



Sheep Pen Creek Land Management Group Newsletter, August 2019

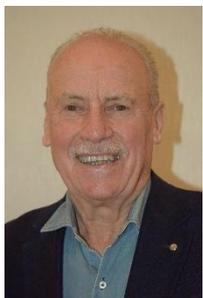
Committee; Doug Robinson (Chair), Cam Barrett-Lennard (Vice-chair), John Hoornweg (Treasurer), Sally Mann (Secretary), Zel Austin, Kathy Barrett-Lennard, Lex Finlay, Ivan Frederick, Richard and Rhyl Long, Don Piper, Lisa Rasmussen.

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Welcome to our winter edition of the landcare newsletter. The group has been busy this year on a range of projects including woody weed control, noxious weed control, release of a new strain of the calici virus for rabbit control, planning erosion control, and organising the re-fencing of Camerons Hill reserve. Our project officer, Ali Piper, whom we appointed to the role in February, has been terrific at making most of these projects happen and I thank her on behalf of the group for taking on the role.

Join us for the AGM and guest speaker Professor Tim Reeves, Sunday August 18th speaking on:

'Weather, water, climate and other changes – the need for sustainable intensification of agriculture'



In this presentation, Tim will discuss the urgent need to build greater resilience into our farming systems in order to better adapt to climatic and economic disruptions. Sustainable intensification and the transition to regenerative agricultural systems will help us to 'produce more – or enough? – with less'.

Tim has worked for over 50 years in agricultural research, development and extension, focussed on sustainable agriculture. He was a pioneer of no-till/conservation agriculture research whilst based at the Rutherglen Research Institute in NE Victoria. His professional career has included roles as: Director General of CIMMYT, based in Mexico; Member of the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Hunger; and Senior Expert with FAO, working on sustainable intensification of smallholder agriculture.

When: Sunday, August 18th, starting at Caniambo Hall, 11 am, followed by lunch and then a tour to a local farm with Professor Reeves in the afternoon.

Please RSVP for catering purposes to Ali Piper on 0459953669 or agrimmy@hotmail.com.

Weed control update

During this year, the landcare group has so far organised the control of infestations of Chilean Needle-grass, African Love-grass, St John's Wort, Horehound, Silver-leaf Nightshade, European Broom and Prickly Pear along our roadsides, either with contractors or in partnership with the three local shires. We have also had a project tackling woody weeds on private land and roadsides, partly through a landcare grant from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and partly in partnership with City of Greater Shepparton.

The main reason we are focussed on these woody weeds is that just like garden weeds or pasture weeds they are competing with the local plants for moisture and nutrients. With the environment already so stressed by lack of rain and high temperatures, we think that removing these weed trees is one way we can help the local plants survive. Additionally, by their very nature as weeds, these plants are very good at spreading and our group is keen to control them before we end up with the

situation where we suddenly have thousands of plants to control, rather than just a few. Finally, we are focused on controlling these species because nearly all of them produce berries which provide food for introduced animals such as Starlings or rats rather than native fauna; and rotting fruit as a source of fruit-fly contamination. The native Pied Currawong has also taken a shine to these fruiting trees - so much so that many of them no longer migrate back to the hills but stay on the flats all year round where they eat and spread the berries but also prey on eggs and nestlings of native birds.

Supporting Shepparton Council's 'One Tree per Child Project'

Where there were weed trees on roadsides, however, our group is keen to restore native plants to provide habitat for local species of native wildlife. We are consequently working with Greater Shepparton City Council, supporting revegetation of some of the tree-less roadsides in our landcare group area. We are fortunate that our landcare group still has healthy numbers of three species of threatened animal – Grey-crowned Babbler, Tree Goanna and Squirrel Glider – but all of these species mostly depend on the old trees growing along our local roadsides. The One Tree per Child project will help these species continue to have habitat in the future. The plantings will also help create more habitat for other local birds such as fairy-wrens and robins.

Growing trees for climate-change control

As Professor Reeves will discuss at the AGM, establishing more trees in the landscape and on farms is urgently needed to ensure healthy livestock and sustainable farms in a warmer climate. A recent study has shown that planting billions of trees across the world is by far the biggest and cheapest way to tackle the climate crisis. These scientists have made the first calculation of how many more trees could be planted without encroaching on crop land or urban areas. **The landcare group would like to help implement this plan at a local scale by supporting farmers to re-plant some paddock trees. Please contact Ali or me by August 31st if you are interested in re-establishing farm trees so that we can plan for next year**



Erosion field day – Friday, October 11th

The landcare group is organising a field day on Friday October 11th to look at some local examples of tunnel erosion and gully erosion control techniques with Brad Costin, a Soil Officer with the Agriculture Department. The aim of the day is to look at some sites and discuss what has or hasn't worked, and make some suggestions for improving erosion-control in the future. For planning and catering purposes, please contact Ali Piper on 0459953669 or agrimmy@hotmail.com

Wedge-tailed Eagle deaths – requests for information

As reported recently in the media, local landholders have been highly concerned about the suspicious deaths of more than a dozen Wedge-tailed Eagles near Violet Town over the past few years. We have raised this matter with the local Conservation Department, Steph Ryan and the State Government's Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. To help with our efforts to ensure that this cannot happen again without serious consequences for the people involved, we would appreciate details of any Wedge-tailed Eagles you have found on your property in the last few years, which we can then pass on to the relevant authorities.