

SOUTH GIPPSLAND
LANDCARE NETWORK



A newsletter for landcarers
in the South Gippsland
Landcare Network (SGLN)

South Gippy **Landcare News**

Issue 2

Volume 24

Summer 2016-17



Peter and his son Fred Gannon at an event in November 2016 at the Turtons Creek Falls with a focus on native burrowing and spiny crayfish.



**The South Gippsland Landcare Network
wishes every one a happy and
prosperous Christmas and New Year!**

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South Gippy Landcare News is a joint publication between all Landcare groups in the South Gippsland Landcare Network.

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Circulation

South Gippy Landcare News is distributed to all members of the South Gippsland Landcare Network and at field days and festivals. 1000 copies are circulated in the South Gippsland and Westernport catchments.

It is with much pleasure that I present my first Chairman's Report.

It certainly has been a busy time for the South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) with the high point being the well-attended and highly entertaining Annual General Meeting (AGM). Held at the Woorayl Golf Club on the 8th of October we were fortunate, or in my case unfortunate enough, to have Brian Nankervis entertain us, and what a magnificent job he did.

Brian had the whole crowd involved with his jokes, games, sketches and even poems. I haven't heard too many people leave an AGM in such a happy, positive frame of mind. Well done to Kate McKenzie for organising a wonderful night.

With the AGM came the retirement of a number of serving Board members in Arie Bos, Dawn Marotti, Rosemary Trease, Mark Uren, Phil Piper and Sally Jelbart. The whole of the SGLN deeply thanks those retiring Board members for the countless hours they

have all put into this wonderful cause.

However, when one door closes another one opens and we have been fortunate to have three new Board members elected to the SGLN Board in Ray Saunders, Libby Anthony and David Layton. I am sure these three will do an excellent job with our robust group heading into 2017.

It is that time of year when the weather is starting to warm up so I would encourage all SGLN members to get out and attend one of the many events organised by the Network, they are always great days and you will probably learn something along the way.

Finally, leading up to the festive season, I would like to extend season's greetings to all SGLN members and trust you have a safe, happy and prosperous festive season. Merry Christmas.

Frank Dekker

Chair - South Gippsland Landcare Network



Photo above: (from left) Frank Dekker, SGLN Chair, Mike Cleeland, Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) Chair, David Buntine, Port Phillip & Western Port Catchment Management Authority CEO, Kate McKenzie, SGLN Network Coordinator and Kellie Nichols, BCLN Executive Officer at 30 years of Landcare event in November at the Holden Proving Ground, Lang Lang. Photo credit: Trevor Warren.

Photo opposite page: Kate McKenzie, Frank Dekker and guest speaker Brian Nankervis at the SGLN AGM in October

Hello and welcome to the summer 2016 edition of The South Gippy News.

In this edition we share the achievements of SGLN Landcare groups over the past 12 months with you.

We are constantly inspired by the commitment and innovation displayed by groups and their members as they pragmatically respond and adapt to emerging threats and future pressures. Read the articles on pages 6 and 7 which showcase examples of two Landcare groups that bring about significant social and environmental outcomes.

We strive to benefit our environment, both in South Gippsland and beyond. In the 2015/2016 financial year with assistance from State and Federal government, SGLN has assisted landholders to erect over 15,000 metres of fencing to exclude stock from remnant vegetation or revegetated areas.

We aim to provide clear, reliable information on sustainable land management and farming practices. We pride ourselves on offering the community access to training and education on a range of topics relevant to land management.

Over the 2015/2016 financial year, we have delivered a wide range of field days, farm walks and training sessions. At each of these events, we have engaged the professional services of specialist consultants, (when necessary) to ensure that the highest quality of service and skills is delivered.

See page 5 for a snapshot of other on-ground outcomes achieved as an excerpt of the SGLN 2015/2016 Annual Report (a copy of the Annual Report for 2015/2016 is available for download via www.sgln.org.au).

In October we hosted the SGLN Board elections with 8 vacancies out of 10 positions on the Board available. Seven nominations were received from Ray Saunders, Libby Anthony, David Layton, Jean Carnell, Mark Walters, Helen Hasty and Frank Dekker.

Ray is a member of the Tarwin group, Libby and Helen are members of the Mardan Mirboo North Group, David is a member of the Fish Creek group, Jean and Frank are members of the Hallston group,

and Mark is a member of the Poowong Landcare group. Margaret McDonald, (SGLN member) and Russell Swan, (Tarwin Valley group member) return for their second year on the Board.

Frank Dekker was elected as Chair, Mark Walters was elected as Vice Chair and Margaret McDonald was elected as Treasurer. We sincerely thank retiring Board members; Sally Jelbart, Mark Uren, Arie Bos, Phil Piper, Rosemary Trease and Dawn Marotti for their volunteer based contributions to the Network over many years.

This will be my last report before I head off on 12 months maternity leave at the beginning of 2017. During this time we are pleased to advise that the SGLN Network Coordinator role will be fulfilled by Jill Vella of Koonwarra.

Jill brings with her an extensive knowledge of sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, Landcare and group facilitation. Many of you may know Jill as she a former employee of SGLN, and in recent years she has worked as the Agricultural Climate Resilience Officer across the Shires of Bass Coast and South Gippsland.

As the year comes to an end I would like to thank all our partners for their support, in particular the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority who continue to enable our ongoing growth and development.

I would also like to thank former SGLN Project Officer Nicole Walsh, Jenny O'Sullivan and the SGLN Board for their significant commitment and enthusiasm to Landcare in the region.



