

THE YEAR THAT GOT AWAY. ISSUE 5

THE BABBLER

The official e-newsletter of the Buloke and Northern
Grampians Landcare Network



Opening of the Landcare Harmony Garden and Galngga Festival,
St Arnaud Raillery Hub

RUNNING TO STAND STILL IN 2023

BY MARNEY DURIE, ASSISTANT FACILITATOR BNGLN

I know what you're thinking - "Babbler, where have you been?!" Well, like the lizard drinking, we've been flat out! We hit 2023 running with so many amazing network projects that we've had to put on an assistant to handball all the menial tasks and coffee runs to - that's me!

With no time to waste, read on for all things happening across the BNGL network, from: Bushfood gardens with Djaara in Wycheproof, erosion control in Berrimal and Kurraca, soil and regen-ag in St Arnaud, Jr Landcare at Moonembal, biolinks at Calawadda, Winter Wanders with Avon Plains/Banyena, the inaugural BNGLN 'Galngga Festival', new groups, new alliances, forums, roadshows, projects and so much more in this issue of your e-zine.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

JUST A QUICK WORD

As you read this edition of The Babbler, I hope the season is treating you well, whether for cropping, livestock or whatever you are trying to achieve on your patch of land.

We are looking forward to welcoming a new Regional Landcare Co-ordinator at the NCCMA. As you would all know, Tess Grieves has taken on another position at the CMA. She has been a wonderful supporter of Networks, groups and individuals, and will be greatly missed by all. We thank her for all of her assistance over eight years.



Ken Coates - President, BNGLN

Andrew has been very successful in procuring grants for the Network. So successful that we've had to employ Marney Durie to assist Andrew and project manage the Nature Festival to be run in September-October, which should be exciting and educating.

My thanks go to all members of the Steering Committee for their guidance and oversight. I couldn't finish

this article without thanking Andrew Borg, whose dedication and enthusiasm for all things Landcare, assists our groups in all that they do. We are indeed fortunate to have Andrew.

Regards,

Ken



ASSISTANT FACILITATOR'S REPORT

My experience is green, but so is my heart.

G'day! I'm Marney. I joined the BNGL team as an assistant facilitator in February. Outside of the BNGLN, I'm the Chairperson of Wycheproof and District Landcare group, and in my spare time I manage a free range chicken farm. My inauguration came with the Victorian Landcare Forum in Beechworth in March, which was a truly inspiring experience. It was my first crack at networking with Landcare whilst learning all about the networks, groups, individuals and projects happening all across the state. I left feeling inspired and energized, full of pizza and enormous hope for the future of Landcare in our region.



Ken welcoming Marney to the BNGLN team.



Marney and Andrew welcoming Sophie Thomson (from *Gardening Australia*) to Galngga Festival's opening ceremony.
St Arnaud Railery Hub September 24th

My main role with BNGLN has been as project lead for the network's inaugural nature festival 'Galngga Dja Dja Wurrung Festival'. Galngga Festival was about bringing people back to nature and fostering that connection within all of us that says we are nature. The seed of Galngga was planted by Andrew in November 22' who promptly secured us a Parks Volunteer Innovation grant and now, looking back, I feel it was a terrific success! We welcomed in excess of 1100 participants to activities over the course of the month-long spring festival and, in turn, saw a spike in network Landcare membership and Jr Landcare membership, as well as interest and invigoration for community Landcare. A massive thank you to everyone involved. My personal favourite activities included a bush bike ride (thank you Russel!), orchid walks at Dalyenong and poetry in the bush. See pg 4 and 5 for more.

I'm so grateful to Ken and the BNGLN Steering Committee for allowing me this opportunity, and of course to Andrew of whom has been patient and generous in mentoring me. The beautiful people of this network, have made the job of my life's most wonderful experiences so far, so thank you! I'm looking forward to what's to come in the BNGLN going forward.

