

NEWSLETTER OF THE LAND FOR WILDLIFE SCHEME VOL 8 NO.1 JUNE 2011

2011 CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF LAND FOR WILDLIFE



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Photo: Felicity Nicholls



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Peter Johnson
Statewide Coordinator
and Editor
**Department of
Sustainability and
Environment,**

Box 3100,
Bendigo Delivery Centre,
Bendigo, 3554.
Tel: (03) 5430 4358
Fax: (03) 5448 4982
peterjohnson@dse.vic.gov.au

See page 16 for a list of Land for Wildlife Extension Officers and Contacts.

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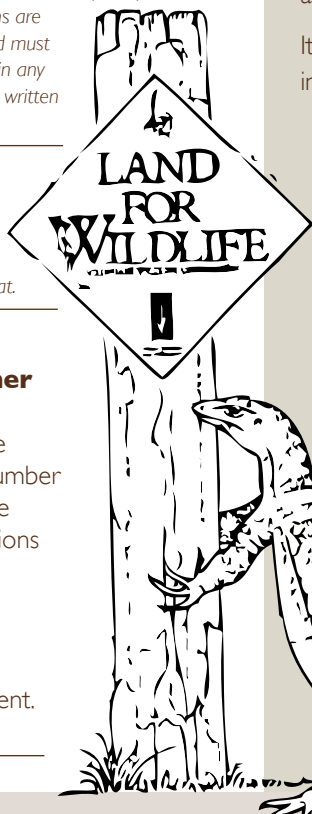
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Letter from the Editor

In this edition of the newsletter, we celebrate 30 years of the Land For Wildlife Program!

The cover image in this LFW 30th Year Edition shows a remnant vegetation landscape in central Victoria. The image represents the way in which LFW is connecting habitats for wildlife across different landscapes, and in so doing, demonstrating the dedication and commitment of LFW'ers to the protection of wildlife habitat.

Some of the achievements of LFW in the last 30 years include:

- 8,900 total members with 690,000 hectares registered (including 200,000 ha of retained/restored habitat).
- 4% of private land in Victoria is represented by LFW properties (15% of land area in Victoria is nature conservation on public land).
- A diverse range of organisations involved, including local governments, water authorities, schools, golf clubs and vineyards, army and naval bases, large corporations, and various interstate and international signatories.
- An annual Open Property Scheme with properties open for the public to inspect.
- A National Land For Wildlife program run by interstate agencies under the terms and conditions of the Victorian LFW program.
- Finalist in the 2001 United Nations Association Australia - World Environment Day Awards, in the Alcoa Awards for Best Community Based Environmental Project or Initiative.

An important characteristic of the program is the voluntary commitment that land-holders make to nature conservation, not directly linked to financial benefits. Land for Wildlife members act as role models and help generate interest by introducing neighbours and the general community to the ethic of conserving nature on private land.

From a recent survey, LFW'ers appear to be making significant contributions to local economies when they purchase goods or services for protection and enhancement works on their properties. Nearly all members surveyed were interested in learning about conservation, with almost half being members of other conservation organisations - two thirds of which are involved in Landcare. Around 80% of members continue to find the program helpful and supportive.

A research project conducted by Ben Cooke from RMIT studied how people from non-farming backgrounds are dealing with land management challenges on their property. You will find a short article summarising Ben's interesting results in this edition.

It is of great sadness that Reg Johnson OAM passed away recently on his LFW property at Baileston in Central Victoria. There is a tribute to Reg and his work inside this copy. Congratulations to all Land For Wildlife members for your significant achievements over the last 30 years in protecting, restoring and enhancing wildlife habitats!

Peter Johnson, Editor and Statewide Coordinator, Land For Wildlife Victoria.

Land For Wildlife Property Statistics at 1/6/2011

LFW Membership	Total Property Area	Habitat Being Retained	Habitat Under Restoration	Total Retained and Restored Habitat
5,776	538,679 ha	144,340 ha	22,839 ha	167,179 ha

Please Note: The total membership in 2011 (5,776) is less than 2010 (5,903) due to a high amount of mail with RMB addresses returned by Australia Post as undeliverable.

We attempted to contact as many of these members as possible, but due to phone numbers not being current or members moving without advising LFW, it was not possible to keep these as registered. If any member knows of a registered member who is not receiving the newsletter, please contact your Extension Officer, or email Editor: peterjohnson@dse.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 5430 4358.

Land For Wildlife

Celebrating 30 Years of Voluntary Conservation on Private Land



The original idea for the Land For Wildlife Program arose out of meetings between the original Fisheries and Wildlife Service (now the Department of Sustainability and Environment) and the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA). At one of those meetings it was recognised that landholders voluntarily protecting habitats for wildlife

should be encouraged and supported. Following this, the first Land for Wildlife (LFW) property was established in November 1981, at Winchelsea in Victoria.

During the period between 1990 and 2002, LFW experienced its highest growth. The initial appointment of Stephen Platt later followed by Felicity Nicholls as State-wide Coordinators, employment of 16 extension officers, establishment of the state-wide property register, regular newsletters, notes series and regular field days and other events program, all contributed to this rapid growth.

By April 1997 there were more than 4,000 properties registered by the Program, and this has now grown to almost 5,800 properties in 2011. Since 1997, LFW has extended interstate, where it operates under a uniform set of principles and standards, consistent with the Victorian Land For Wildlife Program.

The current area of private land being managed by Land For Wildlife members in Victoria is approximately 540,000 hectares - an area almost equal to the Victorian Alpine National Park, representing about 4% of private land voluntarily managed by LFW members in Victoria.

From a recent survey, more than 80% of landholders estimated that they were spending an average of \$2,100 on conservation management each year.

This equates to a direct capital investment of more than \$10 million by landholders undertaking voluntary conservation actions.

About 85% of landholders have not accessed funding through incentives or grants, reinforcing the volunteer commitment not linked to financial benefits.