An advertisement for RSA Rotor Solutions Australia. It features a blue helicopter flying over a green field under a clear blue sky. The RSA logo is in the top right corner. Below the helicopter, the text reads: 'FOR ALL YOUR AERIAL NEEDS', followed by a list of services: '/ spraying / aerial seeding', '/ crop protection / fertiliser', and '/ granular application'. Below that, it says 'CALL FOR A QUOTE' and '1300 500 901'. At the bottom, it provides the website 'www.rotorsolutions.com.au', email 'info@rotorsolutions.com.au', and address 'PO Box 793 Albury NSW 2640'.

Flitter Flutter Butterfly!

Sword Grass Brown Butterflies generate a great level of interest

On Sunday the 6th of November a group gathered at Henrys Creek Sanctuary, Loch to learn about the biology, life cycle and habitat requirements of the Sword Grass Brown Butterfly (Tisiphone Abeona).

Guest speaker, Eddie Tsyrlin of Butterfly Adventures explained that the species is an attractive, slow lazy flying species with two distinct life stages. The first life stage is as a caterpillar where they feed on Red Fruited Saw Sedge (Gahnia sieberiana) during the evening and grow to the length of about 6cm. The second distinct life stage is as a butterfly, where it becomes a large (55mm wingspan) butterfly dark brown in colour with a central orange bank and a blue cantered eyespot to the forewing and a red-ringed eyespot to the hindwing.

Eddie encouraged anyone with an interest in butterflies, moths or wildlife in general to share their photos via the website platform BowerBird (<http://www.bowerbird.org.au/>). This is also a great tool to assist with species identification.

To increase the population of Red Fruited Saw Sedge (Gahnia sieberiana) locally the Poowong, Loch/Nyora, Triholm and Mt Lyall Landcare groups have been planting this species over the past two years on private properties. It is hoped that more plantings will occur in future. For more information on how you can take part, please contact Malcom Brown via seawish@aapt.net.au.

This event was made possible thanks to Malcom Brown and the members of the Mt Lyall, Loch Nyora, Triholm and Poowong groups with the support of the South Gippsland Landcare Network.



Photo above; Although it was too cold for Sword Grass Brown Butterflies to be active, the weather certainly didn't dampen the enthusiasm of this group. Participants came from all over South Gippsland to learn about this special species.



Photo above; (on left) Butterfly expert Eddie Tsyrlin of Butterfly Adventures with Loch Nyora Landcare group member and event coordinator, Malcom Brown in front of the host plant for the butterfly; the Red Fruited Saw Sedge (Gahnia sieberiana) at Henrys Creek Sanctuary, Loch.



Photo above; Butterfly expert Eddie Tsyrlin of Butterfly Adventures (on left) with workshop attendees demonstrating a capture net at Henrys Creek Sanctuary, Loch.

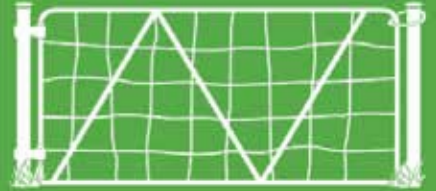


56.18 ha
REMNANT
VEGETATION
PROTECTED

THE NO
OF LAND
HOLDERS
WHO UNDERTOOK ON-GROUND
WORKS VIA SGLN

54

15,673.4
METRES OF STOCK PROOF
FENCING ERECTED



HABITAT ENHANCED THROUGH
REVEGETATION AND/OR
WEED CONTROL



21.26 ha



NUMBER OF
PLANTS FUNDED
56,526

3=

Number of training courses
1 on Soil Health,
1 on Pasture Management
and 1 on koala Spot
Assessment Technique (SAT)
and Eucalypt ID training



5=

Number of workshops or field
days



5=

Number of comprehensive Soil
Heath and Nutrient Management
Plans developed as part of the
Heathy Soils Sustainable Farms
project

71 SITE
MANAGEMENT
PLANS

Community reaches out to the Black Spur Wetlands

By Kathleen Brack, Regional Landcare Project Officer, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Members of the Nerrena Landcare Group have recently completed a management plan for 100 acres of run-down wetlands on public land in South Gippsland.

The Black Spur Wetlands' Management Plan outlines a clear vision of how the group intends to restore the site. Guided by the plan, the group recently started their first work on the site, removing pussy willows in the area's wetlands thanks to funding from the West Gippsland CMA.

The plan and the works are especially exciting as the members of the Nerrena Landcare Group have known for a very long time just how special the Black Spur wetlands are, but have been frustratingly unable to help.

The Black Spur is a unique area of public land created by the confluence of three key parcels of public reserve: the South Gippsland Rail Trail, the South Gippsland Highway and the Tarwin River. The area has never been cleared and remains an untouched pocket of South Gippsland environment, home to melaleuca swamps, rich birdlife and one of the only incidences of Strzelecki gums to be found on public land.

However, due to the decrepit and unsafe trestle bridges along the railway line the site was inaccessible to the public, full of weeds and never managed or appreciated by the community.

According to Kate Walsh, a member of the Nerrena Landcare Group, the group was keen to open up the area but cautious to take on the project due to the likelihood of a highway realignment that would go straight through the middle of the site. The scale of the project at the 100-acre site was also an issue for a small group of volunteers.

"For years and years, we kept bringing up the wetlands and their importance at meetings but always the voices of reason told us it was too hard for a small group of volunteers, already busy with their own land and projects," Kate said.

Two key events then changed the outlook for the project – the opening of the South Gippsland Rail Trail through the middle of the site, and the confirmation of the highway realignment route. This spurred a new momentum amongst group members.

Nerrena Landcare Group president, Jill Vella, said some key members of the group received a burst of enthusiasm and decided to bring all of the site's key stakeholders together.

