



Community Network News

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



NEWSLETTER VOL. 21 - No. 2- March 2015 - Incorporation No: A0061417V

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

MEETINGS & EVENTS - 2015

Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group

Next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 10th March at the Lockwood South School,
Speaker : Ken Wellard from Neangar Nursery
Presenting good ideas for revegetation in our changing climatic conditions

West Marong Landcare Group next meeting to be held at 8.00pm on Tuesday 21st April 2015 at the Woodstock Hall.

Baringhup Landcare Group - next meeting to be held at 7.30pm at the Baringhup Hall Supper room on **Tuesday 7th April** – Agenda: Final arrangements for the 21st Birthday celebrations & Presentation - Revegetation methods in our changing climatic conditions (Judy)

Nuggetty Land Protection Group next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 4th March at the winery meeting room.

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.**

Cactus Control event to be held at the **Maryborough Road property of Geoff & Noreen Gill (behind the shearing shed) at 10.00am on Sunday 19th April.**

Learn how to poison cactus via the round-up injection method. Bring your own safety gear. and assist Geoff with cleaning up the cactus.

A BBQ lunch will be provided

Swift Parrots – Nationally endangered.

Monitoring the Swift parrot numbers as they fly in from Tasmania will be the responsibility of local community volunteers from May to Sept. this year and members are hoping one or more, will take on the challenge. The traditional monitoring sites are the western edge of the Shelbourne NCR – which may expand following the current forest thinning program and the eastern edge of the Lockwood South State Forest (Boswell Road)

Monitoring training will be available.



Swift parrots are one of Australia's most endangered birds, but until very recently we didn't know why. New research shows that they're being eaten by sugar gliders at their breeding grounds in Tasmania, but even that's not the full story. Conservationists have known for decades that swift parrots are in trouble. Across southeastern Australia, the forests and woodlands where swift parrots live have been converted to farmland, swallowed by urban sprawl and been chipped away by logging. These processes are well known to drive the decline of forest wildlife, but until recently, we didn't fully understand the subtler effects of deforestation on swift parrots.

Swift Parrots - a difficult bird to study

Swift parrots are difficult to study. Although they migrate from the Australian mainland to Tasmania to breed each spring, swift parrots rarely reuse the same nesting area in successive years. Each year the parrots move to a new location to breed depending on where food (nectar from flowering eucalyptus trees) is most abundant. They use hollows high in trees as nests, and these hollows are most abundant in old growth forests.

Using motion activated camera traps deployed high in trees to monitor swift parrot nests, unexpectedly high rates of parrot deaths were recorded. The cameras revealed that sugar gliders visit the nests of swift parrots at night where they kill and eat the adult bird and her eggs. But it turns out sugar glider predation may be a symptom of a deeper problem. On the Tasmanian mainland, where sugar gliders can be found at all swift parrot breeding grounds, we found a link between glider predation and forest cover. Where there was less logging and mature forest cover was higher there was less predation from gliders.

In contrast, at regions where mature forest cover had been reduced (by agriculture, logging, urban development, wildfire etc), swift parrot nests suffered predation rates as high as 100%.

Extract from paper written by Dejan Stojanovic
Postdoctoral Fellow at Australian National University

All Mid-Loddon Landcare Network Group members are busy working on the Action Plans or Blue Prints as some prefer to call them

A printing quote (and editing if required) has been organised and I hear that all groups are getting close to completion.

Biodiversity in the Landscape:

The conservation of biodiversity is now well recognized as a key part of ecologically sustainable natural resource management. This includes grazing and cropping enterprises throughout the agricultural heartland of south-eastern Australia – a set of regions that coincide with large parts of the nation's temperate woodlands.

The conservation of these temperate woodlands on private properties is extremely important as

they support many threatened species of mammals, birds and plants.

The temperate woodland landscapes have been modified extensively over the past 220 years, making the development of ways to integrate conservation with agriculture and livestock grazing a significant research and management challenge. In many ways, the conservation of biodiversity in these areas will be a major test of Australia's ability to develop farming practices that are both financially and ecologically sustainable.

Counting Baringhup's birds:



Ross Dohnt beside his recently fenced woodland remnant.

Site bird List

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
Rhipidura leucophrys	Willie Wagtail
Microeca fascians	Jacky Winter
Psephotus haematonotus	Red-rumped Parrot
Cacatua roseicapilla	Galah
Lichenostomus penicillatus	White-plumed H/eater
Corcorax melanorhamphos	White-winged Chough
Anthus novaeseelandiae	Richard's Pipit
Corvus coronoides	Australian Raven
Colluricincla harmonica	Grey Shrike-thrush
Artamus superciliosus	White-browed Wo/Sw
Gymnorhina tibicen	Australian Magpie
Platycercus eximius	Eastern Rosella
Falcunculus frontatus	Crested Shrike-tit
Climacteris picumnus	Brown Treecreeper
Grallina cyanoleuca	Magpie-lark
Anthochaera carunculata	Red Wattlebird

Transects have been installed and bird counts were documented on five properties in October 2014 by Ben Goonan Environmental Services.

Ben also delivered his detailed bird lists and site photos during a presentation to the group members at their February meeting, creating much interest and discussion.

The landholders involved in the project have all received copies of a booklet which includes lists of the birds found on all properties involved. Additional copies will be available at the next meeting for other interested members.

This can be the first edition booklet that lists birds found in the Baringhup Group area. It would be good to add to it each Spring with members also supplying photos?

Funds could be raised for Ben to return in a few years and repeat the original transect bird counts with perhaps some extra project sites added.