Almost half have 60% or more of their property set aside for conservation management. Most properties are relatively small, with 32% being less than 5ha and a further 35% under 20ha. Most landholders in LFW do not rely on farming for their income - less than a quarter are primary producers. In general, the results are relatively consistent with previous surveys. When asked how they heard about LFW, members indicated they either "saw the sign" on a fence, they heard about it from friends, or by attending an event where LFW information was available. In 50% of occasions where people were undertaking management actions, LFW directly influenced landholders undertaking those management actions.

Almost all members are dedicated to nature conservation, believing it is their own responsibility to take action, and that more people should take action. Members take immense pride in telling others about their involvement in Land For Wildlife. The Land For Wildlife program has been quietly enriching and improving connections between community and wildlife landscapes ever since it began in 1981.

Since 1981, over 8,900 properties have been registered as LFW, engaging and motivating more than 20,000 people in Victoria alone (the number doubles when interstate properties are included). With others, this has broadly influenced conservation outcomes on private land locally, interstate and internationally.

Congratulations to all members for their dedication to Land For Wildlife and voluntary conservation, and for directly or indirectly influencing others, by educating families, friends and neighbours, or by helping others find the confidence to complete works on their properties.



Land For Wildlife in 'Tree-change' Landscapes

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In recent decades, Victoria's rural farming landscape has undergone a significant transition, with an influx of non-farming landholders to areas of high amenity. These high amenity regions are often around the coast, hinterland regions and within commutable distance to Melbourne or other regional centres. Amenity in-migrants, often referred to as 'tree-changers' or 'sea-changers', have relocated from urban or suburban Melbourne, or just as frequently, from rural regions elsewhere.

The tree-change phenomenon has raised questions amongst farming communities, policy-makers and research agencies regarding the land management capacity of new rural landholders. While their interest in conservation is considered to be high, the practical land management experience of such landholders is poorly understood. The research project from which this article is sourced focuses on how people from non-farming backgrounds are confronting land management challenges on their property. Landholders from various land use backgrounds in the hinterland regions around Melbourne were interviewed for this project, including a number of people enrolled in Land for Wildlife. For those involved in Land for Wildlife, a number of key themes emerged regarding how the program contributed to conservation practices:

- Involvement in Land for Wildlife provides participants with the sense that they belong to a community of like-minded people. The process of reading about the experiences of other landholders in the newsletter, helped many feel a sense of attachment to a community of common interest. This was especially true for people who felt isolated due to conflicting relationships with neighbours over conservation issues. The newsletter also provided more than a 'fuzzy' feeling, with a number of landholders identifying key management practices they had adopted after reading the suggestions in the newsletter. Reading advice from fellow landholders also helped to reduce barriers to management, by encouraging people to give things like nest box construction a try.

This was especially important when people felt they didn't have the appropriate knowledge or skill to 'get involved' in actively managing their bushland

- A number of people with a Land for Wildlife sign on their front gate also reported being a source of knowledge for other neighbours. The sign seemed to attract questions from neighbours about things like bird identification and indigenous plants, potentially helping to trigger an interest in conservation for those living nearby.

Of particular note was the lengthy time period - sometimes decades - for Land for Wildlife property owners to slowly encourage some of their neighbours to make subtle land management changes

- Interestingly, the Land for Wildlife sign was not just an outward expression of conservation values, but also an affirmation of the biodiversity value of the property itself. For those landholders who were employed off-property, coming home and seeing the sign reinforced the habitat value of their property, and the importance of keeping up with weed control and other management tasks.

Overall, Land for Wildlife participants were keen to help educate their neighbours, but their primary interest was learning more about their own 'patch'. As many landholders were seeking out a lifestyle change in the form of rural land ownership, it was not surprising that the property itself proved to be the focus when it came to learning about conservation.

Land for Wildlife is well suited to the rural amenity context with its focus on education, and opportunities for interaction with agency staff.

Ben Cooke is undertaking a PhD at RMIT University in Melbourne, which is exploring the influences on the conservation practices of private landholders. He has previously worked in local government as a conservation officer:

ben.cooke@rmit.edu.au



Call for Articles and Contributions

If you would like to have your article, interesting images of flora or fauna, or other snippets, please send them to us and we will consider them for publication. Any solution to a problem, or a new approach, are all welcome.

They can be hand-written or emailed - any format is ok. We look forward to hearing from you - including "letters to the editor".

Observations By A Land For Wildlife Member, Devlins Bridge

Occasionally, members will send in their observations and lists of wildlife they have encountered on their properties. One such list is from Trish Betheras at Devlins Bridge. Her account reflects the enjoyment and satisfaction of watching wildlife from the verandah:

Dear Nigel (LFW Extension Officer, Alexander),

"We are all revitalised to make and get a range of boxes up about the farm. We have been quite selfish so far, as most of the boxes we have put up are around the garden where we can enjoy watching the occupants! Our garden positively teems with sugar gliders! Although two of the four boxes are now occupied by bees and am not sure if there is any way to get rid of them which doesn't involve falling off a ladder and being stung. Any ideas on this?" (Ed. See note below.)

"I am thinking we have been in Land for Wildlife for nearly twenty years now and it has made me think back over some of the memorable animal encounters we've had. I'm not sure if you are interested in narrative from your members, but I would think it could make interesting reading if all put together. So here are some of our highlights:"

- Koala in top of apple tree, despite being surrounded by manna gums!
- Counting 30 turtles in one dam, summer 2007, when most dams are dry.
- Family of tawny frogmouths roosting the whole summer in stringybarks next to house, mum, dad & baby spent evenings catching moths brought by the house lights.
- Bush rat eating parrot seed on the verandah
- Pair of rainbow bee-eaters feeding on the bees in the roses around the garden. Present for one summer but not seen since.
- Pardalote pair attempted to nest in open end of 'pink batts' in shed, disastrous. All nestlings died.
- Bats roosting under pillow of outdoor furniture and under fold of old coat hung in shed.
- Sugar gliders nesting in apex of shed and having to vacate in heat of day. Had shed full of unhappy possums, one baby took refuge under tractor canopy
- Mother wombat trudging down Steuarts Lane with pouch dragging on the ground and a leg sticking out of it.
- The first time we heard the barking owl scream my husband jumped in the car and drove to the neighbour's house to make sure she was ok!
- Flocks of bower birds in the orchard this autumn for the first time.

