

December - January 2013

# gecko CLaN

## Landcare News

Gecko CLaN Inc. (Catchment Landcare Network): Warrenbayne/Boho Land Protection Group, Molyullah/Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group, Goomalibee Landcare Group, Sheep Pen Creek Land Management Group, Swanpool Landcare Group, South Yarrawonga Landcare Group, Yarrawonga Urban Landcare Group, Dookie Land Management Group, Burrumine/Tungamah Land Management Group, Granite Creeks Project, Balmattum/Sheans Creek Landcare Group, Burnt Creek Landcare Group, Creightons Creek Landcare Group, Goomal Valley Landcare Group, Longwood East Landcare Group, Strathbogie Tablelands Landcare Group, Nagambie Landcare Group, Graytown/Costerfield Landcare Group, Warby Ranges Landcare Group, Benalla Indian Myna Action Group.

### Important Dates and Events:

25 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas!
10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> February	GHD/MLA Weeds Workshop
12 <sup>th</sup> May	Fred Provenza, Animal Behaviour Researcher, Warrenbayne Boho
May (date TBC)	Native Grasses and Mosaic Burning workshop/Bill Gammage author of 'The Biggest Estate on Earth'

### From the Chair

The Gecko CLaN AGM was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Ian Herbert stood down as Chairman after 2 years of dedicated service, but agreed to continue his involvement as Vice Chairman. Thankyou Ian for your valued input whilst Chairman.

I accepted a nomination as Chairman after relinquishing the role as treasurer. Kevin Kennedy accepted nomination as Treasurer and we thank him for taking on the important role.

### Gecko CLaN New Project in 2014: Resilient Sustainable Agriculture

This project will provide farmer training in the latest practices for agriculture to improve their knowledge of sustainable agricultural techniques. The importance of biodiversity and vegetation/groundcover management in sustainable farming will be the key issue addressed: focusing on topics such as planning for rotational grazing, pasture management, land use capability mapping, landscape water use efficiency, animal requirements, plant identification, soil structure and the importance of carbon for soil health.

Project activities and topics will include:

- Shut the gate stock containment
- Land class site visit
- Native grass ID
- Mapping
- Rotational grazing
- Fencing/water design
- How to grow the feed
- Pasture Varieties
- Stock handling
- Animal nutrition
- Vet
- Water

I feel privileged and excited to be taking on the leadership role at this time, but I hope in the near future others can be inspired to take on executive positions to provide fresh input. The Gecko CLaN is certainly a great organisation to be part of. There are a number of interesting and very useful projects continuing or beginning in 2014, which you will hear about in future newsletters as they unfold next year.

May I wish everyone a joyous Christmas and relaxing break into the New Year and I will touch base in the next newsletter.

Doug James  
Chairman, Gecko CLaN Inc.

### GBCMA Expression of Interest COMING SOON

The Goulburn Broken Expression of Interest period is opening soon. The expressions of interest allow the GBCMA to see what projects are in need of funding and gauge interest in the region so that they can attract/distribute funding as needed. It also assists the GBCMA to determine community priorities. If you have any upcoming project ideas please contact Kerri or Melanie for assistance and development of an application.



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



**GOULBURN  
BROKEN**  
CATCHMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITY

## Ideas Fertilised at Strathbogrie Trial

The Strathbogrie alternative fertiliser's trial site once again attracted interest as the Strathbogrie Tableland Landcare group presented a field day on the results so far. Held on the 28th November, the field day stimulated discussion on soil health and profitability. The morning was held at the alternative fertiliser's trial site on David Hamilton's property, 'Bolarum'.

The purpose of the day was to present all evidence to attendees and allow them to make their own decisions on what would suit their enterprise. Greg Bekker (DEPI) presented the results from the soil tests and bulk density measurements, and he highlighted the need to look at why you are making decisions, asking participants what are they doing with the extra grass produced. A cost-benefit ratio will be created to assist those interested with decision making.