Funding success:

Congratulations to the Eddington Landcare Group who have been successful in raising funds to build a 'fence stile' near the Loddon Bridge at Eddington. When installed this will allow easier access to the Loddon River bank by all local and wider community members interested in fishing or just relaxing on the river bank.

Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group

Clean – up Australia Day was just a minor affair this year as four members met to clean up the Happy Jack Reserve. We were pleased to note that we were obviously not the only community minded people as the picnic area and the main reserve were remarkably tidy.

We know that other members have been concentrating on cleaning their 'own patches'.

Alison Frischke from the GRDC and BCG Grain & Graze 3 Program, was unable to attend the West Marong Landcare Group Meeting in February but sent some notes which were delivered to the members who attended.

Some key results from 2014 Grain & Graze activities

- A trial at Quambatook was sown on 1st April (winter wheats Rosella and Revenue) and 6th May (mid season Scout and short season Mace). Crops were grazed early at GS16 (25-35cm tall) or later at GS30, stem elongation (40-45cm tall) and to different heights; light (to 25cm), moderate (to 15cm) or heavy (down to 8-10cm).

The trial demonstrated that when opportunity presents to early sow wheat varieties, you not only capitalise on early moisture but you can spread the sowing window out in the farm program and present a grazing opportunity for livestock. With this you can either increase your area sown to crop without compromising pasture available (because you can graze), and ease the pressure on other pastures for greater production in spring.

The winter wheat Rosella generally produced more feed than the spring types Scout and Mace, although Mace (with it's vigorous growth) grazed early had good feed value.

Grazing crops **early (in the season & growth stage) to any height**, or grazing **lightly as crops approach GS30**, did not affect grain yields. Even with such a dry spring – there was enough early **moisture and time**, or **leaf area** left after grazing, that enabled plants to recover and fill the grain. The more green leaf you can leave, the greater the ability of the plant to start photosynthesising again and retain their roots for moisture and nutrient uptake.

If a crop has a lower yield potential it is more likely to recover from grazing and not suffer any yield penalty, compared with a crop that has set a high yield potential early – a function of resource availability.

The warm growing conditions last year meant that Revenue, which has a greater vernalisation requirement than Rosella, stayed vegetative well into the season and failed to yield.

- In a neighbouring Early Sown Wheat trial there was a similar story where Wedgetail and Rosella sown at the beginning of April produced more biomass for grazing than spring wheats at the start of May, and yields were unaffected by grazing (in fact increased for Rosella).
- Case studies: may interest some because they're small case studies which use 3 different wheats for grazing; a forage barley Moby at Patchewollock, a slower maturing spring wheat Bolac at Jil Jil, and long season winter wheat Wedgetail at Normanville.

Eventually all reports will be available on a Grain & Graze 3 website but it's not quite up and running yet.

West Marong and Baringhup Landcare Groups - Planning future farm projects

Plans for local monitoring in 2015

I've spoken with Howard and Colin and they are still keen to grow some crop for grazing and have it monitored.

Howard: Howards experience is that he had an 80 acre paddock last year that he sowed to Wedgetail. The paddock had been 2 x 40 acre paddocks and had the fence pulled out. One of those paddocks had been pretty grassy with ryegrass, while the other paddock was clean. The sheep tended to graze the grassy side more and seemed less keen on the clean side which was thicker – perhaps harder to walk through. The grassy side ended up yielding 3-4 bags, compared with the clean side which was essentially ungrazed and went 1 t/ha (5 bags). So despite the grass competition and the grazing, the crop recovered pretty well. This year Howard plans to grow some Wedgetail again.

Colin: At present, Lucerne is still making good feed (*and would have lapped up this latest rain!*). Colin has plans to sow 100 acres of country to cereals for grazing, including a couple of small blocks and some irrigation. He'll sow some Moby barley and Wedgetail in late March. Last week he was just about to go in for a back operation that will slow him up for a couple of months so the forage cereal sowing program might get wound back a bit, but he'll make sure some still goes in and he's keen for us to monitor.

To monitor the paddocks I'll come 6-8 weeks after sowing (when the grower is ready to graze) and take DM cuts and feed tests to measure feed value. We'll erect 3-4 simple sheepmesh exclusion cages (2m x 2m) to keep some ungrazed crop, and record how long the sheep are on the crop for (work out DSE grazing days). Keep an eye on things while the sheep are on the crop – make sure there are no animal health issues (shouldn't be, but there have been cases with pregnant ewes). Then at maturity take cuts in and out of the cages to measure final dry matter, grain yield and quality. We might also monitor another pasture paddock while the sheep are on the crop

to measure the benefit of resting those to bulk up a bit. We could take some ground cover photos as well now I know there's a handy program BCG has to measure it from a photo (rather than guessing by eye!).

So for now it's sit and wait and hope we keep building subsoil moisture that gives a good sowing opportunity for mid-late March. I'll be in touch with Howard and Colin around that time

[Alison Frischke m 0429 922 787 |](mailto:Alison.Frischke@m0429922787)

West Marong and Baringhup Landcare Groups - Planning future farm projects

Christian Bannan attended the West Marong Landcare Group Meeting and discussed with members present, a draft project brief for further intense soil investigations that could be delivered to either or both the West Marong and the Baringhup Group farmers. Funding availability will continue to be researched.

Christian also provided a large amount of information on soil health and cropping conditions including problems and successes across a wide farming area. His information was as usual well received by members.

Baringhup Landcare Group have completed their Victorian Landcare Grant project -

'Promoting Biodiversity in the Baringhup Landscape' – Stage 1 Blue Hills to the Loddon

Protecting eroded drainage lines from Blue Hills to the Loddon and improving water quality in the River.



Fencing of this eroded site has now been completed, with plans in place for a continuation of the project.