- The large group of Gang-gang Cockatoos which came every afternoon to drink from the horses' trough over summer. Not in the least scared of people & the kids loved seeing the babies being fed.
- The majestic pair of Wedge Tails I see often close up when going over our tall hills. Never fails to thrill and humble simultaneously.
- Animals I used to see but haven't seen for 20 years or more; red bellied black snake, crested shrike tit, rufous fantail.

"Things I'd like to see but haven't: antechinus, long nosed potoroo, feathertail glider. There is no doubt that it is the presence native animals and birds on our farm that give it soul and 'value'. I think without them we would have a pretty piece of 'worthless' land.

Thanks again, Trish Betheras, Devlins Bridge."

(Ed. Thank you Trish for this wonderful account. Regarding the removal of bees from a nest box, it is best to contact a pest management professional with bee experience to remove the colony. After the box is down and the bees are removed, scrape out all the honey-comb and wax. Wash the inside of the box thoroughly with hot water; don't use soap or detergents. After cleaning, allow the box to air dry completely, then store indoors. Replace the nest box in late autumn to avoid feral invaders, and to maximise the potential use of the nest box by winter or spring nesting species).





Vale to Reg Johnson OAM

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Land For Wildlife Pioneer, Birdwatcher, and Conservationist

It with great sadness that Reg Johnson OAM passed away in May 2011 on his property, "Noonameena", at Bailieston which he and his wife Kathleen had owned and nurtured for its wonderful wildlife values since 1980, and one of the first to be registered under Land for Wildlife, also protected by a Trust for Nature Covenant.

Along with Ellen McCulloch, Reg Johnson was a pioneer of the Land For Wildlife program with the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA). Reg was a very prominent member of BOCA (now Bird Observation & Conservation Australia), joining the Club in 1962, serving 20 years on the BOCA Council, six years as President and being awarded Life Membership in 1988.

During this time Reg became a strong advocate for conservation on private land. In 1974 he left his prestigious position as Chief

Draughtsman for the Department of Crown Lands and Survey to take up the role of Executive Director of the Conservation Council of Victoria. With Ellen McCulloch, Reg Johnson initiated the concept of voluntary conservation on private land, leading to the creation of the Land for Wildlife scheme in 1981.

Reg and Ellen continued to train and mentor BOCA volunteers conducting assessments of properties seeking Land for Wildlife registration. BOCA continues to provide moral and practical support for Land for Wildlife as reflected in the BOCA logo appearing on the LfW signs now proudly displayed on 5,900 properties across Victoria. The Land For Wildlife program has been adopted throughout Australia, and is seen as the leading conservation program on private land, both nationally and internationally. Reg Johnson will be remembered for his contribution to many conservation causes, one of the most significant, and likely his proudest, being the major role he played in the establishment and pioneering of Land for Wildlife.

(Thank you to Don Saunders, Conservation Coordinator, BOCA for information regarding Reg Johnson.)

1000th Trust For Nature Covenant

Recently, the Trust For Nature covenanting program reached a significant milestone with 1,000 conservation covenants across Victoria. Trust for Nature is a non-government program, and developed its conservation covenant program so landholders could permanently protect remnant native vegetation on their own properties.

Over the past 25 years, Trust for Nature and its covenantors have protected more than 80,000 hectares of grasslands, woodlands, wetlands and other important habitats.

Trust for Nature's mission is to enable people to bequeath land or money for conservation and for the purchase of threatened, privately owned bush.

It is Australia's oldest conservation trust, allowing landholders to permanently protect their properties with significant conservation values as a registered covenant on the property's title. This is "peace of mind" for landholders who worry about how their valuable asset will be protected when their property changes ownership.

The similarity between Land For Wildlife and the Trust For Nature program is that both are voluntary processes, with the key difference being that TFN places legal protection on a percentage of the property supporting conservation values.

In 1989 the organisation added a revolving fund, which allows Trust for Nature to buy important bushland, protect it with perpetual conservation covenants and resell it so the funds can be re-used.



Robert and Gail Cook From Axedale proudly show their commitment to both Land For Wildlife and Trust For Nature. Source: Felicity Nicholls.

Conservation, Art and Land For Wildlife

The area known as “Dunmoochin” is near Cottlesbridge, located North East of Melbourne, and was so named by Clifton Pugh as he was quite possibly “Done – Moochin” around, settling there in 1951. The property came under joint ownership by the Dunmoochin Artists Co-operative, with Pugh later establishing the Dunmoochin Foundation, allowing artists in residence to explore art and enjoy the special environment at the centre of Dunmoochin. Clifton Pugh was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1985 for service to Australian Art and was three-time winner of Australia's Archibald Prize.

Pugh was also a pioneering environmental activist. While there is no record of the property being registered with LFW, there are many LFW properties in the vicinity of Dunmoochin, such is the quality of the environment and commitment of landholders to conservation. In recognition of the environmental values, Pugh obtained a Victorian Conservation Trust (now Trust For Nature) covenant over Dunmoochin. The property has at least two plant species of national significance recorded. Pugh donated Dunmoochin to Trust For Nature in 1989, allowing his legacy to continue and the significant environmental values to be protected forever.

One of the other significant properties in the Dunmoochin area with a Trust For Nature covenant and LFW status, is owned by David and Jean Nicholls. When the Nicholls purchased the property in 1989, it had previously been subjected to damaging agricultural practices.

