

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 Yarrowong Landcare Group, Yarrowong 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:

- 17th October** Indian Myna Information Session, 7.30pm BPACC
- 17th October** Swanpool Landcare Group AGM, 8pm
- 18th October** Sheep Pen Creek Indian Myna Information Session, 6.30pm, Violet Town Community Centre Supper Room
- 21st October** Balmattum/Sheans Creek AGM, 7.30pm, Flour Mill, Euroa
- 28th October** Sheep Pen Creek Chilean Needle Grass Information Session, 6pm, Caniambo Hall
- 6th November** Gecko CLaN Annual General Meeting, 6pm, Parish Perfumery, Violet Town
- 9th November** Creating Community Connections Expo, 2 – 4 pm, Fawckner Drive, Benalla.
- 10th – 12th November** Chilean Needle Grass Information Sessions, (see page 3 for details)
- 13th November** Indian Myna Action Group Meeting, DEPI
- 28th November** Strathbogie Alternative Fertiliser Field Day
- 2nd – 3rd December** Granite Creeks Project ACUP Course

The Granite Creeks Project

Rabbit Control Program – Baiting & Ripping Program 13/14

Agricultural Chemical Users Permit Course/ACUP with 1080 certificate.

Open to all Landholders of the Landcare groups within the Granite Creeks Project area. The granite Creeks projects will subsidise 50% of the cost to all Landcare members within Granite Creeks Project.

DATE: 2nd & 3rd December, 2013

COST: ACUP course is \$300 per person
1080 course is \$200 per person

LOCATION: Euroa, Community education centre,
46-50 Binney St

REGISTER BY: 31st October

BOOKINGS: Kerri Robson, Landcare Project Officer on
0418 140 710 or landcare2@iinet.net.au



From the Chair

This is my final newsletter article as Gecko CLaN Chairperson. After two years at the helm it's now time to step back and give someone else a turn.

The most rewarding aspect of the job has been the performance of our Landcare Officers – Melanie, Kerri and Jacci. Their abilities shine out and have helped to raise our profile in the region. Without their competence and work effort we wouldn't be able to undertake the broad range of projects that we now have on our list. I'll save my detailed thanks for the AGM.

I don't get to retire completely though. I will still remain on the Executive Committee, as long as more jobs are not sent my way. At home in the Swanpool District I have plenty to attend to with a large project to manage at the Swanpool Hall plus my recent appointment as President of the Swanpool Cinema committee.

I leave at a time when projects and our funding are now ticking along quite nicely. With recent project grants we have achieved a good balance between income and workload. The only downside is that Mel and Kerri have less time than we would like available to directly support our many Landcare groups. We're certainly targeting field days and activities across our whole geographic region so no one should miss out entirely.

Should we be doing more? It's up to you to have your say through your own group's representatives at Gecko CLaN meetings. We'd like to hear from you.

Thanks for all your support and I hope to see you at Swanpool Cinema if not around the traps at a Landcare event,

Ian Herbert



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



**GOULBURN
BROKEN**
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY

State Landcare Awards



Congratulations to Brad Costin for winning the Dr. Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award at the State Landcare Awards held at the beautiful Government House on 28th August. This award is awarded to an employee of DEPI or a Victorian CMA who has demonstrated an outstanding contribution towards reversing land degradation in a primary production setting. Brad will use the award to further increase his understanding of how landscapes work in terms of the interaction of soil, water and land use. Brad will travel throughout New South Wales and Queensland to investigate soil conservation methods used and will utilise local knowledge. The Gecko CLaN is proud to be working with Brad on our new erosion project, 'Reverse the Dirt', and hopes that the award will position the project at the forefront of innovation in erosion control.

After winning the Regional Landcare Awards the Gecko CLaN was nominated for the State Landcare Awards and several executive members attended the ceremony. Congratulations go to all groups within the Gecko CLaN for their hard work and initiative in delivering some great projects. Congratulations also go to Kerri Robson who was nominated for the facilitator award. Kerri's energy, dedication and long hours are invaluable to the Gecko CLaN and the nomination is well deserved.

