone animal or more than one. There was some concern that it may have been caught in the recent 'burn' but obviously not.
Hopefully the forest thinning project will eventually produce a greater area of Koala friendly habitat
Koalas typically inhabit open eucalypt woodlands, and the leaves of these trees make up most of their diet. Because this eucalypt diet has limited nutritional and caloric content, koalas are largely sedentary and sleep for up to 20 hours a day.

**Cut Worms: Pests of crops, pastures and gardens.**

Cut worms are out in force this year following the early season break. Cutworms are plump smooth caterpillars of several species of night-flying moths that lay their eggs in the soil. After the caterpillars emerge they chew young plants and seedlings at ground level, sometimes eating right through the stem, which falls over (hence the name cutworm). The caterpillars grow up to 40mm long and range in colour from light grey or pinkish brown through to almost black.
If disturbed they curl up into a flat coil. They eat at night and take shelter in the soil during the day. They usually attack seedlings but can also affect soft fruits like strawberries. Cutworms are more likely to be active after periods of rain.
Prevent cutworm attack in your garden by placing small, open-ended plastic cups around plants or by wrapping plant bases with aluminium foil. Cutworms are only active at night, so go out after dark with a torch and check for caterpillars at work.
They feed on all crop and pasture plants, damaging them near the ground. Young caterpillars feed on the surface tissues, the damage resembling lucerne flea or webworm attacks. The caterpillars hide under the soil or litter by day. When mature, they pupate in the soil. The common name 'cutworm' refers to the feeding habits of these caterpillar pests. Plants are often attacked at or near ground level so that the plant falls to the ground. Severe damage may because by sporadic outbreaks of these pests. There are many species and several are responsible for

economic damage.

**Damage:**

All crop and pasture plants are attacked by cutworms. Young plants are favoured and are more adversely affected than older plants. Whole paddocks of cereal or lupin seedlings may be destroyed or severely thinned early in the season. Pastures may be attacked at any time during the season but, apart from severe effects early in the season, the damage usually goes unnoticed. Irrigated crops may be attacked at any time of the year.

When small, the caterpillars feed on the surface tissues of the tender foliage, but as they grow they assume their typical cutworm 'felling' activity. The surface feeding may be confused with damage caused by lucerne flea and the more serious damage may be attributed to webworm. However, webworm does not attack oats or broadleaved plants.

**Life cycle**

Most of the eggs are probably laid on plant material near the soil surface. They are creamy-white when laid and may hatch in three days or in several weeks depending on the temperature. The caterpillars emerging from the eggs grow with several moults until they are full size and then pupate in the ground. Moths emerge from those pupae. It may take one month or a whole year to complete the life cycle depending on the species.

**Control**

Biological control agents, including fly and wasp parasites, disease organisms and predatory beetles, continually reduce cutworm numbers but cannot be relied on to give adequate control.

They are active at night, feeding and chewing through the stems of the crop seedlings. In the day they burrow underground or under clods to avoid detection. To inspect for cutworms, dig around the damaged areas during the day or come out at night with a flashlight to catch the culprits in the act.

The potential for cutworm infestations is governed in large part by the following factors:

- Planting time
- low-damp areas of the field that drain poorly,
- fall and early season weed growth, and
- the amount of surface residue.

**Alternative Pesticides & Applications**

Scout for the presence of cutworm larvae early in the season, and after destruction of adjacent habitats. Cutworms are best scouted at night, when they are most active, using a flashlight.

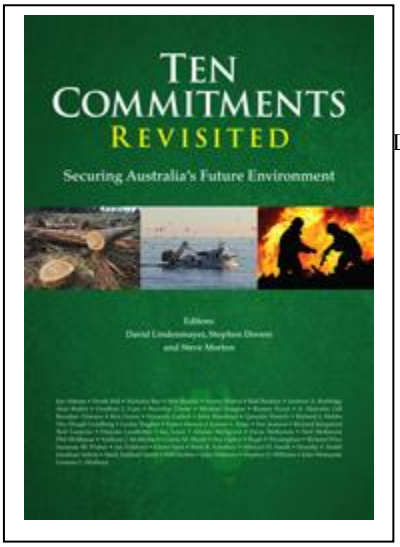
Look for cut-off or damaged seedlings and dig around the base of the plant to locate the larvae.

**Biological Controls**

Cutworm larvae have a number of natural enemies. Predators include several species of ground beetles. Parasitoids include tachinid flies and braconid wasps. Cutworms may also be attacked by fungi, bacteria, and nematodes. Understanding the biology of beneficial organisms is imperative in order to use them effectively as pest control agents. For example, insect parasitic nematodes like *Steinerema carpocapsae* or insect-infecting fungi like *Beauveria bassiana* require adequate humidity to be effective. Other predators include spiders, minute pirate bugs, damsel bugs, and lacewing larvae. Birds also prey on cutworms, so do not assume that the birds in the field are causing the seedling damage. As with other pests discussed, farmscaping and Integrated Pest Management are recommended means of increasing the numbers of beneficial predators and parasites that help to keep cutworms under control.

Nightime spraying of Bacillus thuringiensis has shown to be effective.

**Forthcoming Book Release**




Edited by David Lindenmayer

What are the 10 key issues that must be addressed urgently to improve Australia's environment? In this follow up to the highly successful book *Ten Commitments: Reshaping the Lucky Country's Environment*, Australia's leading environmental thinkers have written provocative chapters on what must be done to tackle Australia's environmental problems – in terms of policies, on-ground actions and research. Each chapter begins with a brief overview of the 10 key tasks that need to be addressed in a given field, and then each issue is discussed in more detail.

Available in September 2014 from CSIRO Publishers
AU $ 49.95