Fortunately, pockets of high conservation value escaped damage, most likely due to the steepness and difficulty of access, north of a remnant creekline, and which conveniently divides the property.

The property supports one of the few examples of relatively intact vegetation, retaining many of its original components prior to agricultural damage, including trees, shrubs, ferns, grasses and wildflowers.

Highly significant vegetation classes include Creekline Herbrich Woodland, Box-Stringybark Woodland, and Valley Grassy Forest, all benefiting greatly from recovery practices within the past 20 years. Indeed, many species, plus the presence of many old growth trees on the Nicholls' property, are not well represented throughout Dunmoochin. A remarkable recovery has occurred by seeding from many of the large old-growth trees, considering that the

property was cleared and contour ploughed in the mid-1950's and farmed until 1990. Some ecological thinning of a red box thicket has been carried out, and at least 75 bird species have been recorded on the property over the last 10 years.

Ongoing management actions include management of lower storey, control of tunnel erosion, and exclusion of motorised vehicles outside domestic area.



Before and after photographs (ten years apart) on the Land for Wildlife Nicholl property.



Land for Wildlife Member profiles

In this section of the LFW Newsletter, we ask some members why they joined LFW, what works have they conducted, what do they plan to do to improve their property, what are some of the special things they have on their property, and what they have enjoyed from being members of LFW. Hopefully, you will find some connection with your own goals and values for your property, with some ideas for planning your own work.

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Julie and Paul Whitfield

New member since 2010

Bendigo area

Why did you want to join Land for Wildlife?

Wanted to be an advocate in my area, and have neighbours get the idea of protecting their own properties.

What works have you completed to attract Wildlife?

Weed removal and nest boxes

How are you planning to improve?

Direct seed for erosion control and plant out dam walls
Erect a rabbit proof fence around property

What do you have on your property?

Have established a Trust For Nature covenant for permanent protection.
48 birds species so far; 7 dragon flies; 9 butterflies;
Woodland blind snake; and endangered grass Amphibromis fluitans.



Julie and Paul beginning their planting near the dam on their property at Lockwood, Central Victoria.

Carol & Wayne Casey

Members for 17 years

Traralgon Area

Why did you want to join Land for Wildlife?

Didn't know much at first and found Land for Wildlife a great source of information.

What works have you completed to attract Wildlife?

Blackberry and weed control.
Already had good quality habitat, so we leave it to attract wildlife itself.

How are you planning to improve?

Conduct future weed management
Be part of vegetation studies on the property and local area.

What have you enjoyed as a member of Land for Wildlife?

LFW provides us with information and advice to address issues that may arise.
Enjoys getting the newsletter and showing it to neighbours and people at work to spread more information.



LFW'ers Carol and Wayne Casey conduct plant surveys, do revegetation and control weeds.

Land for Wildlife aims to encourage and support landholders to conserve biodiversity on private land, with all members sharing a common vision and extending nature conservation to the landscape level. *Land for Wildlife* also promotes broader community participation in nature conservation, and works with land holders to find better solutions to management problems involving protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

An important characteristic of the *Land for Wildlife* program is the voluntary and public commitment that land-holders make to nature conservation, not directly linked to incentives or short-term financial benefits. *Land for Wildlife* members act as role models and help generate momentum for growth of the scheme by introducing neighbours and the general community to the ethic of conserving nature on private land.

Doug and Jan Pocock

Members for 9 years

Wedderburn Area

Why did you want to join Land for Wildlife?

To let people know they wanted to protect their property for wildlife.

What works have you completed to attract Wildlife?

Completed weed removal and allowed natural regeneration

Reduced the impacts of grazing on regeneration.

Improved Mallee Fowl habitat.

What projects do you have planned to improve your property?

Conduct future weed works

Conduct erosion works on property

How are you planning to improve?

Keep enhancing habitats for various threatened species and educating other people about the values of habitat.

What have you enjoyed as a member of Land for Wildlife?

The newsletter, access to information, and projects other member's are doing.



Doug seen here monitoring a Mallee Fowl mound.

Marianne & Roy Schrieke

Members for 20 years

Ballarat Area

Why did you want to join Land for Wildlife?

After moving to the country and not know anything, they wanted to learn as much as they could about their place and what they could do to improve it for wildlife.

What works have you completed to attract Wildlife?

Completed weed removal and planted approximately 2,000 native species in creek area.

How are you planning to improve?

Conduct future weed works

Plant-up dam to enhance it for wildlife

What have you enjoyed as a member of Land for Wildlife?

Enjoys getting the newsletters.

Likes feeling like they are doing something for wildlife and the environment.

Likes being a part of the program and having access to information.



Marianne and family planting out their property... with a kangaroo enjoying the results.

Keeping the small creatures happy on your farm: Revegetation and bushland management

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Do you wonder about how best to manage bushland areas on your farm for native animal habitat? Are you interested in how to make the most of grants for revegetation? I've been looking into these questions as part of my studies at the University of Melbourne and I found some surprising results.

Victoria is home to much of Australia's cropping and livestock production, and our farming regions are an important part of our cultural history. Many of the agricultural areas have been farmed for over 100 years. This has involved heavy clearing, in some cases leaving less than 10% of the natural bushland areas. Thus, while agriculture has prospered, many of our native animals have rapidly declined. Revegetation is one method landholders and natural resource managers have used to stop native animal decline, as well as maintain farm productivity.

Over the previous two years, I have been surveying revegetated areas in the Wimmera and Benalla regions to see how effective this revegetation has been for native animal species, in particular reptiles and beetles. You may be asking yourselves, why? Well, reptiles and beetles are seldom studied compared with birds and mammals, probably because they are small and relatively difficult to survey. However, they are still a vital part of our natural environment, filling a wide variety of functional roles; in addition, beetles in particular are extremely diverse. My surveys took place over the summer months. I surveyed using pitfall traps to catch and release reptiles and beetles in private property and along roadsides to determine whether they preferred revegetated areas, existing bushland or cleared roadsides. I also wanted to know whether it was better to provide movement corridors such as windrows to connect bushland areas, or to enlarge existing bushland areas.

