



## **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. 8 September 2014 - Incorporation No: A0011936S**

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

### **MEETINGS & EVENTS - 2014**

#### **Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group**

Annual General Meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September at the Lockwood South Primary School

**Agenda:** Debrief from the Albury Curlew Summit

**West Marong Landcare Group** meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October at the Woodstock Hall. Agenda:

#### **Baringhup Landcare Group - Special meeting**

Next general meeting will be held at 7.30pm, Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October at the Baringhup Hall supper room. Speaker – to be notified.

**Nuggetty Landcare Group** next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at the winery meeting room.

**Eddington Landcare Group**- meet in the Red Gum Forest seasonally. The Spring meeting date is to be announced

#### **Ravenswood Valley Landcare Group.**

Next meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September

#### **Mid Loddon Landcare Network Management Committee**

meeting to be held at the Lockwood South Primary School at 7.30pm. Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

AGM – Agenda:

Confirmation of member groups executive officers and their contact details. – for incorporation purposes.

Voting for change? or confirmation of Network executive committee as is, -Chair, Treasurer, Secretary for the next twelve months, while new members settle in, but we do need a vice chair?

**Mid Loddon Landcare Network Christmas social dinner** event will be held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November – at a venue to be decided ?

Speaker will be Prof. Linten Staples from Animal Control Technologies Australia.

**Advance notice :** Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group Christmas BBQ will be held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December at the Happy Jack Reserve. **Special event** to Celebrate 20 years of Landcare at Lockwood South, Details in following issues

**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. All event dates will be finalised soon.

**ACUP updates** – Anyone interested in renewing their ACUP certificates in November , please ring - 0428 506 525

#### **Soil micro-organisms can help farming reduce greenhouse gasses**

Newly published research into soil microbes shows how, eventually, farmers might reduce greenhouse gas production through the way they manage their soils.

The work, by an EU-wide consortium including Teagasc and researchers from Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), shows how effectively a newly-discovered group of soil microbes breaks down Nitrous Oxide, a major contributor to global warming and a gas blamed for depleting the ozone layer. It suggests that if their growth could be encouraged soils could make a greater contribution to addressing climate change.

The research, published in the respected journal Nature Climate Change, was led by the INRA agroecology centre in France

“This work gives us greater knowledge about the bugs which reduce harmful Nitrous Oxide to useful Nitrogen and Oxygen. We have also discovered that the effect of this denitrification does not depend on one simple soil factor like drainage or pH but relies on the abundance of these microbes. The next step will be to look at the factors that control their abundance and activity.” Agriland article by Ciaran Moran

## Bush Stone-Curlew Summit in Albury: *Judy*



Neville Lubke and his wife Jan are members of the NSW Nature Conservation Working Group which has been promoting the conservation of the iconic Bush Stone Curlew for the past twelve years.

The local 'Save the Bush Stone-curlews' program was formed following a group tour of their property and breeding enclosures in 2007.



Curlew extended breeding complex at the Lubke farm.



Curlews can hide even in enclosures

The local 'Save the Bush Stone-curlews' program began following a group tour of their property and breeding enclosures in 2007.

Irene Punton, Frank & Jenny Steele and myself attended the summit and were almost overwhelmed by the flow of Curlew information.

It was good to catch up with the Lubkes again and also David Baker-Gabb who has assisted in the

past with our Curlew relocation and Shelbourne NCR restoration project planning.

All the information gathered will be shared at the next USC landcare Group meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, but I will provide details now of our most important facts.

We know that foxes (and cats) prey on ground dwelling native fauna, but the loss of habitat that can provide a good ongoing source of food has also been a strong cause of the local decline and almost extinction of our Bush Stone-curlews. The long years of drought certainly didn't help.

It has been proved that captive bred released birds in NSW that have been found dead, have died not from fox attack but from malnutrition. Through the use of spy-cam in breeding pens it has also been confirmed that Curlews chicks must have fast and easy access to quality food in the first week of life to survive.

Our landcare members have completed the fencing of all our remnant woodlands around the Shelb. NCR but many still lack the very native fauna required habitat, created by large amounts of branch litter and rotting logs on the ground and unless this can be reversed, the small numbers of our native fauna will be lost and our reintroduction program will surely fail.

Long term conservation of Bush Stone-curlews will require the protection of low-intensity land-use areas around known sites or other areas of suitable habitat.

Our plan to create large areas of protected habitat in and around the Shelb. NCR will hopefully provide interim habitat but much more needs to be done to improve many of our farmland sites.

The recent total loss of 40 ha of Curlew and small mammal feeding habitat in the Shelb. NCR through a planned burn, has been very detrimental to the current small Curlew population, when we are struggling to establish sites with good rotting leaf litter that provides insect habitat.

One of the reasons for the restoration thinning in the Shelbourne NCR has been to create quality habitat for our ground dwelling fauna, with logs on the ground providing habitat and assisting the retention of the leaf litter. Invertebrates form the main component of the Curlews diet and foraging is generally nocturnal when it prods through leaf litter and groundcovers for food.

## What can we do?

Our current and future planned protected sites will be assessed over the next few weeks to determine how we can improve our curlew's food habitat requirements.

One idea is to add water &/or create damp areas. Place sheets of iron on the ground to retain moisture and habitat for crickets, frogs and other small invertebrates. We can even 'seed' the areas once habitat is established, by purchasing captive bred insects usually available from pet shops.

All habitat improvement ideas and any assistance would be greatly received.

More funds are required for the planned 8 ha site in the thinned areas of the Shelbourne forest. To make up the current shortfall in funds we are applying for a grant (2<sup>nd</sup> attempt). We currently have only \$5,000 of the \$35,000 needed. Previous sites have mostly been supported by Corporate grants

Our first pair of captive Curlews are settling in and a launch of the project extension with an open day event, will probably take place in October - details in next Newsletter.