David Hamilton spoke briefly about the different grazing regimes which had been applied to the site and how this has influenced pasture growth and impacted on his enterprise. The trial site has now been fenced into four parts and the next step is to look at rotational grazing and how this may influence results.

Cath Botta spoke about soil health and the soil microbiology tests. Unfortunately the difference in diversity and volume of soil biota was so small that there could be no conclusions drawn from the soil microbiology tests, however this generated good discussion around soil health and soil biology.

The trial was set up to test different alternative fertilisers that are available, these include Pig Poo SE, SeaSol, Nutrasol, Rum, CalSap, Superfect, Bactive8, BioAg and VicMill. For further information about trial results, fertilisers or methods please contact David Jamieson on 0423 328 321 or Greg Bekker on 57 611 631.

This project has been brought to you by the Strathbogrie Alternative Fertiliser Trial & Strathbogrie Tableland Landcare Group, and Goulburn Broken CMA SoilCare project, with funding from Caring for Our Country.



*Greg Bekker demonstrating how to take pasture cuts with Tom Abbottsmith Youl and Rob Hodges at the alternative fertiliser trial site at Bolarum.*

## Indian Myna Project Update

**What impact are we having?  
Please report numbers of  
Indian Myna's destroyed to  
Samantha Hood (Benalla  
Indian Myna Action Group  
Data Coordinator) on  
5762 7795 or  
[benallamynagroup@yahoo.com](mailto:benallamynagroup@yahoo.com)**



On the 17<sup>th</sup> October the Benalla Indian Myna Action Group presented an information session about the threat of Indian Myna's and how to control them, which was held at BPACC. Local wildlife ecologist Lance Williams presented along with Max Caithness from the Yarra Indian Myna Action Group. Lance highlighted the threat of Indian Myna's to native wildlife and their behaviour while Max spoke in detail about the trapping process.

Due to an embarrassing error made by Matt Dowling about Indian Myna's, Desma Versteegen was invited to do a full interview about the group and on what is happening around Benalla on Indian Myna's. Well done to Desma for delivering yet another high quality interview.

A BBQ lunch was held on Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup> November to thank all those who had helped out with trap building at the CAL community farm in the old men's shed. The group has done a fantastic job getting over one hundred traps out into the Benalla area, so well done to all those involved.



Max Caithness from Yarra Indian Myna Action Group presenting about how to trap at the session.

## Sharpening up on Chilean Needle Grass

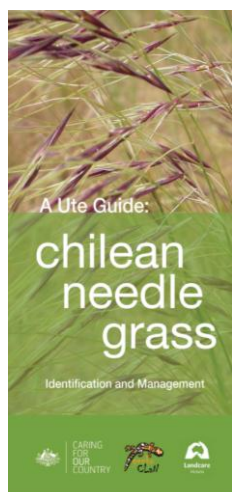
Chilean needle grass information sessions were rolled out in November, with great support from Landcare groups. Barry Oswald presented the sessions which provided participants with the ability to identify the weed and best management techniques. The sessions were a great introduction for those new to the problem and a good refresher for those already aware of Chilean needle grass. It was a good reminder for attendees to with infestations on their property to map them and set up a control program.

Chilean needle grass is a highly invasive weed which poses a major threat to agriculture and biodiversity. If left unchecked the weed will take over large areas of pastures and native grasslands, reducing productivity and quality and extent of native grasslands. Chilean needle grass has a highly resilient reproductive system and is very difficult to identify, causing it to become well established before being noticed.

The Sheep Pen Creek Land Management Group are congratulated for their efforts to combat Chilean needle grass within their Landcare area. They have been hard at work spraying infestations on roadsides and informing adjoining landholders of the problem. Small signs have been put up on fences to mark infestations. This has been a long battle for the group who are now getting on top of the problem through conscientious work over the last 10 years. Spraying has been done with glyphosate coloured with fluoro pink paint so everyone can see what has been done. The group has been able to do the work thanks to a federal government CFOC Community Landcare grant. The group are a model for other groups to follow, so well done to all those involved.