"There were lots of people talking about the site, lot of people talking in corners about the same thing and not really talking to each other. We brought the key people and stakeholders together in a room. We all said the time is right to do this.

"The project seemed to be beyond the scope of a small group of volunteers, so we suggested we really needed a plan where the works were handled by contractors. Yes we were keen to have working groups and citizen science but we knew it had to be based on a proper plan and proper work," Jill said.

A grant from the South Gippsland Shire allowed the group to contract a consultant to produce the plan. A key component of the plan is to encourage the community using the rail trail to better understand the environmental values of the site, through access and interpretive signs.

"We want the Black Spur Wetlands to be a place everyone can enjoy, because it really is incredibly special," Jill Vella said.

For further information contact Kathleen Brack at KathleenB@wgcm.vic.gov.au



Photo above: Walking along the rail trail as part of the Nerrena Landcare groups community consultation meeting in October 2016

The Fish Creek Landcare Group formed in 1992 and has been working actively since then. It grew from the closure of the South Gippsland Farm Trees Group. With the winding up of this group, its funds were shared between the new Lower Franklin and Fish Creek Landcare Groups.

Following successful field days, membership grew rapidly spreading around the Fish Creek catchment area as land holders saw the benefits and the improvements to the landscape. During the last 24 years, the group has been very successful in receiving grants for many projects. All members are encouraged to be involved in the planning of activities at a committee of management level or as individuals.

Our vision: Fish Creek Landcare Group strives to provide the whole community with leadership and education for a sustainable & productive environment through coordination, cooperation and communication.

The 'catch phrase' as seen on our signage and car stickers is:

Fish Creek Landcare, Landscaping the Future

Membership: There are around 50 families making up our membership. Membership interests have changed over the



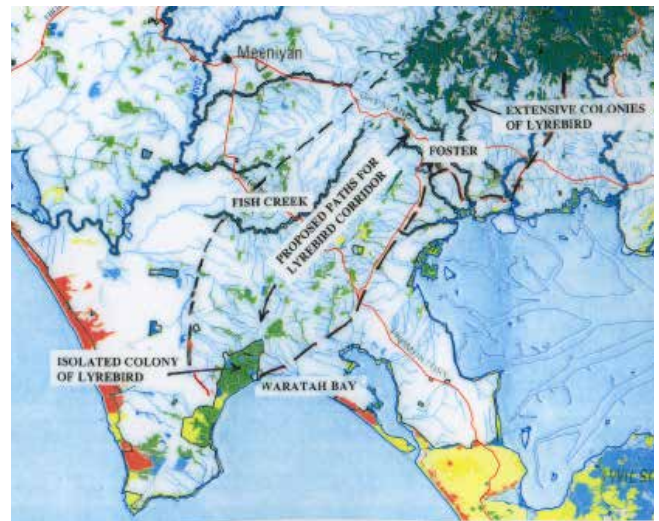
Photo above: Fish Creek Landcare revegetation reduces erosion in Fish Creek floods April 2011. Photo courtesy G. Wallis

years. Beginning with a focus firmly on broad scale agriculture – dairy, sheep & beef farmers, the group has changed to embrace the smaller landholders who have chosen to make the Fish Creek area their home or weekend getaway.

Projects & Activities: Initially the group focused on the revegetation of the Fish Creek, downstream from the town. Since then, the group has been involved in a broader scope of works in both the public and private domain. For example, The Great Southern Rail Trail, Strzelecki Lyrebird Link, town environs, the construction of the information rotunda and its informative display and Battery Creek Reservoir.

Cooperation and joint activities with neighbouring Landcare groups such as Tarwin, Foster North and Prom Plains has been a focus over the years. The philosophy being 'the more the merrier!' The group is very happy to include members, non members and neighbouring groups in any activity that we run.

We have also worked in conjunction the Fish Creek Primary School and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. As a result of earlier riparian management, many Fish



Map of the Strzelecki Lyrebird Link concept protecting and revegetating habitat between Cape Liptrap and Foster North

Creek waterways were protected from extensive damage during the floods of 2011.

The Fish Creek Landcare Group runs a range of outdoor activities to attract the interests of different members. Activities usually attract 15 – 35 people. Examples of this include:

- Summer farm walks show casing different farming enterprises and their integration of Landcare principles. A recent example was Amber Creek Farm, owned by Dan and Amelia Bright, Fish Creek Landcare members and 2015 winners of a Regional Bank of Melbourne Business Award.
- A farm dams walk on a dairy farm show casing the integration of wildlife with a productive farming system.
- Whole farm planning aimed at smaller landholders. Fencing, revegetation & weed management techniques were demonstrated.
- Walks in the local area including the Hoddle Range mountain trail, of which Fish Creek Landcare is a major contributor to this local community initiative.



Photo above: Hoddle Range mountain walk summer 2006

The Fish Creek Landcare Group also organises a diverse range of guest speakers to attract the interests of different members and the general public. Examples as follows;

- Jonathan Stevenson, Parks Vic marine biologist on Corner Inlet and Wilsons Promontory marine life
- Colin Silvey, Melbourne Museum on reptiles in our area
- Gary Wallis on local geology and understanding our landscape
- Graeme Nicoll, 2010 Nuffield Scholar, on resilient dairy farming systems
- Dr John Feehan on dung beetles in our area and their benefits

Other past successful topics have included talks with a sustainable agriculture focus including planning for dry periods, updates from the WGCMA, fertiliser & nutrient discussions and talks about climate change.