For more information on the winners on this year's Landcare awards go to <http://www.landcarevic.net.au/2013-victorian-landcare-awards>



The Gecko CLaN crew at the State Landcare Awards

Flying the Landcare Flag at Yarrowonga Show

The South Yarrowonga Landcare group again held their annual Landcare Stall at the Yarrowonga Show on 5th October. The focus of the information and displays was about wetlands and their rehabilitation, including examples of wetlands that have received environmental watering. Landcare members engaged the community at the stall which was shared with Sarah Ning from the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group.

Junior school students were invited to make frog masks and frog eggs in a pond, after learning about the lifecycle of a frog. Winners of a frog quiz for middle and senior school students received chocolate frogs. The theme was chosen as the group eagerly awaits the results of their recent state government Communities for Nature grant application to restore the wetland adjacent to the Yarrowonga Waste Water Treatment Plant.



Alex Sloane, Doug Wilson (President of South Yarrowonga Landcare Group) and John Cummins



Sarah Ning from the Murray-Darling Wetlands Association talking to SYLG Vice President Doug Carmichael and Lorraine Carmichael



SYLG members Bruce and Janine Myers, James Carmichael, and Jeanette Wilson speaking with Sutha Ooruthiran

Turning up the Heat on Chilean Needle Grass

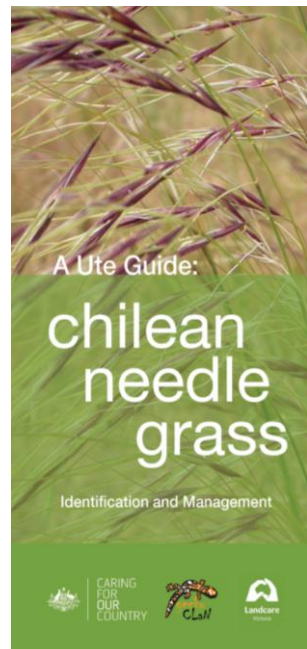
The Gecko CLaN is again delivering its education campaign to combat Chilean needle grass thanks to a CFOC Community Landcare Grant. Chilean needle grass is a highly invasive weed which could be devastating for agriculture in the Goulburn Broken region. It is listed as a 'restricted' noxious weed in Victoria, which means Chilean needle grass or any product contaminated with the seed cannot be traded or transported, creating large financial implications for farmers.

To address this, the Gecko CLaN is running a series of information sessions on identification and best management practice to equip landholders with the knowledge needed to combat the spread of Chilean needle grass. The biggest problem is that the weed is commonly mistaken for native grasses, especially native spear grasses, wallaby grass and tall fescue. It is a vigorous competitor in pastures and native grasslands and can completely take over large areas if left unchecked.

Once established, Chilean needle grass is very difficult to control producing three types of seed. The main seeds ability to stick to nearly anything is the greatest contributor to the weeds spread. It readily attaches to vehicles, machinery and animals and can also be dispersed in waterways and by flood events.

The information sessions aim to educate landholders and concerned locals on identification and management of Chilean needle grass, including control options and reducing seed spread. Information sessions will be held:

- 28th October** Caniambo Hall, 6pm
- 10th November** Milawa Recreation Reserve, 3 – 5 pm
(hosted by Wangaratta City Council)
- 11th November** Molyullah Hall, 8am Breakfast
- 11th November** Longwood Community Centre, 6.30pm
- 12th November** Dookie College, 8am
- 12th November** Goomalibee CFA Shed, 6pm, BBQ tea



Reservations essential to
Melanie Addinsall
(03) 5761 1560 or
landcare1@iinet.net.au
Or Kerri Robson - for
Longwood (03) 5763 2465
landcare2@iinet.net.au

For a free copy of the Ute Guide to Chilean needle grass, please contact us.

