



Mid Loddon Landcare 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

Winter social evening held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 9th June at the Marong Hotel. Bring along your stories.

West Marong Landcare Group next meeting to be held at 8.00pm on Tuesday 16th June 2015 at the Woodstock Hall. **Agenda:** TBA

Baringhup Landcare Group - next meeting to be held at 7.30pm at the Baringhup Hall Supper room on **Monday 1st June.**

Nuggetty Land Protection Group next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 3rd June at the winery meeting room.

Eddington Landcare Group- meet in the Red Gum Forest seasonally - Next meeting TBA

Ravenswood Valley Landcare Group. Next meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 24th June 2015

Mid Loddon Landcare Network Management Committee - to be held at the Lockwood South Primary School at 7.30pm on **Monday 29th June 2015. Please note change of date.**

Agenda: Annual meeting which will include an activity and financial report, confirmation of group's representatives and the election of a new Chair for the next two years.

Bendigo Tafe 1080 course dates.

Tuesday 25th August & Tuesday 17th November 9am to 1pm at the Charleston Road campus. Cost \$260 all inclusive. Enrol at 1300 554 248.

Monitoring success:

The elusive Swift Parrots have been spotted as they drop in for energy boosting nectar as they fly north for the winter. Google their call and then see if you can hear/see these small birds as they are feeding on Yellow Gum blossom. Please take note of where and when.

Project funding successes:

Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group have been successful with a City of Greater Bendigo **Environmental Grant – 'Researching Tuan and Sugar Glider populations at Shelbourne'**. The purchase of 40 nest boxes - \$2,546.00. There has been great success in providing additional nest box habitat in the Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve, with Tuans and Sugar gliders quickly moving into their new homes during the last few years. This project will extend the habitat to the north and nest boxes already on hand will be installed in farmland remnants to the west.

Local links to the NSW Great eastern Ranges Glide-away project through a Central Victorian Bio-link Alliance funded project.

An extension to the local Nest Box project – creating habitat for our disappearing local small mammals

The Mid Loddon Landcare Network has applied for funds for scientific supported events that will be available to all Network Groups. The project will provide information about how we can extend the habitat quality and range of our small populations of mammals. This project is a response to -

Twenty-nine Australian land mammals have become extinct over the last 200 years, and 56 are currently facing extinction.

Mammal extinctions: USA & Australia

At a Field Naturalists' seminar in Melbourne on 28 Feb. Dr John Woinarski, lead author of the recent ***Mammal Action Plan 2014***, put up two slides on extinction rates. The one for Australia shows that for every decade from 1800 to now there has been about 1 or 2 mammal species go extinct, with worse rates in 1890s and 1940s. It is not a phenomenon of "less enlightened times" and continues despite a very large conservation

effort in recent decades. By contrast, North America was settled by Europeans from the late 16th century and there are now 350 million humans there, 15 times the number in Australia, which is about the same size as USA. But in over 400 years only one mammal – the sea mink that used to live along the Atlantic coast– has become extinct, whereas Australia has lost probably 33 species, 8 of them in my lifetime since the late 1940s. A further 56 terrestrial mammals are threatened – 20% of the endemics – and yet another 52 species are “near threatened” – another 20%. Since 1992, 39 species have moved into a worse category and 11 into a better one. The major cause of declines and extinctions has been introduced predators, especially feral cats and foxes. Woinarski offered some suggestions for the future:

- We are not fitting well into this land and need to reassess what it means to live in this country, take more responsibility for our custodianship of fauna
- We are an affluent nation and can afford to take action to prevent further extinctions.
- The effort being made to now is very inadequate to deal with deeply entrenched threats to fauna survival.
- The most effective action is broad-scale control of feral cats and foxes.
- We humans are too disconnected from the natural world and need a greater connection with and understanding of our wildlife.
- We should recognise the success stories and learn from them.
- For all the recent extinctions, no person or authority has accepted any accountability or shared responsibility for the loss of the species.
- We need far more effective monitoring of biodiversity and evaluation of the effectiveness of management

Australia’s mammal fauna is the most distinctive in the world. Eighty-six per cent of Australia’s 315 land mammal species occur nowhere else in the world,” Professor Woinarski said.