Other specific projects have included:

- Coordination of aerial photographs for members to assist with whole farm planning
- Renewal of the rotunda display in Fish Creek
- A joint evening with Franklin River Landcare Group (Dr Richard Eckard on climate change)
- A joint evening with Tarwin Group (Dr Gunter Weller on climate change); 50 plus attendees

Communications: Promotion in the local newspaper is an important avenue of communication as is the South Gippsland

Landcare Network newsletter. These publications allow us to promote events as well as report back to the wider community on the events that are run.

Over recent years the group has established a successful email update process where the bulk of members receive an email update from time to time, of upcoming events and items of interest. Mail drops broaden communication to the wider community.

Landcare displays have been a part of local community events including the 'Back to Fish Creek' event held in 2009 marking 125 years of settlement in the area. This type of promotion provides an interface for those who are not members and show cases the works going on in our community.

Conclusion: The Fish Creek Landcare group has always used sound Landcare principles in its planning and activities. The group aims to encompass all land owners in the community – large and small. Whilst we aim for landscape change, there is a clear understanding that this must be underpinned by quality education opportunities for members and non members alike.

Collaboration with other land managers in our community such as the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria, South Gippsland Water and private landholders will continue into the future.

The group marked its 15 years with a community celebration and the awarding of life memberships to several of its founding members. As the 25 year mark approaches the group is in good health and looking forward to future goals being met.

Fish Creek Landcare committee, June 2016

Rabbits

We've trapped them and starved them and chased them with dogs,
We've dug them from burrows and chopped them from logs,
We've driven them, yarded them, clubbed them with sticks,
And poisoned with strychnine and ten-eighty mix.

We've shot them and sold them and cooked them in stew,
We've stretched out their skins, sold for fur and felt too,
We've ferreted, netted, and gassed in huge doses,
And developed a virus called Myxomatosis.

But still you will notice as you move around,
Rabbits in numbers increasing abound,
It's forty odd years since Mixo's release,
And it only gave us a few years of peace.

This fight 'gainst the rabbit's not battle, it's war,
And we can't take a view that's short-term anymore.
If the experts now tell us to wait, 'til September,
We'll wait and be patient and try to remember.

Calici is good, if we use it with care,
But we need a planned spread so it works everywhere,
You still need to rip burrows, get the harbour removed,
Or the rabbit will come back, as history has proved.

MICHELAGO MICK ABC Country Hour - 12 April 1996

* Mike Stephens 1996



Photo above: If only we could train the rabbits to eat thistles.
Image; Shutterstock.

Agnes River District Landcare Group

2015/2016 was a year of reinvigoration for the Agnes River Landcare Group with a number of events taking place, in addition a new executive committee forming.

A highly popular and inspirational evening was held at the Toora North property of Bryan Watterson in April, focused on all things 'Agnes River'. Over 30 guests were treated to delicious food made by Elizabeth Collins.

The group have been working with neighboring Landcare groups and a community tree planting day planned for August 2016.

Allambee South Landcare Group; Tom & Lyn Butcher, President & Secretary

Allambee South Landcare Group have not met in the last year as members were preoccupied with managing enterprises during a most challenging period. The difficult seasons needed our complete focus.

There was some planting done by Mirboo North Secondary College students on a section of the Tarwin River. Unfortunately, the success rate of plant survival was very low because of the very dry conditions prevailing over a long period of time. Some replanting has since been carried out with varying success as a result of

wombat populations. The coming spring shows enormous promise and hopefully we will be able to get our enterprises back on track and have an opportunity to refocus and look once again at Landcare activities.

Allambee Community Landcare Group; Judy Lackman, Secretary

The past year has seen membership numbers for the ACLG remain constant, with only one funded Landcare project to enhance biolinks being undertaken by a member. The extremely low rainfall throughout the Allambee district during spring (the lowest for 10 years) provided very little incentive for new plantings, with maintenance of existing ones more of a focus. Whilst low rainfall did not produce good pasture growth, this was not the case for the local weed population. Weeds are always a constant in our area, with a few members making excellent inroads to control some extensive blackberry infestations. Hopefully next summer will see further efforts to keep them at bay.

Numerous mature plantations of pine and eucalypt throughout the Allambee, Mt Worth and Hallston areas have recently been harvested resulting in a vastly different landscape in our region. The construction of access tracks, soil disturbance and removal of vegetation have exposed the steep slopes of the Strzeleckis making them more vulnerable

to wind, rain, soil loss and erosion. ACLG sent a letter of concern to the Baw Baw Shire regarding the timber harvesting and logging up to the roadside which could cause erosion, destabilisation and potential road slip, but the reply from the Shire did not address this issue to our satisfaction.

The resultant loss of shade, shelter and habitat across the slopes has meant wildlife have sought new homes. On a positive, one member was excited to have their first sighting of a koala on their property (which was residing in a tree planted by them 8 years prior) before it moved on to find a new home in an adjoining remnant vegetation corridor. However, as a negative, the reduced habitat has flushed out unwanted wildlife e.g. deer, into neighboring properties. It is not uncommon to sight deer grazing pastures on the foothills just 4km from the township of Yarragon.

Students from the local Yarragon Primary School were involved in a tree planting activity at the Allambee Camp and a neighboring property where a landslip had occurred. Neil O'Sullivan arranged and supervised this activity, with the children learning the benefits and importance of planting trees. The plants were kindly donated by Ian and Gay Cornthwaite owners of The Strzelecki Plant Farm.

During January several members from our group and the local community attended the Allambee Coal Seam Gas free declaration day. As a result of surveys in our area, 100% of people surveyed were against drilling for CSG in our community. Signs stating this declaration have been erected on the Leongatha Road near Childers Road and another sign erected on the Mirboo Nth Road near Hallston.