Warmly,
Marney

Celebrate Dja Dja Wurrung Country



Galngga

DJA DJA WURRUNG DJAA

Festival

23.09.23 - 22.10.23

Galngga Festival in review

Galngga Festival blossomed on the 23rd October where we welcomed Sophie Thomson to open the Landcare Harmony Garden at the St Arnaud Raillery Hub, and what followed was four weeks of free activities across the network that invited participants into the bush. When planning this festival we wanted something for everyone which saw our agenda ever expanding to tickle the fancy of participants wanting to try. We had yoga and tai chi, African drumming, bush medicine, bushwalks and nature surveys, a Sound Healing, Rural Women's Day at Bigibila Winery, art classes, Cultural days with Djaara and activities for Jr Landcare which included native animals and Vikings. Galngga Festival welcomed guest speakers abundant, including Dr Anika Molesworth, Millie Ross, Odanata, Trust for Nature and the North Central CMA, Dr Marissa Parrot and Claire Dunn to name a few. We wanted people to come out to try things and thus be part of their natural surrounds, and to know that local Landcare is for everyone. To great success, we closed out the month with a Gala at the St Arnaud Raillery Hub, featuring the Eaglehawk Brass Band, feeling tired but inspired. Many thanks to everyone who came along and supported us.



From top: Sophie Thomson and Galngga guests opening Galngga Festival, Harmony Garden St Arnaud. Participants at the opening ceremony which included free plants and a smoking ceremony with Djaara



From top: art classes at Teddington Reservoir. African drumming at Blue Gum Rise. BNGLN chairman Ken Coats with Wild Action Zoo python at Jr Landcare Day. Dr Marissa Parrot, Claire Dunn, Millie Ross and Marney at Growing Connections author talks. Dr Anika Molesworth Bushwalking at Carapooee. Hannah's Jr Landcare activities at Queen Mary Gardens. Rural Women's Day guests Elle Fox, Rebecca White, Marney, Amy Smith.

Landcare Group reports

Friends of Blue Gum Rise Landcare Group Annual Report 2023

Breeding: We have had 2 male Rufous Bettong joeys born in 2023.

The Squirrel Gliders have not bred recently, as we are behind in our cage building activities. Our population is 8 at present.

Conservation: Our Sugar Gliders were used to test a prototype nestbox to help the endangered Swift Parrot breeding sites in Tasmania. It was successful and the nestbox is already being rolled out into the Tasmanian Wilderness

Events: During the year BGR hosted a number of school groups, educating students about conservation and planting trees. BGR also assisted in a Jr. Landcare Grant at Timor PS.

BGR hosted a big Jr. Landcare event during the Galngga Festival- Wild Action Zoo, Connected Circus, Welcome Ceremony, showbags, free give aways, sausage sizzle and alpaca pats. About 25 children signed up to Jr. Landcare.

Professional Learning: Andrew completed a Sanctuary Management Course with the Odonata Foundation and we attended a workshop day/night at Mt. Rothwell.

We attended the Wimmera Biodiversity Day.

We are interested in training volunteers and having volunteer days at BR.

We have been successful in obtaining another grant of \$12,000 for education and research.

Cheers,

Debra Borg, President BGR Landcare Group.

Summary of Activities of the St Arnaud Field Naturalists Club Inc for 2023

- Submission to various Federal and State Government politicians and Departments regarding our concerns about the environmental consequences of the Navarre Green Power Hub.
- Continuing quarterly bird surveys of the area.
- Contribution to the Galngga Festival. This included liaising with Parks Victoria and the local DEECA crew to refurbish the road to the Wax Garden prior to the Festival.
- Local area surveys of National and State endangered floral species.
- Worked with Parks Victoria to instal a bench seat at the Wax Garden.
- Refurbishment of some of the Wax Garden plant signs being organised.
- Ongoing maintenance of the signs and paths at the Wax Garden and Bell Rock.
- Conducted excursions around the local bush areas.
- Produced a conservation pamphlet about the Basin (part of the St Arnaud Grand Circle Tour series) to promote tourism to our town. The brochure was also placed on our website.
- Submission to the BNGLCN for two of our more prominent members for consideration for their Hall of Fame recipients.
- Management of our website and the addition of any new blogs.

From Debbie

Natte Yallock Landcare group

The landcare group has had a quiet year with a couple of small projects that were completed late last year.

