



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 Yarrowonga Landcare Group, Yarrowonga Urban Landcare Group, Dookie Land Management Group, Burramine/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, Strathbogrie Tablelands Landcare Group, Nagambie Landcare Group, Warby Ranges Landcare Group, Benalla Indian Myna Action Group.

Important Dates and Events:

- 8th May **Managing Native Grasslands with Mosaic Burning (Bill Gammage)**
- 12th May **How Behaviour Links Humans, Animals and Landscapes (Fred Provenza)**
- 19th May **Erosion Field Day – Balmattum Sheans Ck**
- 2nd June **Low Stress Stock Management and Market Trends, Euroa**
- 14th June **Swanpool Environmental Film Festival**
- 27th June **Goulburn Broken Natural Resource Management Awards, Swanpool**

From the Chair

What a wonderful autumn break we are receiving after the long hot summer. Even after a lifetime of living in and working with nature, I still marvel at her response after a good autumn rain. As Landcarers continue to repair and enhance the areas in which they live, the current conditions are a great reminder that often all that is needed is some patience and that magic ingredient called water.

Our various projects continue to go well, thanks to the guidance of our facilitators Melanie and Kerri. The associated field days and workshops have been well attended and informative. No doubt this will continue as the year progresses. I urge everyone to come along to any session that they think will enhance their knowledge of farming and Landcare activities.

Until next time,
Doug James,
Chairman, Gecko CLaN Inc.

Managing Native Grasslands with Mosaic Burning

Thursday 8th May, 9am – 3pm

Learn about how Aborigines used fire to manage and shape the Australian landscape and how traditional knowledge could be applied to current management practices.



Prof. Bill Gammage – Author of ‘The Biggest Estate on Earth – How Aborigines made Australia’. This revolutionary book challenges previously accepted ecological ideas about the Australian Landscape before European settlement. His findings are that Aboriginal people used a complex system of

land management using fire and the life cycles of native plants to ensure plentiful wildlife and plant foods throughout the year.

Dr Fred Cahir – Author and Indigenous Studies Coordinator at Federation University of Australia. Dr Cahir will be speaking about the role of fire in Aboriginal Culture.

Benalla Performing Arts Centre
Lunch and morning tea provided
Bookings essential – Kerri Robson (03) 5763 2465 or
0418 140 710 landcare2@iinet.net.au

Gecko CLaN Website Now LIVE

Check out the new Gecko CLaN website at www.geckoclan.com.au

The website features information and updates about projects and other Gecko CLaN news. The website has a page for each Landcare group in the network, which will showcase their work and provide a strong online presence for new members and funders. Please forward group information and photos to landcare1@iinet.net.au

Goulburn Broken NRM Awards Nominations Open

27th June, Swanpool Cinema

The awards will be held in the Swanpool Cinema and organisers are looking for films about local initiatives to utilise the cinema. Nominations are now open. For details go to www.gbcma.vic.gov.au



Resilient Sustainable Agriculture Project Update

'You can't manage what you don't measure' was a key take home message from the Gecko CLaN's 'Making it to the Autumn Break' field day on Wednesday 19th March. The day was presented by Ash Paech of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, who spoke in detail about managing feed supply to maintain groundcover and therefore landscape health.

Ash spoke about when to feed, how to feed and how to ensure best value for money through feed testing to enable comparison. Ash explained how it is important to test for dry matter, digestibility, metabolisable energy and protein, and how to budget using DSE. Ash highlighted the importance of farming to the capability of the land. Gecko CLaN would like to thank Doug James for the use of his shearing shed and paddock again.

The next field day in the series, 'How much fertiliser is enough?' was held on Tuesday 8th April at Molyullah Hall. The day was presented by Sue Briggs who demonstrated Holbrook Landcare and DEPI's new Phosphorus calculator, enabling greater efficiencies in phosphorus application. The day provided participants with a greater understanding of how the phosphorus cycle works, types and importance of soil tests and where the risk factors or variables are in the system.

The tool allows users to determine rates (maintenance and target levels) and costs, providing accurate figures on which to make decisions of how to spend the limited bucket of money. The phosphorus calculator is an Excel spreadsheet with instructions that can be downloaded from the Holbrook Landcare Network site:

<http://www.holbrooklandcare.org.au/>

The next Resilient Sustainable Agriculture field day in the series will be about low stress stock management and market trends on 2nd June at Euroa.