Whilst we have not had many formal meetings, our New Year social meeting was well attended, and some members have also attended SGLN presentations and information sessions on the proposed release of the new strain of virus for rabbit control.



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Arawata Landcare Group

The Arawata Landcare group continues to meet on the first Wednesday evening of each new season. Its a chance for members to get together for a social catch up to share stories and discuss their plans for the weeks and months ahead.

A number of members completed projects on their properties as part of 25th Anniversary Landcare Grants funded by the Australian Governments Landcare Programme. The group has also worked with the Korumburra Secondary College. 2016/2017 will no doubt be another lively year for the dedicated group.

Fish Creek Landcare Group;

Robin Stevens, Secretary

The Fish Creek Landcare group continues to focus on encouraging the local community in ecological management of remnant bush and farm land, with protection of creeks and drains, and maintenance of a healthy balance between agriculture, remnant vegetation and wildlife.

We are encouraging farmers, interested locals and a significant lifestyle/weekender population to meet this focus with education, native vegetation planting, fencing, weed management and organising interesting local walks.

Our group has 51 members which is less than the past few years, but we have had a significant review of our current financial membership resulting in fewer numbers. We plan to survey our members to put into place activities to meet their needs.

Activities for the past year include:

- Working with the Fish Creek Development group to maintain and encourage use of the Mt Nicoll circuit track.
- Continuing to liaise with the WGCMA with their works of willow removal and weed eradication along the Fish Creek near the township.
- Cheryl Glowry, a local and published historian, spoke at the last AGM on the "History of Fish Creek before the

Railways arrived in 1892"

- Jonathon Stevenson, a marine biologist and member of Parks Victoria, presented an evening talk on "The Unique South"
- We are currently working with the Fish Creek Community Garden to re-vegetate a steep slope adjacent to the garden and a small section of the rail trail

Friends of Turtons Creek Falls; Peter Gannon, group leader

2015/2016 has been a busy one for the Friends of Turtons Creek Falls having received a grant for the survey of South Gippsland Spiny Crayfish and habitat rehabilitation. The grant was part of the Threatened Species Protection Initiative, Community Volunteer Action Grants, funded by the Victorian Government.

As part of the grant, a community event was held on a hot summer's day in March where participants learnt about the ecology of the crayfish by Aquatic Ecologist, Aaron Jenkin. Aaron has scheduled survey work in spring, with a follow-up community day planned for November 2016. The group also worked in conjunction with South Gippsland Shire Council and DELWP to have blackberry control undertaken during the summer.



ABOVE - Peter Gannon, Friends of Turtons Creek Falls with Aaron Jenkin electrofishing as part of the community day in March 2016.

Loch Nyora Landcare Group; Ron Barnacle, President

While our Group continues to struggle for numbers, our recent focus on recruiting is paying off and numbers are growing again. As Landcare Victoria celebrates its 30 year anniversary, our Group turns 20 and we feel it is critical to keep the group growing and active as challenges remain,

despite all the wonderful work done by those who went before us in the Loch Nyora Landcare Group over those two decades.

Clearly, the relevance and importance of Landcare has not diminished over its three decades despite the tremendous contribution it has made right across Victoria - weeds remain a problem in many districts, especially on public land and small, private holdings, and there is a major need for education as more people from cities relocate to regional areas with little or no experience of maintaining their newly acquired land in a sustainable way.

For our group, the highlight for the year just past was the opportunity to work with Bass Gas on rehabilitating some of the land around their Lang Lang site. We are hopeful that the help and guidance provided will result in some extensive revitalisation there.

Lower Franklin River Land Protection Group; Judy Bacon, President

We held our A.G.M. in February 2016 at Hugh Sargeant and Diana Droog's place at Toora with a farm walk followed by a barbeque tea; Kate McKenzie chaired the meeting. All office bearers were returned to their positions.

President- Judy Bacon

Vice- President-Bruce Knee

Secretaries- Diana Droog and Hugh Sargeant

Treasurer- Rae Knee.

Activities for the year 2015-2016.

- Roadside Blackberry spraying in Toora area.
- In May 2016 we had a farm walk at Dave Hutchinson and Lyndell Shields place at Wonga/Mt Best followed by tea.

- At the South Gippsland Shire meeting in July 2016 it was decided the Shire with consultation with the Lower Franklin River Land Group will manage the future of the Franklin River Reserve. A Draft has been drawn up by the shire and it will be implemented. We have already had meetings with the shire and it is looking good for the ongoing

improvements to the Reserve.

We are a small group but have very pleasant social events.

Mardan Mirboo North Landcare Group; Phil Piper, President

Overall a very successful year.

Over the last 12 months we have had five members receive grants from the Network for tree planting with three out of the five completed to date. These treebees were held on a Sunday morning for a couple of hours as usual and were followed by a social BBQ.

Well done to Libby, as we received two grants from the Federal Government. One for \$2500 for a projector and high visibility vests. The other for \$36,000 for three half days of sustainability presentations to be delivered. Thanks to Ian for filling in two surveys for \$400 each and that money has gone to our group.

The Baths Road Reserve area has about 2 km of bushwalking tracks through tall gum tree forests, native plants and fern gullies. You can gain access to the area from the swimming pool or the car park opposite the Town Hall. The defunct Friends of Baths Road Reserve has come

on board and is a part of our Landcare group.

Thanks to Viki's vision and passion and the hard working volunteers and in conjunction with the local shire and our year nine Landcare cadets from the Mirboo North Secondary College, this reserve in the middle of Mirboo North is slowly being returned to it's original splendor. This is becoming a very successful bond.