The group has met a few times with a small quorum of members attending meetings.

We have meetings planned for June and some planning for the year will progress.

Thank you

Tony Mortlock

Hon secretary.



AVON PLAINS BANYENA LANDCARE GROUP**Annual Report 2023**

Another busy year with lots of projects to implement and the satisfaction of knowing that, with persistence, we can make a difference!

Victorian Landcare Grants

In 2023, we were successful in our Victorian Landcare Grant application for our project **Richardson River Restoration**. This project aims to improve the health of the Richardson River and the flora and fauna it supports and involve the community along the way! Issues to be addressed by this project include riverbed erosion, reduced water quality and a general lack of biodiversity. Activities planned are fencing to exclude stock, to reduce erosion and overgrazing, and revegetation to increase biodiversity and create habitat for woodland birds. Native plant lists based on locally occurring EVCs have been put together and sent to our local native nursery and site prep is well underway. A key theme of this project is community participation and education which will be achieved by hosting two community planting days planned for late autumn/early winter and a flora ID workshop at one of the properties in spring.

Annual Winter Warmer Walks are a continuing success, taking in Swanwater Cemetery, Creswicks Well and the Banyena Weir and Cemetery last year. These events are a great way to keep in touch with like minded locals and to explore some of our lesser known natural history hot spots, usually with a knowledgeable guide or two to help us appreciate what we find. They are easy to organise with car pooling and BYO chairs and sustenance to relax afterwards. Carol Campbell will be running these again this year and we look forward to seeing where she takes us this time!

Marbled Marshwort at Creswicks Well

A critically endangered wetland plant is being grown and distributed locally and it's thriving in dams, ponds and even troughs! It was recently translocated to Creswicks Well, where the North Central CMA will manage environmental flows to ensure its persistence at the site. In collaboration with Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Creswicks Well has also been nominated for a cultural burn to promote the abundance of native plants that are being overrun by invading pasture grasses. Anne Hughes and other APBLG members have been instrumental in raising the profile of this site, where 91 native plant species have been identified so far. This project is also a wonderful example of how stakeholders working collaboratively can achieve great results for biodiversity.

Rabbit Busters program

In collaboration with Parks Victoria, APBLG have been eliminating rabbits across many of the ephemeral lakes that lie on the floodplains of the Avon River, including the popular recreational spot Walkers Lake. The baiting runs saw significant uptake of the free feeds and baited carrots so a second run is most likely needed to make any kind of dint on the rabbit population. The Banyena Cemetery has also been targeted.

Walkers Lake update

After nine years of campaigning to protect the cultural and environmental values of this popular recreational lake, the APBLG are pleased to see some fencing in place to prevent vehicle traffic damaging sensitive areas. It took a Cultural Heritage Survey and four ecological surveys to demonstrate the diversity of endangered species and ecological communities that still exist, although much depleted, around the lake margins.

The land managers, Northern Grampians Shire, are now ready to appoint someone with ecological expertise to monitor the health of this local treasure and we look forward to working with them.

Banyena Weir Walk

With funds provided by the Northern Grampians Shire, the landcare group is establishing a walk from the local hall along the Richardson River to the Banyena Weir. Information posts along the way will provide some detail of the natural history, both past and present.

The events of the **Galgnna Nature Festival**, run by the BNGLN, provided entertainment, networking opportunities and education for many of our members in 2023. We are also excited that a couple of our “younger” members are on the working group for the **New Futures Project** and we look forward to seeing how this ambitious pilot program helps to deliver positive outcomes for our landscapes.

President Madeleine Grant

Wycheproof and District Landcare group annual report

Wycheproof and District Landcare group welcomed 2023 with a vigour not seen in local Landcare for a few years, with our members enticed, perhaps, by the promise of a free meal and a cold beer over the February general meeting where we presented our 5 year plan.

Our main project this year was to develop the Wycheproof Wetlands project, in partnership with the Buloke Shire. On National Tree Day we welcomed more than 60 volunteers to plant 1200 indigenous plants on the banks of the functional wetlands, much to the delight of the committee - of whom had to scramble to find more food for a celebratory BBQ lunch!