“People recognise and regret the extinction of the Thylacine [Tasmanian Tiger], but how many

Australians could name many of the other mammals lost in the last few generations, like the Lesser Bilby, Toolache Wallaby, Desert Bettong, Long-tailed Hopping-mouse, Crescent Nailtail Wallaby or Pig-footed Bandicoot?

We see now only a faint shadow of the richness and abundance of what existed when Europeans arrived in Australia.

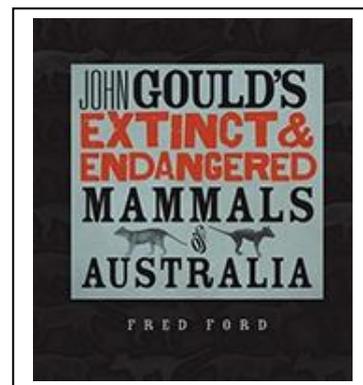
“These species were part of the fabric of our country, and they had lived here for at least tens of thousands of years.”

Locally – Have you seen any of these small mammals recently?

Yellow-footed Antechinus, Dunnart, Tuan, Sugar Glider, Black wallaby

Threatened and endangered species habitat restoration is a high priority for the current State Government.

Book of the Month: John Gould’s Extinct and Endangered Mammals of Australia - *Fred Ford*



Accompanying the pictures are accounts of the animals as they lived in the relatively untouched Australia that John Gould knew, and the evidence of the attitudes of European settlers towards the native fauna.

The author provides the reader with fascinating, and often poignant material and stories of what would be considered today as shameful behaviour and attitudes towards Australian native fauna.

In this book are not only sobering stories of the fate of these animals after Gould’s time, but also success stories of reintroducing species to places, ridding areas of pests and preserving habitat.

Words of Wisdom: The history of a forest is written in the shape of its trees. The shape of each tree tells not only its life story, but also the story of its neighbors: where they lived, who came and went, when they departed.



Good advice - never stand under a tree during a thunderstorm. Original photo from Wikimedia

SOILS: The fertility of the world's soil is reaching a peak that will threaten global food supplies this century unless more is done to preserve the long-term viability of existing farmland, according to a group of leading scientists.

Soil erosion and degradation, combined with the loss of agricultural land to urban sprawl and a booming global population, is one of the most pressing issues facing human security in the 21st century, they said.

The - green revolution - of the past half century, where intensive farming based on agro-chemicals managed to boost food production significantly, will not be able to sustain the growing population this century without greater emphasis on soil preservation and fertility.

The economic growth, urbanisation and rising affluence of developing and emerging economies are driving 'nutrition transitions towards more Western diets rich in sugar, animal fat and protein. **Note that it takes 2.5 to 100 times more resources to produce energy and protein from livestock than from grain.**

Diversity dilemma

Invasive species are one of the most significant known threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services around the world. In Australia invasive vertebrates such as rabbits, feral cats, pigs and

camels impose severe impacts on Australian habitats and wildlife.

But biodiversity is also important in underpinning the ecosystem services for agriculture and the economy. Healthy soil function, pollination, and natural pest control are all driven by biodiversity within agricultural landscapes. Over the past century, crops have lost 75 per cent of their genetic diversity, making them potentially more susceptible to new pathogens or pests.

We rely on some species for the services they provide, such as the European honeybees which pollinate our largely non-indigenous crops Australia is fortunate to be the only continent not yet affected by the devastating bee pest, varroa mite, There is very real potential for it to arrive and spread in Australia.