Connectivity is important, especially in agricultural areas, because bushland areas are usually isolated from one another – sometimes by hundreds of kilometres. This makes it very difficult or impossible for some animals to disperse between bushland areas. If a disease or some other disaster occurs in an isolated bushland area and animals cannot move away, the whole population may go locally extinct. On the other hand, patch enlargement is important because the larger an area is, the more likely its animal populations are to breed and survive.

What I discovered from my surveys was that although reptile and beetle populations were still present in these

agricultural areas, some species were reliant on bushland areas – especially bushland areas along roadsides – rather than revegetated or cleared areas. Along with other studies, my research showed that although bushland patches provided better habitat than revegetated or cleared areas, they were often degraded by livestock grazing. This practice reduced native grasses and disturbed fallen timber, litter and rocks, which are all important for reptiles and beetles to survive. Roadside bushland was less disturbed by grazing, so reptiles and beetles preferred these habitats.

I also found that elements particularly important for healthy reptile and beetle communities were ground layer features such as native herbs and grasses, leaf litter, fallen timber and rocks. These animals also preferred areas without introduced plants. While some animals such as birds are able to use areas revegetated with trees only, reptiles and beetles are very reliant on what is at ground level; replacement of these ground layers should be considered as part of a revegetation project.

Other studies have shown that native grasses usually won't come back on their own, so weed control and planting of native grasses is necessary. If you already have native grasses on your property, they are a rare and valuable asset which should be protected.

Overall, bushland habitats that are the least disturbed by grazing are the most valuable for native animals. Native grasses and other ground layers are also very important in enhancing native animal diversity in both existing bushland and revegetated farmland.

By Sacha Jellinek PhD Candidate School of Botany, University of Melbourne



Fallen timber, grasses, herbs, and ground litter are all important for reptiles and beetles to survive.

Creature Features

Water Scorpion

Water scorpions are aquatic insects and live in ponds, where they hide among plants to ambush prey. Adults lay their eggs in pond debris and the stems of water plants. Water scorpions, like most insects, need oxygen, and use their long-tail-like siphon or “snorkel” to breathe after coming up for oxygen.

Water scorpions are not really scorpions, but insects with 3 pairs of legs and 2 pairs of wings. Their name comes from their specialized grasping forelimbs, which are superficially similar to the ‘pincers’ of scorpions, and a siphon or breathing tube, which superficially resembles a scorpion’s long stinging tail, without the venomous spine.

There is much uncertainty about the ability of water scorpions to sting. The “stinging apparatus” is located beneath the head and is (apparently) quite painful but not as harmful as a scorpion sting. It is more likely that the “stinging apparatus” is used for injecting digestive fluids into prey, which it then sucks out leaving behind an empty shell.

Water scorpions are ambush predators using their excellent camouflage to hide while clinging to plants with the second and third limbs waiting for prey. The forelimbs are held out at the front. When prey approaches, the hindlimbs straighten, swinging the water scorpion forward, and the victim is grasped by one of the forelimbs.



Photo: Felicity Nicholls

Red-shouldered Stick-insect

Following the floods in northern Victoria, several reports of a large stick-like insect were received. This particular specimen was brought home for identification. There was quite a bit of debate between Felicity and myself as to whether it was a Pink-Winged Phasmid or a Red-shouldered Stick-insect. The Australian Museum initially identified it as a “Pink-winged Phasmid”. However, information from *The Complete Field Guide to Stick and Leaf Insects of Australia*, by Brock and Hasenpusch, 2009 (published by CSIRO), and feedback from Dr Alan Yen, DPI and former Museum of Victoria Entomologist, indicated that this was indeed a “Red-Shouldered Stick Insect”.

This stunning large insect was initially described from Inglewood, in Central Victoria. It feeds on Eucalyptus and is found in Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia, northern parts of Victoria, with a record as far north as Rockhampton in Queensland. The image is of a female, depicting the typical green-brown colour, a large and broad-body, with brilliant red “shoulders” to the wings. Her size range is 137mm to 150mm, and can lay up to 58 eggs in 11 days. The male is brown and elongated with large tessellated wings. We’re not sure if there was a connection between the flood events and our specimen turning up. Several other sightings were reported during the same week.



Photo: Felicity Nicholls

Mangrove Plodding Echidna

Echidnas are surprisingly good swimmers, using their broad digging feet as effective paddles, with only the snout and a few spines showing. Echidnas will swim to cool-off in summer. They have been seen to cross wide beaches to swim and groom themselves in the sea. This image shows one plodding about in mangroves.

The echidna is common and widespread, and can live anywhere with a supply of suitable food. The diet of echidnas is largely made up of ants and termites, although, they will eat other invertebrates especially grubs, larvae and worms.

The breeding season for echidnas is from the end of June to September. Two weeks after mating, a single rubbery-skinned egg is laid directly into a small backward facing pouch which has developed in the female. After 10 days the egg hatches and the young remains in the pouch. During the following period of lactation the female spends most of her time in a burrow but will leave the young behind, covered with soil or wood fibre, to go foraging. As echidnas lack nipples, the mammary glands secrete milk through two patches on the skin from which the young suckle. Juveniles are eventually ejected from the pouch at around 2 - 3 months of age due to the continuing growth of their spines. Suckling gradually decreases up until the juvenile is weaned at about 6 months of age.



Photo: Robyn Malcolm

Rebirth of a wetland

During the early days of European settlement many important wetlands throughout Victoria were drained, causing a dramatic decline in the habitat for a wide range of species.