**Our local reptiles** will be waking up soon as Spring weather warms the ground and insects begin to appear, and they are not all dangerous.



Dwyer's snake – slow moving and non-venomous

Karen disturbed a baby Dwyer snake recently, which proved that the pair of adult snakes on their property has been successfully breeding.

So take care when you next raise the shovel to kill a brown snake, (not that you should) if it seems friendly and doesn't slither away quickly, it may be a Dwyer snake.

## Lizards in revegetation corridors and protected remnants

Lizards are fussy – Reptiles often rely for concealment on small refuges such as rock outcrops, fallen trees and slabs of thick bark.

Reptiles show the importance of doing more when corridors are created than just planting trees and shrubs.

Providing logs, rocks and other features enhances them, not only for reptiles, but for frogs, invertebrates and some ground-feeding birds such as Bush Stone-curlews.

Cool hiding places can serve as life-saving refuges during extreme heat waves and fires.

Planted corridors do improve over time. Surveys done today cannot tell us how well corridors will perform in a century or two, when there may well be large logs, tree hollows, but if we wait for nature to take its course it may be too late for many of ground dwelling fauna.



Shingleback lizard

## Lizards in your garden

Do not use any herbicides or pesticides as they are lethal to all insects which are food for your lizards. Avoid using snail pellets as snails that have consumed poison will be harmful to any lizard that eats them. The lizards in your garden are a natural pest control, as they will happily eat pesky slugs and other insects that love to munch on your garden. Shinglebacks, also known as stumpy or sleepy lizards, live solitary lives when not breeding. They pair up to breed each spring with the same mate year after year.

They have live young, usually only one or two, but the young can weigh as much as 35% of the adult's body weight. An equivalent human baby would weigh 50lbs (23 kg)!

## What can you do to encourage lizards in your garden

Have plenty of mulch, fallen logs and rocks for lizards to use. Also plant some low ground covers that provide protection and food for lizards. Keep your cats and dogs inside or controlled, or fence off areas that they cannot access and provide safe habitat for lizards in those areas.

### **Why build a lizard habitat in your garden?**

Lizards are beneficial guests to gardens (and farmland) They eat a variety of insects, and they are entertaining to watch. Inviting lizards to the garden is a healthy and exciting way to add insect control to your organic garden.

Lizards and Amphibians are also important indicator creatures. Their presence indicates a very healthy environment.

Their decline indicates environmental pollution and harmful chemicals which help to alert us to environmental problems. In an organic garden, insects, lizards, and amphibians are all beneficial.

### **Soil doesn't need to be a dirty word**

We despise soil. We tolerate endless advertising about how to get rid of dirt. We drag our children out of it. Our municipal bylaws treat it as a nuisance, to be controlled and confined. Every field of corn grown for animal feed or biogas wastes soil. We seem unable to cherish this precious substance with a view to feeding ourselves in the not-too-distant future.

Bill Mollison, the father of the permaculture movement, said, "if you plot the rise of soil scientists against the loss of soil, you see that the more of them you have, the more soil you lose."

This about sums up our love-hate relationship with the stuff from which God reputedly made our ancestor, Adam. No matter how much we know about soil, we can't seem to bring ourselves from degrading, eroding, desertifying, salinating or finally burying soil under asphalt.

As schools introduce more and more students to gardening, children get a much better idea of where Caesar salad comes from and what French fries are made of. Let's hope that they will also figure out that without healthy soil we cannot grow healthy food. Meantime, as one soil scientist sadly notes, "saving dirt just isn't a very sexy issue."

Writing in the journal, *Science*, academics from South Africa warn that we are repeating the mistakes of past civilizations, over-exploiting the land until it goes beyond the point of no return, leading to a vicious circle of famine and social disintegration. The same journal carries news of a University of Colorado study using DNA gene technology to find that "soils currently found throughout the region bear little resemblance to their pre-agricultural state." Or, as Jim Fuglie wrote in *The Prairie Blog*, "Much of the agricultural produce that fills our supermarkets comes from dead or nearly dead soils."

Soils are more efficient than our atmosphere and forests together in reducing greenhouse gases and hold more than twice as much water as our rivers and atmosphere combined. Is this more important than more space for housing?

Only government policies that put soil protection above housing prices and automobile fuels and animal feed can get us out of this vicious circle. At the personal level, setting aside wilful ignorance and supporting every person and group working to save soil could make a huge difference. Marjorie Stewart - Nanaimo News Bulletin

### **Baringhup Landcare Group members tour Hepburn/Ralton Woodstock Farm**



Surveying the shelterbelt protected paddocks.

Baringhup landcare members also checked out the Network's Direct Seeding machine – we may see more seeding in our southern area next year?

### **Book of the Month:**

*Australian Garden Rescue – restoring a Damaged Garden* by Mary Horsfall – CSIRO publishers \$39.95.

Whether you have a garden suffering from lack of attention, damaged from weather events or suffering pest attacks, *Australian Garden Rescue* will guide you through practical solutions, helpful tips and preventative tactics to minimise future harm.

Best-selling author Mary Horsfall explores how our harsh climate can impact gardens, including the effects of bushfires, floods, frost, storms and heatwaves. She also addresses various pests from possums, snails and caterpillars to fungal problems and weeds.

With an emphasis on environmentally friendly strategies and simple advice, this highly illustrated guide will provide tactics for gardeners repairing recent damage or tackling prolonged neglect. Regardless of your garden's size or location, this book should be part of your gardening toolkit.

**Wise words:** "The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese."

Willie Nelson