Thanks to the committee for all your hard work and support of me as president. As president, I have found the job challenging in trying to keep a social community based group together. In the 10 years that Ian and I have been active members we have enjoyed the social interaction and the casual nature of the group, along with a lot of tree planting. I believe this has made the Mardan/ Mirboo North Landcare group one of the most successful groups in the network. All the best to our new president and the new committee.

Mount Eccles Wild Dog Valley Landcare group; Sonia Holt, Secretary

A meet and greet BBQ was held in June, designed as a way to encourage new

members and the broader community in the activities it the group.

Hammons Bush remains a focus for the group, with a number of working bees held throughout the year in conjunction with committee meetings.

Mount Lyall Landcare Group; Frank Bugeja, former Secretary

The Group held the 24th Annual General Meeting and Dinner at the Poowong Hotel and was attended by 25 members.

Our guest speaker was Mr Geoff Trease. Geoff grew up on a farm at Mardan in South Gippsland, studied horticulture at Burnley and very successfully combined the skills from both these adventures to fulfil numerous roles working for Landcare over the last 14 years. He manages the South Gippsland Seed Bank which supplies seed to nurseries and for revegetation projects throughout South Gippsland. Geoff described the collection, storage and supply of indigenous seed and included an impressive slide show.

Generally, seed is collected from the native bush, sometimes from established revegetation project areas. Seeds collected endeavor to cover the broadest genetic base as possible and are stored in a controlled environment (cool room). Approximately 170kgs are held in stock and can be stored for periods varying from 12 months to 50 years. 10 – 15% of individual seed sock goes to tube stock and the remainder to direct seeding projects. Seed sells for approx \$750 per kilo (average mix). The seed bank is open on Thursdays.

Our first committee meeting was held in October at which the following Executive was established.

President	Jeff Ferrier
Vice President	Paul Cook
Secretary	Frank Bugeja
Treasurer	Lyn Mitchard
Newsletter Editor	Leesa Grant Rudy Youseff
Equipment Officers	Bill Loughridge Harold Hillberg
Committee	Anne-Mette McNamara Gilmore Douglas

This has been a relatively quiet year in terms of outdoor activities however our membership has been maintained at



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around 40 landholders and our financial position is very sound.

The Committee decided to continue the groups participation in the Red Fruit Saw Edge and Sword Grass project and we look forward to the publication of an information brochure and the feedback field day next November.

Unfortunately we have not been able to obtain any further substantial feedback from our investigation and field tests on eucalypt dieback but we will continue to try to find more relevant information to distribute to members.

Committee members joined members from other South Gippsland groups at the network AGM in Leongatha.

Members continued to monitor the weed situation at former Mt Lyall Primary school. A field day and BBQ was held on site in June to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the planting. A Poowong Primary School teacher attended and was keen to hear about the history of the site.

Members attended the workshop in April to develop a draft network Landcare group action plan. Our group has agreed to participate in support for contract work (e.g. weed spraying on rail line) and will suggest potential network projects including the coordination of the development/completion of wildlife corridors throughout various group areas.

Our group continues to provide members with an inventory of plant and equipment for weed control for loan and/or hire and is very ably maintained by Harold Hillberg and Bill Loughridge. Details are provided in the group Newsletter- Contact Bill or Harold directly to arrange pick up.

The Mt Lyall Group Newsletter was produced and delivered by email and/or post to all members during the year.

Nerrena Landcare group; Kevin Hughes, President

The AGM last year was very successful with 20 people attending at the Waratah Hills winery to hear Jill and Howard Plowright talk about local birds. The

delicious lunch and wine was big part of the success of the day as well.

Nerrena Landcare Group has not met



ABOVE - Mardan Mirboo North Landcare group members the Roberts family with Alex Campbell (centre back) at a 'treebee' day at the Robert's Mardan property. Photo courtesy of Libby Anthony.

much over the year, except for the working group preparing the Black Spur Creek Wetlands project plan. This has involved many hours of meetings, literature reviews, mapping and list making. I am pleased to report that the plan is ready to be presented to the group and interested visitors at the 2016 AGM.

We are extremely grateful to the Shire of South Gippsland for giving us a grant to employ Michelle Harris to prepare the plan, bringing together the inputs of the LC group, VicRoads, the WGCMA, DELWP, and other agencies and community groups.

I would like to thank Kate Walsh, Coral Hughes, Jill Vella and also Michelle Harris and Matt Bowler for their work, and for being at the AGM to speak about the project, and launch the plan that has been prepared for public consultation. I hope you will read it and contribute to the plan if you think we have missed anything.

In August, the group assisted with planting a long windbreak at Ben and Jemima's place (Egans Road) along with students from Leongatha Secondary College. A lovely morning tea was enjoyed afterwards.

Poowong Landcare Group; Mark Walters, President

It has been another eventful year at Poowong Landcare. We have had a regular attendance at our meetings, and

we have tried to make these more of a social event by gathering 30 minutes early for refreshments and a chatter. I hope we continue this over the coming year.

There have been some interesting projects, none more so than the "One Tree Per Child Program". This was a funded project which we ran in conjunction with Poowong Primary School. Every student at the school was involved in the planting of 600 trees. The event was attended by the Russell Broadbent, the Mayor, and local councilors, with members of staff and parents all playing a part. A big thankyou to Jeff Clark for organising this event.

We visited Steve & Bernie Halliday's property to see how the revegetation that was carried out 2 years ago was progressing. I am glad to say that it seems to be going very well.

A lot of our members were at Jo and Rob Mcleay's place last week to help with the planting of their gully region.

We participated in the Sword-Grass Butterfly project, with most members receiving plants to attract the butterfly, but with hardly any success due to the poor quality of plants provided.