Fortunately many landowners now recognise the value of wetlands and have actively sought their preservation or restoration. This has been the case at "Challicum", a Land for Wildlife property near Buangor; approximately 170 kms west of Melbourne. The property covers 1300 hectares and produces fine wool and prime lambs. The current owner, Mr Doug Hopkins, joined Land for Wildlife in 1990 and has since carried out a wide range of measures to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat.

A long term study of the vertebrate fauna of the property commenced in late 2002 (see A fauna survey of Challicum, a Land for Wildlife property near Buangor; Land for Wildlife News, Vol 5, Aug/Sep 2004).

One major project has been the restoration of an important ephemeral wetland that was drained in the early 1960s. The site is on the flood plain of Fiery Creek at an isolated location on the property. Historically the wetland was known as a key location for Brolga *Grus rubicundus*. A grant was obtained from the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and in March 2006 the drainage line was dammed and an area surrounding the wetland was fenced to exclude stock.

Several hundred indigenous trees and shrubs were also planted on two slopes above the wetland in October of that year. An old fence-line that ran through the site was dismantled and thirty-eight old fence posts were placed around the edge of the wetland as habitat for small vertebrates.

When full, the restored wetland would cover approximately two hectares, with a surrounding fenced-off area of approximately four additional hectares. During the first week in May 2006 substantial rain fell across western Victoria and the water level in the newly restored wetland rose significantly. Within days three Brolgas were seen at the wetland.

In June 2007 a further two Brolgas were seen and the species has been seen there several times since. The Brolga is still common in northern Australia, however, in Victoria the population is greatly reduced and the species is listed as threatened under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

In May 2007 two adult Red-capped Plovers were seen with two large feathered chicks, confirming that the species had bred successfully. This species usually breeds in Spring, but will breed at anytime of the year if conditions are suitable. In November 2007 ten adult Red-capped Plovers were seen at the wetland. In September 2009 two adult Australian Shelduck (known to many landowners as Mountain Duck), were seen at the wetland with approximately twenty-four ducklings.

Numerous other waterbirds and waterfowl have been observed including Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Wood Duck, Black-winged Stilt, White-faced Heron and Masked Lapwing. Other birds have taken advantage of the improved habitat, including Australian Kestrel, White-fronted Chat, Flame Robin and Welcome Swallow.

In November 2009, the old fence posts that had been placed around the edge of the wetland were carefully turned over revealing a Fat-tailed Dunnart. There is some concern for the future of this nocturnal grassland species as some modern farming practices involve the removal of logs and rocks from paddocks, essential daytime refuges for Fat-tailed Dunnarts.

Frogs have been slow to colonise the wetland, which may be due to its isolated location. However, several Common Froglets *Crinia signifera* were heard in November 2010 and, in April 2011, a Growling Grass Frog *Litoria raniformis* (see photo) was found under one of the old fence posts mentioned above.

The results from the restoration at Challicum show that landowners can play an important role in conserving and enhancing biodiversity. This project was completed under Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department of Primary Industries permits greatly assisting the conservation of threatened species such as the Brolga.

Acknowledgements

- Staff from the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority provided much appreciated advice and guidance in the restoration of the Challicum wetland.

Peter Homan
School of Life & Physical Sciences
RMIT University
Email: peter.homan@rmit.edu.au



Photo: Felicity Nicholls

The Striped Legless Lizard



The Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*), is a member of the legless or flap-footed lizards family (called Pygopids). As with other members of this family, the Striped Legless Lizard has no forelimbs and its hind limbs appear only as small flaps on either side of the vent. Superficially, they resemble snakes, but can be readily distinguished from the latter by the presence of external ear openings, a fleshy undivided tongue and a tail which, when unbroken, is longer than the body, characters not exhibited by snakes.

The species which most closely resembles the Striped Legless Lizard, and which overlaps in distribution, is the Olive Legless Lizard, *Delma inornata*, a more common species occupying a broader range of grassland and grassy-woodland habitats.

In Victoria, the Striped Legless Lizard is sparsely distributed in grasslands of central and south-western Victorian and may have declined over its distribution and disappeared from many sites. The Striped Legless Lizard shelters mainly in grass tussocks and other thick ground cover; it is thought that they enter a state of torpor (similar to hibernating), and overwinter mostly in soil cracks, under or beside rocks and in tussock grass-bases.

Until recently, the Striped Legless Lizard was thought to inhabit only native grasslands dominated by species such as Spear Grass and Kangaroo Grass. In recent years, surveys have revealed they may occupy sites dominated by exotic grasses such as Phalaris (Canary Grass).

The presence of a relatively dense and continuous structure, rather than the diversity of grassland plants, may be important in determining the persistence of the Striped Legless Lizard at some sites, including using vegetated road easements, less disturbed neighbouring land or even soil cracks and spider burrows in the short-term.

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Treating Mange in Wombats

Mange in wombats is an unfortunate condition, leading to the development of thick, crusty lesions which eventually crack and become exposed to secondary infection or septicaemia. The increasing nutrient needs of the wombat means that it must feed for many more hours in the day and increase its range to find food. Severely infected wombats can weigh half the normal body weight of a healthy animal.

The condition ultimately leaves a wombat with reduced senses (eg it can lose much of its sight), and reproductive activity ceases completely. Infected animals experience ongoing pain and eventually die. It is possible for local extinctions to occur if enough animals in a population become infected.

Although wombats have been successfully treated in captivity, due to the need for repeated medication, the successful treatment of wild wombats has been extremely difficult or impossible to achieve. The mite which causes the condition can survive in wombat burrows for longer than the effective life of treatments. There is no quick-fix solution, but wombats suffering with mange can be successfully treated. The process by which this is achieved requires no special skills. It does require care, with much patience and dedication.

Further reading regarding the *Sarcoptes scabiei* mite that causes mange can be found at the Wombat Protection Society website at: www.wombatprotection.org.au



Properties for Sale

Henk van Leeuwen

This eco-friendly residence is set on a gently sloping block of almost 2 acres of bush and landscaped garden in a quiet and sought-after area of Emerald, less than 1 hour east of Melbourne.