We have since spent almost 12 months maintaining these plantings and have recently installed a successful irrigation system for the betterment of the project, with special thanks to member Alex Morrison, the Wycheproof Racing Club and the Wycheproof P-12 vocational learning students for their assistance in doing so.

WaDLg graciously welcomed traditional owner Peta Hudson to BNGLN's Galngga Festival, to facilitate a Bush Medicine Workshop at Wooroonook Lakes, of which was a greatly informative and well attended.

We also welcomed Oli from Djaara to educate the Wycheproof primary school students and our members on bush foods, indigenous culture and Djaara bush forest strategy. Our indigenous bush food forest project with the students sadly piddled out, but we're encouraged to try again in 2024.

We entered Wycheproof's Relay For Life in October to raise awareness and fundraise for people living with cancer, with Landcare members walking up to 36km over 12hrs. We were also awarded Best Dressed Team, taking our inspiration from Australia's favourite gardener Costa Georgiadis.

We also celebrated our secretary/treasurer Amy Smith, who completed her PhD in ecological sciences!

WADLG have been fortunate enough to receive NCCMA grant funding for our next project 'The Green, the Bare, and the Invasive - revegetating Wycheproof's forgotten spaces' of which we are looking forward to kicking off in April 2024.

Warmly,

Marney Durie

WaDLg Chairperson

Donald Landcare Group annual report

Donald & district Landcare were fortunate to receive funding.

With the assistance of Andrew Borg to plant out two sites on Marg and Andrew Falla's property.

With excellent seasonal conditions the plants are surviving at a rate of 70%.

Members are continuing to take water samples every 3 months at the bores in the Donald vicinity. To measure the water table and salinity. Samples are sent to Huntly for recording.

Some of our members have joined the advisory group of the Wetland water, with the aim to continually push for more environmental water for small ponds for the benefit of wildlife.

As a group we are working with the Little Lake Buloke reserve to control rabbits in the area.

As they are being destructive with erosion and the ongoing plantings that have been done over the years.

They are huge problem, and we don't seem to be making head way with baiting and shooting.

Elizabeth Russell



Activities of the Friends of Mount Wycheproof in 2023/24

- Define path from Centenary Park to Mountain summit – with the Wycheproof Lions Club we are looking at installing some path markings to take visitors from the Park to the Mount summit.
- King of the Mountain – Event Returned. We held a Working Bee to clean up the Mount on Sunday 1 October, not much litter was found.
- Eradication of gazanias – The group undertook an advertising campaign to Wycheproof and surrounds on the creeping problem of the invasive weed gazania, which stifles all nearby plants. The campaign was articulated in the local newspapers, a letter box drop and a feature space in the Wycheproof Community Resource Centre. We hope we have helped the community to realise what a problem they are, and how they spread so easily and continue to re-seed on the Mount from surrounding properties, gardens, nature strips and roadsides.
- Emu Management Plan – There is a residual challenge of how to maintain (under present legislation) the 8 or 9 emus that reside in an enclosed area on the Mount. We understand and appreciate that emus are totemic to the local Traditional Owners and First Nation people. Buloke Shire Council (as committee of Management to the Crown) arranged a meeting of relevant people On-Country, at the top of Mt Wycheproof on Monday 27 March 2023.
- Attended meeting for Vegetation Management for Fire Safety – In October 2023 Buloke Shire staff organised a meeting on the Mount with the CFA Regional
- Maintenance of walking tracks – Recent growth of weeds etc., on the walking tracks is a concern to the group.
- Raising funds and purchasing a Steam Weeder in 2024 -One of the major decisions made is for the FoMW to raise enough funds in 2024 to purchase a Steam Weeder. In late 2022 Haeuslers of Mildura demonstrated a trailer mounted machine and we used steam of up to 120 degrees Celsius to kill some weeds on the side of Mount Wycheproof, near the school. Whilst it is slower and more labour intensive operation than simplistic spot spraying with chemicals, it was effective to knock weeds down. And it complies with the Buloke Shire directive to not have volunteers spraying chemicals on weeds on the Mount Reserve. The FoMW are approaching philanthropic groups to seek funds and have asked some of the Wycheproof groups to assist in the funding of the machine. So far we have support and some fund from – Ourselves, Wycheproof Landcare, Wycheproof P-12 College. In principle support from Wycheproof Cemetery Trust, Lions, Op Shop. We have applied to Grain Corp for funds.
- And much more, from this inspiring and active group!