Molyullah-Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group members Kent Muller, Andrew Muller and Andrew Marriott learning how to use the phosphorus calculator with Landcare Project Officer Kerri Robson.

To subscribe to receive your Gecko CLaN newsletter via email please contact:
landcare1@iinet.net.au

How Behaviour Links Humans, Animals and Landscapes

**One day workshop with Fred Provenza
Monday 12th May, Swanpool Cinema**



Fred Provenza is one of the foremost authorities on wild and domestic animal behaviour, specialising in improving productivity and enhancing biodiversity, by allowing animals to regulate their intake with a balanced diet.

Provenza encourages them to eat and browse a range of plants and mineral supplements as well as encouraging animals to graze more effectively and efficiently while rehabilitating their habitat.

This workshop relates to the national SERCS project (trial site at Warrenbayne) which aims to enhance productivity through biodiversity.

The workshop will cover functional relationships of how behaviour links human wellbeing with the health of soil, plants, and herbivores. It will highlight behavioural principles and processes and discuss their implications for:

- Improving animal performance in feedlots, pastures, and rangelands.
- Enhancing and maintaining biodiversity through grazing.
- Restoring ecosystems using grazing to embrace invasive species and reduce impacts to riparian areas.
- Mitigating human-wildlife conflicts to enhance wildlife values.
- Minimizing damage to valuable crops by wild and domesticated herbivores by altering food and habitat preferences.
- Enhancing carbon sequestration through grazing.

The day will include a visit to the SERCS project trial site at Hill's property, Warrenbayne. SERCS Project Officer Donna Rayner will present a project update with information on the shrubs that have been planted at Warrenbayne and the survival rates for all the sites now that the seedlings have survived the first summer.

Monday 12th May, 9am – 4.30pm

Swanpool Cinema

Morning Tea and Lunch Provided

Cost: Free

Bookings Essential to Melanie Addinsall, Landcare Project Officer landcare1@iinet.net.au, (03) 5761 1560 or 0439 040 955

For more information go to www.billhill.com.au or contact Bill Hill on (03) 5763 2360



Appetite for Grazable Shrubs

Efficient digestion and reduction of methane were key themes of the 'Grazable Shrubs' field day at Warrenbayne on Wednesday 5th March. The field day was part of the national 'Shrubs for Emissions and Carbon Storage' (SERCS) project which includes a trial site on Hill's property at Warrenbayne. The project is trialling on-farm use of a range of different Australian native shrubs to demonstrate their anti-methanogenic properties.

The day included a presentation by SERCS project officer Donna Rayner who provided practical advice for including native shrubs into your grazing enterprise, in a range of different climates. Participants then visited the trial site before enjoying a delicious lunch catered for by Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group.



Al Heffron and Bill Hill inspecting plantings as part of the SERCS trial site at Hills property at Warrenbayne.

What's happening at Yarrowonga?



Ron Hocking of Yarrowonga Urban Landcare Group, speaking with an interested community member at the Landcare stall.

Yarrowonga Urban Landcare group have been busy with working bees to maintain and plant new areas throughout the town. Recently Judy Frankenberg from Murray-Darling Working Wetlands Group delivered a presentation to Landcare members about the work of their group.

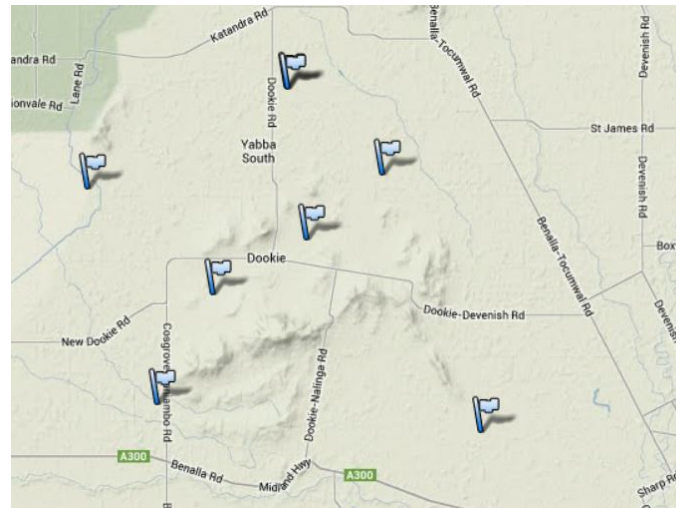
Dookie Soil Moisture Probes Now Functioning!