The owners have carefully managed the property to enhance biodiversity and habitat. It supports a wide range of indigenous vegetation including many species of high conservation value, with numerous birds drinking and bathing at the birdbaths.

Complete with water features, low-voltage lights, quality paving, alfresco dining and a deck, it has a sunny northerly aspect and wonderful views. The passive solar designed home includes an automated ventilation system that pumps in warm filtered air when required. The owners find no need for air-conditioning in summer. 3BRs, 2 bathrooms, study and living and family areas, offers are considered over \$540,000. Contact owner on (03) 59683981 or 0417350459.



“Valley Edge” Tolmie, NE of Mansfield

Thanks to the exploits of Ned Kelly and his gang at nearby Stringybark Creek, “Valley Edge” is part of the land that was opened up for selection in the late 1800’s in an effort to rid the area of his sympathisers. This magnificent Land for Wildlife property is at the end of a road which services only two properties. Its stunning view overlooks Powers Lookout and includes the west arm of the King Valley and almost every ski resort in Victoria.

“Valley Edge” comprises approximately 112 acres with a comfortable 3 bedroom plus study brick house, ample shedding and an excellent water supply. It is partly surrounded by State Forest for your pleasure, whether that be seclusion, bush walking, horse riding, 4WD, bird watching, trail bike riding or any other activity which takes your fancy. More than two thirds of the property is regenerated natural bush, which attracts an abundance of wildlife.



If you’re interested in this property and want to know more, please refer to: www.valleyedgetolmie.com.au or contact the owners Geoffrey & Kaye Coates (03) 5776 2273 or Mobile 0412 64 5525. Price: \$1.45m (negotiable)

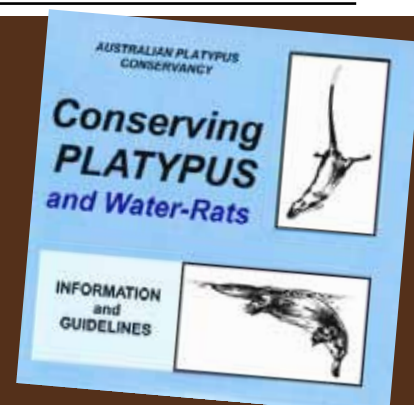
Recent Publications

CONSERVING PLATYPUS CD-ROM

The Australian Platypus Conservancy (APC) has recently produced a new CD-Rom entitled *Conserving Platypus and Water-Rats*, which is designed to be a useful resource for management agencies, planning authorities, environmental groups, students and interested individuals. Drawing upon the APC’s research findings over the past two decades, the CD-Rom contains detailed conservation guidelines along with a wealth of information about platypus biology and ecology.

A comprehensive reading list, FAQ section and quiz are also included, along with a chapter summarising the biology of the Australian water-rat (or rakali).

The CD-Rom also contains copies of various information leaflets produced by the APC (A Guide to Spotting Platypus and Water-rats in the Wild, Platypus Emergency Care, Platypus-friendly Angling, and Platypus Contingency Plans for Works Programs) which other organisations are welcome to reproduce for non-profit, educational purposes. To defray postage and packing costs, the new CD-Rom can be obtained at a nominal cost of \$5 for one copy (plus \$2 for each additional copy). Contact the Australian Platypus Conservancy at platypus.apc@westnet.com.au or PO Box 22, Wiseleigh, VIC 3885.



Properties for Sale

Kerri Norris - 107 Kangaroo Gully Rd, Kangaroo Flat (near Bendigo)

This Land For Wildlife property is set on elevated block over 2 acres and is perfect for those who appreciate the many bird species and other wildlife which abounds here. The cottage is a very cosy, comfortable and bright home. Cork floors, pine-lined walls and a brightly painted feature wall all add character and warmth to the interior. Behind the kitchen lies a spacious, split-level family room with a reverse-cycle split-system and windows on three sides offering bush views. The dam offers a private wetland area where Pobblebonk and Perons Tree Frogs live in harmony, with resident Owlet Nightjars, Sugar Gliders, Tuans known to visit. If you are looking to move out of the hustle and bustle then this is definitely worth an inspection. Contact Sally Sheahan on (03) 5445 0044



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45-47 Kerry Road Warranwood, 35km East of Melbourne CBD.

You can live the dream in a quiet bush environment listening to the birds, with resident swamp wallabies and echidnas, and the occasional koala, and yet be 35km East of CBD! Close to Eastlink and Eastland, walking distance to quality schools: Yarra Valley Grammar, Luther and Steiner.

Architect designed 4/5 BR split level home on 3700m² of indigenous vegetation incl candlebark and yellow box, with own natural creek meandering through. Huge windows all with amazing views. Expansive north facing deck, top class kitchen, lounge with OFP, large rumpus room, quality fittings. Includes pool, chook shed, 5,000l rainwater tank.

Land for Wildlife member since 1996, site of biological significance Maroondah Council and participant in Biodiversity rebate concession program, participant in Melbourne Water stream frontage management program.

\$770K+ Contact owner Jodie Rockliff 0438 128 038 or agent www.landfield.com.au

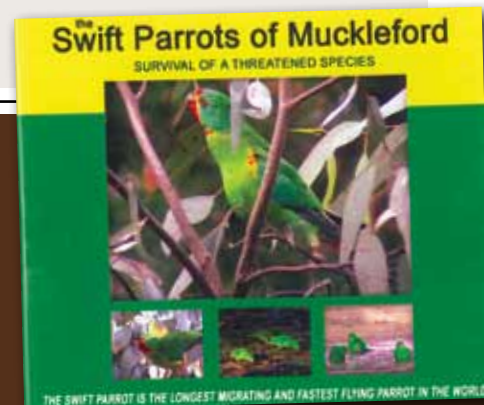


“The Swift Parrots of Muckleford” DVD.