Martin Duke

2023/24 Chair – Friends of Mt Wycheproof

friendsofmountwycheproof@gmail.com

Calawadda Landcare Group annual report

2 members of our group received a grant from NCCMA of 19k used for river fencing and tree planting.

Andrew has tested some waterways in the Callawadda area for rare frogs that maybe impacted by the proposed Campbell's Bridge wind farm project.

Thanks

Jock McGregor



A year of highlights



THE GREAT AUSSIE COMPOSTING ROADSHOW, ST ARNAUD MARCH 8TH

The **BNGLN** and **Kara Kara Regenerative Agriculture group** assisted with the second stop of the Great Aussie Composting Roadshow, held at the St Arnaud town hall. It was an informative day learning about uses of, and developments in, on farm composting for a variety of farming practices, with participants enjoying guest speakers and both morning tea and lunch.

VICTORIAN LANDCARE CONFERENCE, BEECHWORTH MARCH 26-28TH

The Victorian Landcare conference was held in beautiful Beechworth this year and location aside, the conference did not disappoint. With inspiring talks from Landcare networks, groups and individuals, the three day event, welcomed participants from across the state to bask in all things Landcare. This included a social dinner at the Bridge Road Brewery where networking over woodfired pizza was enjoyed by all (especially us!).



CMA SUSTAINABLE SOILS FORUM, MARCH 31ST

The **NCCMA** Forum 2023 was held at the Capital Theatre in Bendigo, to great success. It was an informative day full of guest speakers by which Andrew presented on the activities of the Kara Kara Regenerative Agriculture group; focusing on erosion control projects we've undertaken, and later joined a panel discussion about all things soil and community.



KKRAG EROSION MANAGEMENT WITH STEPHEN POOLE, BERRIMAL APRIL 4TH

We enjoyed a fantastic day out at Steven Poole's property at Berrimal, where Stephen hosted a tour to highlight the transformation of his property over the last 35 years! Through hard work, local expertise and some government program support, the dryland site once riddled with erosion gullies is now flourishing and stands as testimony to what can be accomplished.





NORTH CENTRAL CMA REGIONAL CATCHMENT STRATEGY ROUNDTABLE, APRIL 5TH

The **NCCMA** Regional Catchment Strategy Roundtable was held in Donald to a room full of interested and concerned individuals. Our Landcare Network had the opportunity to provide an overview of our project and group activities; alongside presentations from the CMA and BCG. Liz Russell was awarded the Regional recognition Award from the CMA, congratulations Liz!

SOIL PIT WORKSHOP WIT DECLAN MCDONALD, APRIL 12TH

The **Kara Kara Regenerative Agriculture Group** hosted a soil pit workshop with Declan McDonald, Chief Scientist with Regen Soils. Despite the need to dodge some intermittent rainy weather, the days activities were incredibly informative for those who attended. Thanks to **Ag Vic** and the **NCCMA** for helping us put the day together.



NEW FACES AT AVON PLAIN/BANYENA LANDCARE

Avon Plains/Banyena Landcare Group welcomed new faces to their board at their April AGM. with new President Maddie and Vice President Joe taking on the roles. A huge thank you to outgoing President Carol for her unfailing dedication to community and the environment.

LANDCARE VICTORIA NEW FUTURES PROGRAM

As part of Landcare Victoria's 'New Futures' program, our Network has been selected as one of two Victorian Pilots. Our Landscape project has the [working] title of Windharp Horizons; a nod to the Buloke trees (an endangered species colloquially known as Wimmera Windharps) dotted across the region. This is the BNGLN's biggest project undertaking in many years. Watch this space!