Waterways are a major source of spread of Chilean needle grass and we believe there are infestations along the Upper Ryan's Creek, Holland's Creek and Watchbox Creek. The Gecko CLaN is compiling a list of adjoining landholders who have Chilean needle grass infestations, with a view to gaining funding for treatment beginning in the upper catchment. If you manage property adjoining these waterways there is a high possibility that you may have Chilean needle grass infestations. Please check along waterways and if infestations are found please register your name, address and provide details to Melanie.

For more information about the project or a 'Ute Guide' to Chilean needle grass please contact Melanie, or go to <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/other-declared-weeds/chilean-needle-grass> or <http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/Chileanneedlegrass/>



This project has been enabled thanks to a federal government CFOC Community Landcare Grant.



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY

## Reverse the Dirt

Our expert erosion team, Brad Costin, Kerry Goshnick and Kerri Robson are continuing to visit sites and are confronting some major erosion challenges. The team are currently looking at sites from across the Gecko CLaN region and are still looking for more sites for the project. The project has highlighted that it is not only steep hill landscapes that are at risk of erosion, but that erosion is present in many different types of landscapes including the flatter northern areas. The team is also fixing old failed erosion works and collecting a great amount of knowledge from this.

This project is being delivered with thanks to a CFOC Community Landcare Grant. Due to the success of the 'Reverse the Dirt' project the Gecko CLaN are seeking additional funding including a federal government Innovation Grant application, however the future of this funding avenue is currently unclear.

For further information or for details on how to get involved please contact Kerri Robson, Landcare Project Officer.



## Peter Walsh attends Warby Ranges Landcare

By Pat Larkin

The Warby Range Landcare Group (WRLCG) held its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary A.G.M on Thursday November 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 at Murdoch House Wangaratta with an attendance of 50 at which the Honourable Peter Walsh M.L.A., Minister for Food Security and Water, was the guest speaker.

The evening commenced with a brief introduction from outgoing President, Bill Johnson and a welcome to country from Bangerang/Pangarang community Elder "Uncle Wally" Cooper. Among the attendance were a number of non-members representing both the Goulburn/Broken & North East Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare Networks, Parks Victoria, Department of Environment and Primary Industry and the Bangerang Aboriginal Community (including WRLCG members and non-members), all of whom during the group's lifetime have been involved in providing various support roles and/or partnerships.

Minister Walsh's address was largely focussed on Food Security into the future with little attention being given to the 'green' aspect of Landcare, however he did acknowledge the importance of agricultural sustainability. The Minister's address attracted only three questions, so one can probably congratulate him on being an astute politician in steering his topic away from funding and staff reductions.

The history and achievements of the WRLCG over the twenty one years were mentioned particularly the fact that since the first twelve months of it has not been without at least one project in progress at any one time. The group has demonstrated an extensive history in pioneering projects which became the "norm" including soils, the facilitation for the formation and naming of the Ovens Landcare Network, the entering into projects with traditional custodian communities (the Bangerang/Pangarang being the recipients of the inaugural Victorian Indigenous Landcare Award having been nominated by WRLCG), the facilitation of the first Senate Inquiry into Landcare appearing in Wangaratta, the , "Mountains To Murray" Vegetation Corridor involving six Landcare groups and the first external presentation of the Calici Virus Research Unit.

It is anticipated this group will remain an active community organization able to think, plan and operate both "in and outside the square" into the future and remain a creative, innovative leader in Landcare.

## Moly-Tat visits Warrenbayne Nest Boxes

While planning 2014's program for the Molyullah and Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group, Bob Whytlaw suggested that "They are doing good things with the squirrel/sugar glider boxes at Warrenbayne and we should go and have a look, to see how it is done." We all agreed and Bob contacted Alan Neander to organise a morning. A small interested group gathered at the Warrenbayne Hall on Sunday December 1. Children, the future of Landcare, also came.