Citizen science breaks new ground -Rachel Sullivan (full story Ecos magazine)

From monitoring the weather, to testing for acidic soils, or counting koalas and tree-kangaroos in the backyard, recording frog calls in ephemeral swamps and searching for sea dragons off the southern Australian coast, people from all over the country are helping to build a comprehensive picture of the changing state of our environment.

Community environmental monitoring (CEM) has a long history in Australia: the Bureau of Meteorology has been using volunteers to collect rainfall data for more than 100 years, while the information in the respected Atlas of Australian Birds is based almost entirely on 5.5 million observations made by amateur birdwatchers. In recent years growing public awareness of environmental issues relating to land care, conservation and catchment management has brought together scientists, government agencies, academics, concerned residents and landholders in active groups across the country.

This burgeoning interest is a worldwide phenomenon, with both multi-national programs like Reefcheck and Earthwatch and local programs such as wetland monitoring in Namibia, birdwatching in the UK and pollution monitoring in India all adding up to useful capacity in the ongoing need to collect data across vast geographic areas.

Coupled with an explosion in the availability of off-the-shelf technologies, such as mobile phones, GPS systems, digital cameras and the Internet, community groups now have an unprecedented ability to accurately log and record the data they gather and to effect real change in the environments in their care.

Our local Landcare members and students are also involved in important environmental monitoring/data collection for Curlews, Swift parrots, Tuans, and native flora health. This information is continuing to be used by our university researchers who advise our governments. Its then up to us as voters to make sure our governments put the data to good use.

Agricultural Research papers available:

Forage and grain yield of grazed or defoliated spring and winter cereals in a winter-dominant, low-rainfall environment – Alison J. Frischke, James R. Hunt, Dannielle K. McMillan and Claire J. Browne

The grazing of vegetative cereal crops has the potential to fill the early-winter feed-gap in north-western Victoria; however, the amount of forage likely to be produced and any effects on grain yield and quality are unknown. This analysis over five seasons compares the feed value and grain production of different cereal crop species, cultivars and growth habits. Locally adapted winter wheat cultivars are required to increase the use of dual-purpose crops in the region.

Evaluating the feasibility of dual-purpose canola in a medium-rainfall zone of south-eastern Australia: a simulation approach

Jeffrey I. McCormick, Jim M. Virgona, Julianne M. Lilley and John A. Kirkegaard

APSIM-Canola model was modified to simulate dual-purpose canola production to determine its feasibility in drier inland areas with a shorter growing season. The simulation analysis confirmed significant opportunities to achieve valuable livestock grazing from canola crops sown in an early window (before May) without compromising potential yield.

Performance of spring cereal genotypes under defoliation on the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia – R.A. Latta

DM production and grain yield of wheat, barley and oats cultivars, with and without defoliation, at a range of growth stages were measured in dryland farming systems in southern Australia. Results suggest that there are opportunities to incorporate the grazing of cereals to fill a winter feed-gap in the low-rainfall zone of southern Australia.

Bird of the Month: Black Kite



Black Kites are found across the world, swirling in flocks like tornadoes as they float in the thermals searching for food. Aussie Black Kites in the Northern Territory are rumored to spread fires by picking up smoldering sticks and dropping them on dry grass, feasting on the small birds and animals escaping from the flames.

Description

The Black Kite is a medium-sized raptor (bird of prey). From a distance, it appears almost black, with a light brown bar on the shoulder. The plumage is actually dark brown, with scattered light brown and rufous markings, particularly on the head, neck and underparts. The tail is forked and barred with darker brown. This feature gives the bird its alternative name of Fork-tailed Kite. The eye is dark brown and the bill is black with a yellow cere (area of skin around the nostrils). Both sexes are similar. Young Black Kites are generally lighter in colour than the adults, and have a comparatively shallower forked tail. The Black Kite's plumage is similar to other raptors (birds of prey), such as the Little Eagle, Whistling Kite, and Square-tailed Kite. In flight, however, its long forked tail and almost unmarked underwing make it unmistakable.