The Dookie Landcare Group's soil moisture probes have been installed and are now providing up to date information to the project website: <http://dookielmg.weebly.com/>

Eight probes have been installed around the Dookie region in dryland cropping situations. All sites comprise of a 120cm soil probe measuring soil moisture, soil temperature and soil EC levels. As these probes are buried at depth to avoid machinery, there is also a single sensor probe installed at 10cm below the surface. Six of the sites are also equipped with air temperature, relative humidity and rainfall sensors. Data from all sensors can be viewed on the website.

This project has been possible thanks to a Federal Government Community Landcare Grant.

Probe locations are shown below.



For further information about the project please contact Tony Ludeman 0417 585 003

Facts on Silver Grass

- Carryover residues inhibit germination of other species
- Feed quality is reasonable in winter but very poor quality when runs to head.
- Runs to head earlier than more desirable species.
- Severely reduces animal performance after heading.
- Major contaminant of wool and skins
- Easily controlled
- Has very little hard Seed, so treatments can last for a long time

Silver grass has been highlighted as a priority for our landholders. The Gecko CLaN will be delivering a field day on Silver grass soon. Watch out for further details.



Soil Erosion Interest at Avenel

Soil erosion is back on the agenda for local landholders with 30 people attending Gecko CLaN's field day on soil erosion on Friday 14th March. The field day was the first of many that will be delivered across the Gecko CLaN region as part of the Gecko CLaN's project 'Reverse the Dirt'.

The day featured information on gully erosion, tunnel erosion and salinity including techniques on how to control problems. Excavators were present demonstrating how to control gully erosion through excavating areas and sculpting with geo-fabric and rock. The day highlighted the need for grasses to hold soil in areas susceptible to erosion, and the need for rabbit control as burrows can often be the trigger of an erosion problem. Brad Costin and Kerri Goschnick of DEPI and experienced excavating contractors were on-hand to provide personal advice to attendees with erosion problems. The Gecko CLaN are delivering the project in partnership with DEPI with funding from the federal government.

Landcare Project Officer Kerri Robson was interviewed on film at the field day by the Country News. You can view the video on our website www.geckoclan.com.au on the 'Reverse the Dirt' project page.



Brad Costin of DEPI instructing participants about control options.

Indian Myna Project Update

The Benalla Indian Myna Action group continue to meet on Wednesday afternoons for trap building at the old Men's Shed at CAL Community Farm, Sydney Rd.

The group will be holding an Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 11th June, at the CAL Community Farm. The group are looking for people who are interested in joining the committee, to ensure the continuation of the great work of the group. The committee focuses on raising awareness about the threat of Indian Mynas and supporting trappers. To find out how you can get involved contact 5762 4564.

Traps are available for purchase direct from the CAL Community Farm or from Landmark, Peter Davis, North East Produce and Clarky's pet shop for \$50.

What impact are we having?

Please report numbers of Indian Mynas destroyed to Benalla Indian Myna Action Group at benallamynagroup@yahoo.com

Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2014



Preparations are now well underway for the Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2014 following the success of at year's inaugural event.

We now can share the news that we have Prof. Kate Auty as our MC. Kate will also deliver an opening address. Until recently Kate was the Victorian Commissioner for the Environment but she submitted her resignation three months before her five year term was up as she had a falling out with the State Government over their refusal to talk about Climate Change and only address it as 'climate variability', the inference being that we are only on an upswing and it could go down again. This flies in the face of science as the recent IPCC report confirms yet again.

Our other two guest speakers are Dr. Mark Diesendorf from the Institute of Environmental Studies, UNSW, and Prof. Rodney Keenan from The University of Melbourne. Mark's interests include the interdisciplinary fields of sustainable energy, sustainable urban transport, theory of sustainability, ecological economics, and practical processes by which government, business and other organisations can achieve ecologically sustainable and socially just development. Mark has recently written a book on renewable energy and how it can be a replacement for fossil fuels, which will be available on the day. Mark will be speaking on 'A sustainable energy future for Australia'.

Rodney Keenan specialises in sustainable forest management and policy and will be speaking on 'What's happening with global forests'. Corresponding feature films will be shown.

