



Community Network News

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



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MEETINGS & EVENTS - 2015

Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group

Next to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 10th February at the Lockwood South School,
Agenda: Wildlife and how to assist their survival.

West Marong Landcare Group next meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 17th February 2015 at the Woodstock Hall.

Agenda: Speakers Alison Frischke – Pasture trials & Christian Bannan – Soils

Baringhup Landcare Group - Christmas BBQ will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 2nd March at the Baringhup Community Hall.

Agenda: Revegetation techniques in a changing climate.

Update on 21st Birthday celebration event planning

Nuggetty Land Protection Group next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 24th March at the winery meeting room.

Agenda:

Eddington Landcare Group- meet in the Red Gum Forest seasonally - Next meeting to be notified.

Ravenswood Valley Landcare Group.

Next meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 25th March 2015

Mid Loddon Landcare Network Management

Committee meeting to be held at the Lockwood South Primary School at 7.30pm on **Monday 30th March 2015.**

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

Magazine: Issue 62 (summer 2014-15) which is a feature on Landcare and technology, is out now.

To read or download the current issue of the magazine visit

<http://www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/magazine/vlcm/current-issue/62>

Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group

celebrates 20 years of local environmental restoration work at the Groups favourite event venue in the Happy Jack Reserve Picnic area and the weather couldn't have been better for an outdoor evening BBQ.

Great venue, great food, great entertainment and wonderful stories told to new members, old (not in years) and past members. Let's hope the group can continue their good environmental work through another twenty years.



Group inaugural president Don Swiney and Glen returned to share some past landcare memories.



The group's enthusiastic junior members performed an entertaining puppet show with a little help from their friends.

Local soil scientist and musician, Richard MacEwan entertained with his singing and banjo strumming.

Save our Curlews Project:

Jenny has become our very competent carer of our first Bush Stone- curlew breeding pair which are now happily singing amongst the gum trees near Jenny and Frank Steele's home. We are hopeful of the patter of little Curlew feet next spring.

A second enclosure has also been installed on the site with the hunt for a second breeding pair now happening.

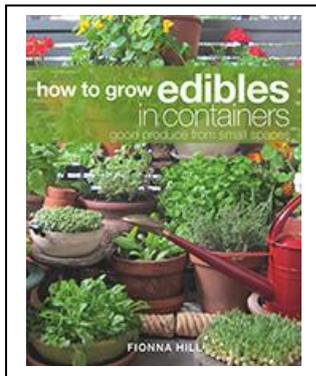
Jenny is also producing a large proportion of the curlews food, with a Worm farm and also a Meal Worm farm, although she may need more help as our breeding flock expands.

Appointments can be made with Jenny for families or group visits, with care being taken not to startle the birds, which are basically wild birds in an enclosure. No brightly coloured clothing please. You may be rewarded by a special song.

Book of the Month: A drought vegie patch?

How to Grow Edibles in Containers.

-- Good Produce from Small Spaces
by Fionna Hill.



From the author of the internationally successful *How to Grow Microgreens*, this companion volume is all about growing vegetables and herbs in limited spaces. Fionna grows a huge range of plants on her apartment balcony and writes candidly about which ones crop well, and which don't, and also introduces more unusual varieties, such as water chestnut, ginger and tatsoi. With over 45 edible plants described, there is something for all seasons.

Available from CSIRO and other good book stores
May 2015 - \$29.95

Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve.

Prior to European settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, forest covered about 90% of Victorian land. Since that time more than 14 million hectares (60%) of Victorian forest has been cleared, making it proportionally, the most cleared of all Australian States³. The period of greatest deforestation occurred between 1830 and 1880, principally the result of agricultural clearance and settlement development by early European explorers and the 1850s Victorian gold rush.

Box-Ironbark forests were heavily modified during the gold rush years 1851 – 1870. Several eucalypt species are found throughout including Yellow Box, Grey Box, Red Box, Red Ironbark and Red Stringy Barks. The trees found in Box-Ironbark forests are amongst the most prolific flowering eucalypts, and as a consequence they attract an array of bird life and have also been supporting the honey industry for nearly a century.

Species diversity in forests

Knowledge of plant, animal and other species present in a forest is a pre-condition for effective forest management. Information on whether populations of species are increasing or decreasing can indicate the extent and condition of forest habitat and changes in habitat, and is necessary to support conservation strategies. A number of forest-dwelling and forest-dependent species and forest ecosystems are listed as threatened on lists compiled by Victoria and nationally. Knowledge of the threats and threatening processes faced by listed species and ecosystems assists in their protection by forest managers. (extract from The State of the Forests Report 2013- available on the web)

An update on the recent Shelbourne NCR thinning and restoration of two catchments project. The recent storm created an opportunity to monitor the project results. The logs on the ground slowed the run-off to a minor trickle and all the leaf litter etc was retained in the forest and no flooding of the Newbridge Road was observed. The downside was that although the neighbouring farmland was not flooded with the usual silt and litter load from the forest, there was no rapid filling of a dam as experienced in the past.

It's a very different story on the east side of the forest where no thinning has been completed at this stage. There was massive flooding of storm water from the forest, removing leaf litter and small twigs and branches leaving large areas of bare and eroded forest floor, serious damage to the forest track, flattened fences and increased erosion on connecting farm land.



This has all been documented and reported to the land manager, Parks Vic, also DELWP & the NCCMA.

The most important part of this community project is the retention of the logs on the ground so we hope all the community will provide support by reporting any would be firewood thieves.

The landcare groups involved are continuing to look for additional funds to install more protective fencing and also complete the Reserve's restoration on the eastern side.