Indian Myna Project Update



Benalla Indian Myna Action Group member and expert trapper Graeme Dyer (photo featured in the Herald Sun)

The Indian Myna Project is flying along with the Benalla Indian Myna Action group receiving plenty of interest, especially from the media. The group have been featured several times in the Herald Sun and were recently featured on Goulburn Murray ABC. Desma Versteegen was interviewed on behalf of the group and received questions from callers alongside Max Caithness from the Yarra Indian Myna Network.

Trap building efforts are continuing every Wednesday afternoon at the CAL Community Farm, Sydney Rd. To date the group has built and sold 102 traps. Volunteers are still needed to assist with trapping and awareness raising.

The group is gathering data on how many Indian Myna's have been destroyed in the Benalla area. If you have been trapping please send your data through to our data coordinator Sam to 5762 7795 or benallamynagroup@yahoo.com

The Benalla Indian Myna Action Group are holding an information session:

Date: Thursday 17th October 2013

Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre
57 Samaria Road, Benalla

Reservations essential to 5762 7795 or
benallamynagroup@yahoo.com



Giving a helping hand trap building at CAL Community Farm

Agroforestry in Vanuatu – Tree by tree, village by village

Reflections from Ex-Pasture Cropping Chairman David Dore who has recently taken an Agroforestry position in Vanuatu.

Threatening rain did not prevent Vanuatu Forestry Department staff from setting out to visit 3 villages in South Santo on Sunday 22nd September 2013. Their mission: to encourage landowners to consider planting seedlings of Nangai (*Canarium indicum*), as a profitable addition to their gardens.

In Vanuatu everyone is a gardener. You live on what you grow, so agroforestry is a way of being – and one of the big advantages of Nangai is that it produces edible (and saleable) nuts after about 6 years that sell for about 300 Vt/kg (~\$3/kg).

Team Nangai for the day consisted of 5 Forestry Department staff – James, Sami, Judy, Rinat and Etel, plus 3 of Judy's kids and myself.

After about one bone-jarring hour of driving down the coast in the back of the ute, past extensive coconut plantations and grazing cattle, we got to our first destination – Serere, where the women went to 'spread the word' while we continued on up a fairly diabolical road up onto the plateau to the village of Narango.

The reason for the Sunday visit is that, in Vanuatu, the best place to catch everyone is at church on a Sunday morning. Let me tell you that Church is long in Vanuatu, but the singing is fantastic. A personal favourite on the day, was 'I got no easy road'. Another plus of the church was that we were inside when the first of the rain for the day started.

Well church came and went, and we exited immediately after the pastor and then shook hands with everyone as they came out of church – but still no talk about Nangai. We were informed that those that wanted to would come to the nakarmal (the meeting house) shortly. We went and waited and eventually people turned up bringing containers of kakae (island food) to share with us.

The traditional staple here is a mixture of grated manioc and coconut milk, flavoured with meat or vegetables. A small serving is recommended. If they don't get any interest in Nangai in Narango it will be because I didn't clean up my plate....James eventually led a discussion about Nangai and people were interested enough to take down his phone number to place orders for seedlings.

Leftovers from the meal were thoughtfully wrapped in banana leaves for us to take home, and we loaded up and bounced back down the hill and collected the other half of the team for our third visit for the day, to a village on the water called Nakere.

Here the discussion was more energetic, with a couple of experienced farmers pointing out that, sometimes the Nangai doesn't produce nuts for 15 years, or sometimes you get your crop stolen just as it is ripe for harvest, however they were still fairly positive, with a recognition of the need to diversify crop options in the face of very low copra (coconut) prices.

The rain started to fall so it was time to load up and get a thorough pizzling on the way home – warm rain though and you dry in no time.

Sometimes it feels like nothing much is happening in Vanuatu, but you can't underestimate the value of face to face discussion. There was no Powerpoint, no posters, no free stickers or T-shirts – but it was appreciated, in the fullest sense of the word, that 'The Forestry' had come out to talk about this planting option. I hummed 'I got no easy road' all the way home.