We felt we needed some kind of recognition in Poowong of the Giant Earthworm which is found in the local country. So we have produced an informative poster that has been located in the Sculpture Park. Thanks must go to Peter Jacques, who ran with this project.

Thanks to Steve & Bernie Halliday for hosting the Christmas gathering again. Also thanks to Jo Mcleay for doing such a great job getting our Facebook page up and running.

Thanks to Jeff Clark for the monthly newsletter, containing valuable tips and information. Thanks also to treasurer Elvie and Secretary Peter for all the work during the year.

Finally, thanks to all other members that have participated during the past year, and I look forward to seeing you all at the next meeting.

South Gippsland Equine Landcare Group; Larissa Judd, President

The past year has been a quiet one for the group, with members busing undertaking individual projects and just busy with life in general. An information evening on fire and horses was held at the Fish Creek Hotel in December 2015.

CFA Community Safety Coordinator, Kerry Senior presented on topics ranging from how to assess your property for fire risk, through to horse friendly assembly areas. We are really looking forward to a session planned for this October with independent equine nutritionist, Carol Layton.

Tarwin Landcare Group; Rod Cope, former President

This past year has been about trying to get numbers back into our group. Our Christmas breakup at Michael Buckley's was a nice night enjoyed by about 12 of us. Thank you Michael for showing us around your garden, nursery, and for opening your house for all to enjoy a nice meal.

Then in May we had a day at our farm which was well attended. Thanks to Jenny

O'Sullivan for being MC on the day. There were many stories of yesteryear shared by my dad, my aunty Liz and Uncle Stan Dunlop, and also Dave Webster. We had a drive after the chat and checked out some of the work we've done over the past 20+ years. The grass trees are my favorite, and if anyone wants to come and have a look, just phone and you'd be more than welcome.

I'll finish off by saying a big thank you to Ray Saunders and Debbie Birkett for all their work, and Val O'Loughlin for her work as group treasurer.

Tarwin Valley Landcare Group; Mick Stewart, President

Another year has come to a close. Where has the time gone?

The two major activities that brought the group together over the past year were the annual Christmas catch-up and plant sharing BBQ day.

The annual Christmas catch-up was held at the Meeniyah Hotel. The group shared some great food and conversation over a couple of drinks. It is always nice to chat with like-minded people about plans for their properties and to gain knowledge from those that have put in the hard yards

over the years.

The group held their second annual plant sharing BBQ day at Tanderah Park, Meeniyah this year. The group purchased 1,000 tubes from The Green Patch Nursery next door and members that attended were able to pick 100 plants from a wide selection of native tubes both indigenous and non-indigenous species.

It was really great to catch up with the core members and also meet some of the not so active members. It is always a nice, relaxed and enjoyable day, I look forward to next year.

Although it was a slow year as far as group activities go, I feel it was still positive with plants going in the ground and members still focused on fighting the good fight.

Keep up the good work everyone.

Triholm Landcare group; Tania Murray, President

The focus for Triholm Landcare Group in 2015/16 has been educating the community on weed control via pop-up signage and the distribution of flyers. With ragwort, blackberry and thistles the target species.

Introducing Jill Vella, Network Coordinator (maternity leave replacement.)

Jill may be familiar to many South Gippsland Landcare group members as she was a project officer from 2008 to 2013 working on Network projects including the Million Trees for South Gippsland and Healthy Soils programs.

Jill, along with her husband Michael farms deer on her 42 ha property at Koonwarra, running a paddock to plate venison business. The farm's environment management system is certified with the ALM group.

For the past three years Jill has delivered the Agricultural Climate Change Resilience project for the Shires of South Gippsland and Bass Coast. This project was funded through the State Government Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership.

Excited to be returning to work with the network Jill will bring extensive local knowledge plus an enthusiasm to develop local partnerships with SGLN building on relationships built during the past few years.

Noting that "I never really went away" Jill continued to provide editorial services to the network as well as EcoTender monitoring field work up to the end of that project in October, as well as a passionate involvement in her own Landcare Group, Nerrena.

Jill holds an Advanced Diploma of Agriculture from the University of Melbourne, and a Diploma of Laboratory Technology (Biological and Environmental testing) from Chisholm Institute.



By Nicole Walsh, former South Gippsland Landcare Network Project Officer

The Strzelecki Ranges in South Gippsland is a beautiful part of Victoria. It also happens to be home for the unique Strzelecki koala. Why unique you may ask? Well this koala population is believed to be genetically distinct from all other koala populations across Victoria.

There are historic reasons for this unique genetic status. Koalas were once widespread across Victoria but declined on mainland Victoria to near extinction by the early 1930s, this was due to a combination of hunting for the fur trade, land clearing and massive bushfires. In order to combat this decline koalas from colonies established on French and Phillip Islands were translocated across the state. These translocated koalas overwhelmed most of the remaining koala population in Victoria, with the exception of the Strzelecki Ranges where small surviving colonies of koalas remained.

Genetic diversity is important for species to adapt to environmental change and disease. The Strzelecki koala population represents a unique remnant gene pool that reflects the original genetic diversity of Victoria's koalas and may be the key to supporting and rebuilding affected koala populations in the future. Recent genetic research (Wedrowicz, 2016) has shown that the South Gippsland koala population is different to and far more genetically diverse than the French and Phillip Island populations.

In recognition of its conservation significance the Victorian Government, through the Communities for Nature Program, funded the South Gippsland Landcare Network's (SGLN) Friends of Strzelecki Koala (FOSK) - Habitat for Life Project in 2012. The project aimed to identify suitable koala habitat on private and public land; engage with landholders to protect and improve the condition of koala habitat through fencing and weed control; create native vegetation corridors to improve habitat connectivity across the Strzelecki and South Gippsland region and to engage with the broader community to increase awareness and understanding of koala conservation.