A burning result:

The planned burning of a section of the Shelbourne NCR in 2014 not only scattered our remaining small population of Curlews far and wide – we are still trying to locate most of them, but the recent storm in that area washed all the ash residues into a neighbouring farm dam. When will they learn?? “Given the massive increase in burning and the threat it poses to wildlife and local economies etc. pausing the lighting of fires and diverting part of that budget to rapidly detecting and extinguishing any that start, would appear the wisest thing to do while reviewing their impact.” Extract from

? <http://tasmaniantimes.com/index.php?%2Fweblog%2Farticle%2Fits-time-to-stop-lighting-fires%2F>

From the Landcare Groups recent experience, improved management of our forest reserves would negate the need for burning at the current scale.

The 68th United Nations General Assembly declared 2015 as the International Year of Soils. The IYS aims to be a platform for raising awareness of the importance of soils for food security and essential eco-system functions. The objectives of the IYS are:

- to create full awareness of civil society and decision makers about the fundamental roles of soils for human's life
- to achieve full recognition of the prominent contributions of soils to food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, essential ecosystem services,
- poverty alleviation and sustainable development
- to promote effective policies and actions for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources
- to sensitize decision-makers about the need for robust investment in sustainable soil management activities aiming at healthy soils for different land users and population groups
- to catalyse initiatives in connection with the Sustainable Development Goal process and post-2015 agenda
- to advocate rapid enhancement of capacities and systems for soil information collection and monitoring at all levels (global, regional and national).

The Grain & Graze 2 research in WA has

confirmed that “carefully managed grazing in summer can preserve topsoil structure and water infiltration and have no impact on compaction and subsequent crop establishment and yields.” Dr Flower said the WA results suggested that growers could safely use summer stocking rates of up to about four dry sheep equivalent (DSE) per hectare, or a grazing intensity of about 150-200 DSE days/ha.

“This level of grazing was enough to maintain 50 to 70 per cent of ground cover in the trials, or about 2t/ha of cereal stubble cover,” he said. “Sheep should be monitored regularly to ensure that residue levels do not fall below 50%.

NOTICE: Seymour Alternative Farming Expo 20th, 21st & 22nd February 2015, 9am - 5pm daily

Black Wattle – *Acacia Mearnsii*

What's interesting about them and why should we plant them? Where we plant them in our current climatic extremes is another story.

Roots

As a pioneer or scab plant their roots are first to rapidly bind the erosion prone soil following wild fires and like peas fix the atmospheric nitrogen in the soil. Woodland species can rapidly utilise these increased nitrogen levels provided by the nodules of rhizobia bacteria present in their expansive root systems.

Mycorrhizal (meaning "fungus roots") fungi attach to their roots produce "yummy" truffles for bettongs, bandicoots, potoroos etc. The digging or "bio turbations" produced in search of these fungi create micro sites on the soil surface for difficult-to-germinate species.

A good feed of truffles will mean mycorrhizal spores are spread far and wide in the marsupials' droppings. This dispersal process perpetuates the symbiotic relationship between wattle's roots and the mycorrhizal fungi.

Bark

The cracks and crevices in the wattle's bark are home for many insects and invertebrates. The rare Tasmanian Hair Streak Butterfly lays her eggs in these cracks, which hatch to produce caterpillar larva attended by ants (*Indomyrmex* sp.) that feed off the sweet exudates from the larva.

When ready to pupate these "diary farmer"-like ants herd the larva down the wattle and across the grassy understorey to *Eucalyptus viminalis* where they pupate in protective bark crevices. The tannin industry early this century thrived on tannic acid extracted from the bark (up to 45 per cent). The logging of the wattle caused rapid deforestations of our woodlands in the early 1900s. The highly valued tannins were used for tanning, plywood and particleboard adhesives and antiseptics. South Africa now has massive plantations of black wattle for this industry from where Australia imports its tannin products. Aborigines used to soak the bark in a wooden waddie next to an open fire to extract their own antiseptics. Cuts and aching joints were treated with this decoction. They also used to split the

bark into lengths of coarse string to produce baskets and bind the flint heads on.

Wood

Black cockatoos love the grubs (wood moths) in the black wattle wood and voraciously strip the bark for access to these borers. The grubs are also good fishing bait.

Bark gleaner birds such as thornbills thrive on insects present under the bark. 'Wattle and daub' hits were constructed using the flexible limbs to construct a framework for supporting mud walls. This cottage stayer structure was common in early colonial history. Also aborigines constructed their 'lean to's' or 'half dome' huts from these flexible limbs, covering them with bark sheaths and coarse foliage.

Black wattle provides comparable quality to Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) as a craft wood for fine furniture manufacturing. With no 'whiteners' for sheets, the colonists often relied on the burnt black wattle white ash to help rid their soiled linens of dark stains.

These ashes also produced the basis for soap making producing a 'lye' (or alkali) when mixed with water. This 'lye' and fat (game meat) formed a chemical reactive mix ending in soap to be perfumed by herbal extracts or lavender oil. Wattle grub frass (the silken lining of the wattle grub tunnel) was a valuable fuel for fire lighting, and ensued the ease of rekindling glowing embers often carried by the aborigines.

Black wattle flowers provide very nitrogen rich pollen with no nectar. They attract pollen-feeding birds such as our Wattle Birds, Yellow Throated Honey Eaters and New Holland Honey Eaters. The protein rich nectar in the leaf axials is very sustaining for nurturing the growth of juvenile nestlings and young invertebrates, e.g. ants. During winter insects, birds and marsupials are hosted by the black wattle with the aid of their supplies of nectar in their leaf axials. These creatures provide an important predatory role to deal with tree die back caused by scarab beetles and pasture pests.

Aborigines would grind the seeds into nutritious flour rich in polysaccharides and very high in protein content. Flat bread, baked in the ashes, was the delicious, wattle seed flower treat for the hours of grinding and winnowing.