Alan and Debbie described what they had learnt and we looked into a number of boxes in a number of locations. We were fortunate to see nesting animals and even a hive of bees. The remote camera was demonstrated as was the old fashioned ladder approach.

Those who attended were extremely interested as it was an informative and valuable morning.

I am sure that the enthusiasm of the Warrenbayne Group, will transfer to the Molyullah Tatong members, and with more investigation, some nesting boxes may appear in the Molyullah Tatong area.

Many thanks to Bob Whytlaw for organising the event and the Warrenbayne members for sharing their experiences.

Frank Fisher,  
Secretary, Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group



## Is YOUR group OHS up to scratch?

The Gecko CLaN are adopting a new Occupational Health and Safety plan. We encourage all groups within the Gecko CLaN to adopt it too. Please get in touch with us if you are interested in using the plan or have any questions about what OHS means for your group.

### Contact Details:

**Landcare Project Officer**  
Melanie Addinsall  
PO Box 124, Benalla 3672  
Ph: 5761 1560  
Mob: 0439 040 955  
[landcare1@iinet.net.au](mailto:landcare1@iinet.net.au)

**Landcare Project Officer**  
Kerri Robson  
208 James Rd, Warrenbayne 3673  
Ph: 5763 2465  
Mob: 0418 140 710  
[landcare2@iinet.net.au](mailto:landcare2@iinet.net.au)

**Gecko CLaN Chairperson**  
Doug James  
Ph: 0418 518 247  
[dougjanjames@hotmail.com](mailto:dougjanjames@hotmail.com)

**Goulburn Broken CMA Manager  
Landcare & Communities**  
Tony Kubeil  
Ph: 5761 1619  
[tonyk@gbcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:tonyk@gbcma.vic.gov.au)

**Goulburn Broken CMA Regional  
Landcare Facilitator**  
Charlie Sexton  
Ph: 5761 1506  
[charlies@gbcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:charlies@gbcma.vic.gov.au)



## Native Grasses Hot Topic at Sheep Pen Creek

Sally Mann inspired a small group at the Caniambo Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> November about the quality and extent of native grasses present in the local area.

The Sheep Pen Creek Land Management group hosted the day which covered species present in the local area, key points of how to identify native grasses, how to promote and manage native grasses.

Sally pointed out that nearly all of the local native grasses are perennial, therefore if you can't pull it out its likely to be a native.

The group then went on a tour of some high quality sites and were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of two Brolgas flying above cemetery road.



*Transforming a farm dam into a wetland at Vin Murray's property. These works form part of the Strathbogie Ranges CMN Farm Wetlands for Woodlands Project, of which Gecko CLaN is a project partner.*



### Wanted: Revegetation Sites

The Gecko CLaN are currently looking for revegetation sites for 2014. If you are interested in doing revegetation please contact Melanie on the details listed.

### Project Officer Report

The excitement of spring and its many events has now ended and we are busy preparing for next year including undertaking site visits for our revegetation and erosion projects. The Goulburn Broken CMA 'Expression of Interest' application period is opening shortly, so if you are in need of funding please get in contact with Kerri and I so we can help you put in a submission.

We extend a warm welcome and thanks to Doug James for taking on the role as Gecko CLaN chairman. A Pasture Cropping trial participant and active Warby Ranges Landcare member, Doug takes on the role with a wealth of knowledge about sustainable agriculture and Landcare issues. Having been with Gecko CLaN for many years, he is a highly respected member and will provide strong leadership for the organisation. We look forward to working with Doug on some great projects in 2014. We extend great thanks our outgoing chairman Ian Herbert for his tireless work and immense contribution towards enhancing Gecko CLaN as a professional organisation.

We are looking for additional executive committee members, so if you are interested in getting involved in this great organisation please contact Kerri or myself. And finally, I wish you all a safe and happy festive season surrounded by family and friends.

Melanie