This amazing DVD shows footage of Swift Parrots never seen before. Swift Parrots (or “Swifties”) fly a return distance of 5,000 kilometres, and is the longest return migration route of any parrot in the world. The Swift Parrot is listed on the National Endangered Species List, with only 1200 breeding pairs left in the wild. Swifties breed only in Tasmania and each year travel to the Australian mainland to feed over the winter period.

This DVD will show you how to identify a Swift Parrot by its distinctive calls and colour through some fabulous close-up footage. You will witness rare footage of some of their feeding habits never seen before. The aim of this DVD is to help anybody identify Swift Parrots by sight and by their distinctive calls. Filmed totally in Muckleford, Central Victoria over a five-

year period by Debbie Worland, a member of the Castlemaine Field Naturalist Group. The DVD features special comments from Birds Australia's Swift Parrot Recovery Co-ordinator Chris Tzaros, and has been narrated by International Award Winner, John Flaus, a resident of Castlemaine. Bill Irwin Productions of Chewton produced the DVD. The Melliodora Fund, Melbourne Community Foundation and The Norman Wettenhall Foundation, and The Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club provided support for this project. You can visit the website www.swiftparrotsofmuckleforddvd.com for more details.



Land For Wildlife Extension Officers and contacts are at the following Department of Sustainability Offices:

Alexandra

Nigel Waterhouse
Phone: (03) 5772 0200
nigel.waterhouse@dse.vic.gov.au
Felicity Smith
Phone: (03) 5772 0264
felicity.smith@dse.vic.gov.au

Bairnsdale and Orbost

Amie Hill
Phone: (03) 5152 0400
amie.hill@dse.vic.gov.au

Ballarat

Elspeth Swan
Phone: (03) 5336 6856
elspeth.swan@dse.vic.gov.au

Bendigo, Swan Hill, and Mildura Areas

Terri Williams
Phone: (03) 5430 4389
terri.williams@dse.vic.gov.au

Central, South and West Gippsland

Kylie Singleton
Phone: (03) 5172 2123
kylie.singleton@dse.vic.gov.au

Geelong and Colac Areas

Rebecca Wray
Phone: (03) 5226 4696
rebecca.wray@dse.vic.gov.au

Heywood, Portland and Warrnambool Areas

Barry Carr
Phone: (03) 5527 0406
barry.carr@dse.vic.gov.au

Horsham

Glenn Rudolph
Phone: (03) 5362 0765
glenn.rudolph@dse.vic.gov.au
Felicity Christian
Phone: (03) 5362 0753
felicity.christian@dse.vic.gov.au

Melbourne & Port Phillip East Areas

John Hick
Phone: (03) 9785 0134
john.hick@dse.vic.gov.au

Wangaratta

Mary Anderson
Phone: (03) 5723 8693
mary.anderson@dse.vic.gov.au

Wodonga

Mary Titcumb
Phone: (02) 6043 7956
mary.titcumb@dse.vic.gov.au

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Events and Field Days

Box Ironbark Ecology Course

Nagambie, 4th October - 8th October
The Box Ironbark Ecology Course brings together leading researchers and experts to share up to date knowledge and thinking about this landscape. It is field based and participants will work in small groups. It emphasises ecological understanding and relationships and techniques that improve observation and data collection skills which can then be applied to other areas.

Participants will gain:

- a better understanding of the distribution, natural values and ecological processes of Box Ironbark landscapes, past and present;
- an understanding of the impact of human use on the ecosystem, past and present;
- practical skills in observation, description, survey, analysis, interpretation, map reading and ecosystem monitoring of flora, fauna, geomorphology and soils;
- opportunity to apply new skills and to collate and communicate information collected from the field; and
- resources to help plan for enhanced ecologically sustainable management outcomes for Box Ironbark remnants on private and public land.

For more details and to obtain an application form contact:

DSE Benalla
Phone: (03) 5761 1611
Kim Wilson (until the 5th September)
E-mail: kim.wilson@dse.vic.gov.au
Tel: 03 5784 0623
Kate Stothers (from 5th Sept 2011 onwards)
Email: kate.stothers@dse.vic.gov.au
Tel: 03 5761 1572

Field Naturalists Club of Victoria

For all FNCV events Phone (03) 9877 9860
Email: admin@fncv.org.au
Website: www.fncv.org.au

Wimmera Biodiversity Conference 2011

Natimuk 1st September - 2nd September, 2011

Theme: Past, Present, Future
Location: Natimuk
Contact: Steffen Shultz
Phone: (03) 5362 0792
email steffen.schultz@dse.vic.gov.au

Winter Swift Parrot & Regent Honey-eater Survey

6th - 7th August

For more information or to register your assistance/receive a site allocation please contact Chris Tzaros (Swift Parrots) 0409 235 263 or Dean Ingwersen (Regent honeyeaters) 0409 348 553 or email them: c.tzaros@birdsaustralia.com.au or Dean Ingwersen (Regent Honeyeaters) d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au, or call (03) 9347 0757.

Trust For Nature 1,000th Property Events

Trust For Nature have reached 1,000 conservation covenants across the State. To celebrate, they are holding a number of regional 'thank you' events to recognise the contribution those 1,000 volunteers have made to conservation. To find out where and when, either phone (03) 8631 5888 or Freecall: 1800 99 99 33 or visit their website: www.trustfornature.org.au

We Got It Wrong...

On page 9 of the 2010 LFW Newsletter we published the following images which were taken by Sue Aldred from St Andrews (not Healseville). Apologies Sue!



Hare Orchid
(*Caladenia menziesii*)



Chocolate Lily
(*Arthropodium strictum*)

Statewide Coordinator

Peter Johnson *Bendigo*
(03) 5430 4358
peter.johnson@dse.vic.gov.au

Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

PO Box 185, Nunawading, 3131
(03) 9877 5342 or 1300 305 342 (country)
www.birdobservers.org.au
www.dse.vic.gov.au/landforwildlife