Samson, James & Sami out the front of the Narango nakarmal, waiting for the punters to arrive.



Where to catch all the farmers on a Sunday morning



Team Nangai

Landcare crucial in Strathbogie Shire roadside pest and weed program

Strathbogie Shire has been working with Landcare to implement its Roadside Pest and Weed program after recently receiving Victorian Government funding. Following a meeting with the Gecko CLaN, the shire arranged to work with Landcare groups to deliver the program. This kind of delivery in partnership with Landcare is a first for the region and all Landcare groups in the Shire were eager to be involved.

The process has involved the Landcare groups identifying the major weeds in their Landcare area and mapping major weeds and rabbit infestations. The Landcare group has been responsible for liaising with the contractor, and checking that the works have been completed satisfactorily when the contractor has finished. Greg Wood from DPI has been working closely with Strathbogie Shire Council and Landcare groups to ensure weeds targeted are in line with state priorities.

The first round of the project has been a great success between Landcare and the Strathbogie Shire. The shire is looking forward to working in with the Landcare groups in the next round of funding that is now available.

If you see any roadside pest and weeds report it to your local Landcare group.

For more information please contact – Kerri Robson Landcare Project Officer.



Direct seeding at Goomalibee



Balmattum Sheans Creek Landcare Group AGM

Monday 21st October 2013

Guest Speaker:
Lindsay Mustan speaking on Indian Myna control
Venue: Flour Mill, Euroa
Time: 7.30pm
RSVP: Chrys Antonis
on 5795 1908 or
warringa@activ8.net.au

All welcome



How much Revegetation is Enough?

We have now entered year two of the Goulburn Broken CMA revegetation project, which will now be called 'How Much Revegetation is Enough?' (formerly known as the Landscape Restoration Trial). This new phase is exactly the same as the first year and will still involve research activities by Deakin University, including yearly bird surveys.

We are currently looking for new sites within our target areas in Earlston, Goomalibee, Warrenbayne/Baddaginnie and Devenish areas.



Wetland and planting at Earlston

Pasture Croppers get expert Soils Advice

On Friday 11th October Don Cook from Farmright Technical Services conducted a plant tissue and soil test interpretation workshop with the Pasture Cropping group. At the workshop Don went through each of the tests from the Pasture Cropping Trial sites with trial participants providing analysis and problem solving.

Don urged the group never to make management decisions based on single test results, and to always make sure decisions are made using a variety of test results and visual analysis. Another handy piece of advice is if you are trialling soil ameliorants, always leave a control area untreated. The trial sites provided a wide range of soil types and Don provided individualised management advice for each.

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Reverse the Dirt

Kerri has been working closely with experts Kerri Goschnick and Brad Costin looking at erosion sites as part of the Gecko CLaN's new CFOC project Reverse the Dirt: New Innovations in Erosion Control. The project will encourage the adoption of practices to mitigate soil erosion, especially in areas affected by recent fires in the Violet Town area. The project will assist farmers through delivering on-ground works and providing demonstration days. For enquiries about the project please contact Kerri Robson.



Project Officer's Report

Kerri and I are busy preparing for spring; Indian Myna events, Chilean needle grass sessions, erosion works, Pasture Cropping days and revegetation works. We have recently submitted a few applications for the Communities for Nature grants including an erosion project and the South Yarrawonga Wetlands project, but we will not hear the outcome for some time. AGM season has kept us busy attending many meetings with interesting guest speakers.

The photography competition has now concluded and we have received beautiful entries, many of these will be showcased on the new website. The winner will be announced at the Gecko CLaN AGM on the 6th November. It is important that as many people as possible from local Landcare groups attend the AGM, especially the two network representatives from each group. There will be a couple of spots available on the executive committee, so if you are interested in getting involved I encourage you to speak with our Chairman Ian Herbert, Kerri or myself.

Melanie