'SEED-POD' WITH SEEDING VICTORIA



The BNGLN are pleased to be in partnership with **Seeding Victoria** in launching their Seed Pod program. Seed Pod welcomes local seed collecting through Landcare for groups and individuals to get involved.

As part of this program **Seeding Victoria** have facilitated seed collecting workshops in St Arnaud on the 17th of November, and in Wedderburn on the 25th. Both of these events were well attended, with Dan explaining the processes and importance of indigenous seed collection and the need for, followed by an afternoon out in the field wherein participants were able to identify and try their hand at collecting seed.

St Arnaud FNC bench installation at the Wax Garden

Parks Victoria and St Arnaud Field Naturalists recently installed a bench seat in the Wax Garden.

The entrance track to the Wax Garden has also recently been renovated by Parks Victoria and the St Arnaud DEECA crew.

The area is all set to host several events in the Spring for the Galngga DjaDja Wurrung Festival and of course for local and tourist visitors.

Please keep dogs on the leash as the Wax Garden is home for ground dwelling birds and animals.

Deb Jenkins



BITE SIZED PIECES



Blue Gum Rise squirrel glider enclosures

The latest squirrel glider enclosure has arrived at Blue Gum Rise for installation and fit out. Lots of work to do for the **Friends of Blue Gum Rise** group who have exciting expansion plans for the future.



Global Landcare Japan/Agroforestry Information exchange

The **BNGLN** hosted the pre-departure event of the **Global Landcare Japan - Agroforestry Information Exchange**. Members of this group travelled to Japan in March to share information on agroforestry methodology and exchange.



Hands on Learning - nestboxes by St. Arnaud secondary students

The students and staff of the **Hands-On Learning Class** at St Arnaud Secondary College have developed nest boxes to be distributed across the district to provide shelter for native birds and animals.



Bush Foods with Djaara, Wycheproof

Wycheproof and District Landcare group were happy to install a bushfoods garden at the Wycheproof P-12 College with the help of the primary students. This came about from a **Woolworths Jr Landcare grant**. The students and community also enjoyed a presentation by Oli from **Djaara** on indigenous plants



Developments at Carapooee

Carapooee Landcare are relishing in the aftermath of a decades old plantation that has transformed a barren paddock dam into an ecosystem and oasis, showing us that while Landcare is a game of patience it is well worth the wait.



North Central CMA Regional Catchment Strategy roundtable, April 5th

The **NCCMA** hosted another regional roundtable in Donald to better understand the needs and local perspective of our regions waterways and catchments. It was well attended, benefitted by a session of community workshopping.



Carrs Plains Project, Calawadda

Callawadda Landcare Group have almost completed their latest project of a laneway and shelter belts with over 3000 trees including 1000 Bulokes, linking previous works establishing corridors to the Richardson River.



Buloke Biolinks, Winjallock, May 15th

Winjallock and Calawadda groups saw another 1200 plants in the ground this year to further add to biolinks securing nitrogen and carbon in the ground, serving as shelterbelts and windbreaks for native species and livestock and reminding us of the hardworking people that make up our groups.



Erosion management project at Kurraca, May 25th

This has been an ongoing project, with early signs of a promising restoration and regeneration coming through for this pasture paddock, funded by Landcare grants



Avon Plains - Banyena Winter Wanders

Avon Plains/Banyena Landcare group have hosted another block of Winter Wanders in 2023, including a great day out around the Rich Avon East Bushland Reserve with Ann Dunstan. These walks are a great activity and always enjoyable and informative.



Litchfield

The Litchfield plantout was finished in record time thanks to well prepared ground and the brilliant efforts of the **Donald Landcare group** and the **Donald High School** (year 9's).

BNG Seed Pod with Seeding Victoria/Seeding Workshop Nov 17th

Seeding Victoria have been back in the area hosting workshops for interested seed collectors, including a talk at the St Arnaud Town Hall and a field walk in the region. These are becoming increasingly popular events as the need for seed is ever present.



The Babler is a publication of the **Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network**.

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We acknowledge that our Network performs its activities on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. We acknowledge and extend our appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