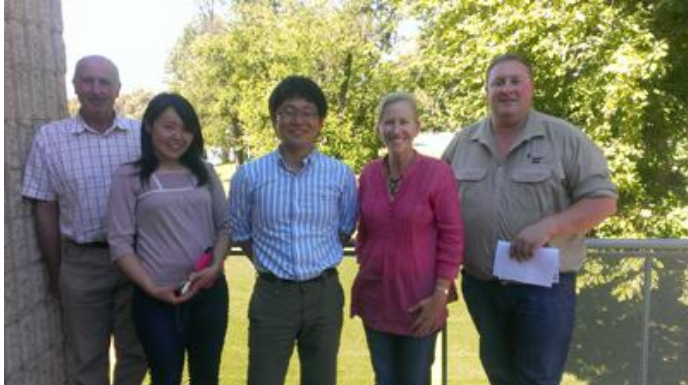
Once again the catering will be provided by our fabulous S&DCDA catering team and they have already chosen an impressive menu. Tickets for the event will be \$20 which includes full catering. The tickets will be presold on line from mid-May with some being available at the ticket box prior to the event. All entry is by ticket only so purchase early.

Gecko CLaN provides advice for establishment of Landcare in Japan.

Recently Doug James, Ian Herbert and Kerri Robson met with Japanese visitors who are looking to set up Landcare in Japan. Horrie Pousard, Landcare International, guided two PhD students Kazuki Kagohashi from Nanzan University, Nagoya and Tomomi Maekawa from Tokyo Institute of Technology, around regional Victoria to study Landcare.

Gecko CLaN members provided advice about how Landcare operates including its structure and the roles and relationships of the different Landcare funding and support bodies. Of particular interest was the funding and resources that Landcare utilises and how groups can apply directly to government for funding.

The social benefits were highlighted including the impact of works within the community, and through creating innovation and investment. This is especially prevalent for sustainable agriculture practices, which are increasingly directed by the community. The role of Landcare support and facilitation was discussed in detail, and the importance of removing the burden of paperwork from volunteers.



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Outstanding Service Recognised

On Monday 7th April, Bruce Gill from DEPI presented David Morton from Molyullah with a memento and certificate to thank him for over 21 years of groundwater observation bore monitoring. Bores installed from the early 1980's to learn about the emerging waterlogging and salinity problem in the district were initially read by departmental employees, but enthusiastic locals like David were later enlisted to help contain costs of monitoring. David started reading up to 60 district bores in 1991, but hung up his fox whistle in 2012. It is through the efforts of people such as David collecting basic groundwater data that we now have a better understanding of the climate – groundwater – salinity dynamic of our landscape.



Project Officer Report

As you can see there is a huge amount going on with exciting events and projects on soil erosion, revegetation, native grasses, sustainable farming, weeds and much more.

Our revegetation project 'How Much Revegetation is Enough?' that we are delivering on behalf of the CMA is now fully subscribed for this financial year, reaching 150ha of revegetation and remnant protection. We are now looking for sites for next financial year.

As always if you need assistance please get in touch with Kerri and Melanie.

The Whitewood seedlings are up!

David Dore is working in Vanuatu for 12 months as part of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, on a project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).



Hello from Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu! This picture shows germinants of one of the local rainforest trees, just days after they have emerged from the ground. This was a big relief, given that getting this seed picked, germinated and planted out is one of the main tasks for my stay here. The Vanuatu Department of Forests is undertaking a tree improvement program on this tree, so that when they hand out seedlings to farmers for use, the farmers are getting trees that grow fast and straight. This is an Olympic tree – in about 2 ½ years, some of these seedlings will be 8 m tall, with a diameter of 12 cm!

The Forestry Department is working on growing different mixtures of trees, with coconuts, whitewood and two other nut and timber producing species, in ways that allow people to integrate the trees into their garden systems, and increase their longer term cash flows.

We've also been picking seed from the wild populations of whitewood on different islands (there are about 86 in Vanuatu!) to ensure that we conserve the genetic heritage of this species. We use a giant slingshot to shoot a rope over a branch and then break it off, pulling down some seed. This has been a great chance to see some of the more remote parts of Vanuatu, and enjoy the odd grazing lunch – sometimes a stick of sugarcane, but here a pineapple, sliced in quarters.