Habitat loss and fragmentation is a major issue for koala conservation. Private landholders are crucial custodians of koala habitat, especially in South Gippsland where much of the native vegetation remains as fragmented patches across the landscape. The primary aim of the FOSK project was to contribute to the long term goal of healthy remnants connected by effective habitat corridors, across a sustainable productive farming landscape. So did we manage to achieve this?

Well, over the last four years (2012-2016) SGLN has delivered funding to 65 on-ground projects which included:

- 134 hectares of habitat protection and enhancement through fencing and woody weed control
- 60.7 hectares of revegetation to create habitat linkages
- 71,534 plants went into the ground, and
- 26.34 kilometres of fencing were installed for both remnant and revegetation projects.

Landholders Helen and Ian Hasty from Mardan, north of Leongatha participated in the FOSK project in 2013. They are also members of the Mardan/Mirboo North Landcare Group.

"We have seen a definite increase in koalas moving through our farm, even visiting our lemon tree, while moving from one area to another. The Landcare funded areas have now been increased to quite a sustainable treed habitat, including koalas, bird life, snakes and a wallaby for a while. We found the program very successful, over the 3 years, as we could add on plantings to existing areas to make corridors for the koalas. We would be keen to be involved again".

Helen and Ian Hasty - Mardan



Photo above: Ellie Watts at a tree planting day held at Geoff and Donna Russell's Hallston property last year as part of the the South Gippsland Landcare Network's (SGLN) Friends of Strzelecki Koala (FOSK) - Habitat for Life Project

"Donna and I have undertaken two plantings with the FOSK project in 2014 and 2015. This involved fencing two gullies that stretched nearly the full length of our property to keep the cattle out of the water-ways. The plantings connected to the west branch of the Tarwin River, which was planted out about ten years ago by Gippsland Water. The plants have gone very well, we had very few that did not survive, most have flourished. We also have had many comments about how good the gullies now look from the other side of the valley. We can't wait for the trees to get to a size that will support koalas. We would do the plantings the same, everything went so well. We had a great group of people for both plantings.

Giving Strzelecki Koalas a helping hand cont.

One group that helped both times were some university students doing environmental studies. They were a terrific group and very enthusiastic. Altogether over three thousand plants went in, from grasses to eucalypts. "We are so happy to think we are providing habitat for our local koalas and other wildlife".

Geoff and Donna Russell - Hallston



Photo above: Participants at a community planting day at the Russell's Hallston property last year.

When I came on board as Project Officer with the South Gippsland Landcare Network in 2013 to manage this project I remember thinking "great there's a Friends of Strzelecki Koalas group already. I just have to make contact with this group and wonderful things will happen". However the reality was a little different from what I expected.

Our aim to engage with the broader community about koala conservation was achieved through the development of a dedicated FOSK website, Facebook page, a quarterly newsletter to supporters, community forums, field days, community planting days, school visits, training sessions and local newspaper articles. Various publications and resources have been produced including education material for schools, landholder case studies, an identification guide to the Eucalypts of the Strzelecki Ranges and Gippsland Plains and a brochure called Living with Koalas in the Strzelecki Ranges which looks at ways that people on bush blocks on the edge of built up areas can co-exist with koalas.

Another key component of the FOSK project was a citizen

ecologist program which aimed to engage the community in citizen science projects involving the collection of data on the local koala population. This data collection occurred at three different levels. The first level was a koala sighting map which allowed the community to record koala sightings in the South Gippsland region on a dedicated website. The second level

involved training volunteers to collect koala faecal pellets (scats) and submit for genetic analysis. Volunteers collected over 200 scat samples from across the region to help determine the genetic profile of the South Gippsland koala population.

The third level of community involvement involved training volunteers to undertake koala distribution and habitat preference surveys. These surveys form an important baseline of the extent and condition of koala habitat across the region. The data from these surveys has been used to develop a koala habitat model. This model provides the ability for stakeholders, such as regional authorities and community groups, to generate maps at a local scale on which to base their on-ground priorities. We also hope it will assist local government when assessing planning and development applications in areas used by koalas.

So, as it turned out the Friends of Strzelecki Koala Group turned out to be a nebulous mix of interested landholders, community and Landcare group members who were concerned for the welfare of the koala population living in the Strzelecki Ranges. The project coalesced around these individuals and groups and four years later we've achieved a great deal to help ensure the continued presence of these wonderful animals in our corner of Gippsland.



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Upcoming events:

Manuka Honey & Tea-tree in Gippsland- a Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices event

Hear about the Oz Honey Project from PhD candidate, Simon Williams from the University of the Sunshine Coast.

When: Sunday the 15th of January 2017, 3pm-5.30pm

Where: Bell Park Scout Camp, 130 Scout Dr, Lang Lang VIC 3984

RSVP by the 12th of January 2017 via: sgln@landcare.net

or contact Jenny O'Sullivan on 0419 153 377

Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices is supported by the South Gippsland Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Governments National Landcare Programme and PPWCMA

A day on the Farm

Fun for the whole family! A tour of Prom Country Cheese and supper made with seasonal ingredients from the farm.

When: Wednesday the 18th of January 2017, 4pm-6.30pm

Where: Prom Country Cheese, 275 Andersons Inlet Rd, Moyarra / Bena

RSVP by the 15th of January 2017 via: www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=247299

or contact Jenny O'Sullivan on 0419 153 377

This project is supported through funding from the Australian Governments National Landcare Programme and PPWCMA



Photo: Burke and Bronwyn Brandon, owner-managers of Prom Country Cheese

