

### Update from the President

Joan Szalman

Welcome to the Spring edition of our newsletter. Spring seems to have come early this year and as usual heralds many changes to our landscape and everything around us.

The CEC Annual General Meeting held on 27th August was well attended. The guest speaker Ed McNabb, well known local ecologist gave a very interesting simulated guided night tour of Owls in our area. Sure Gro once again supported us by donating products for door prizes. A new executive committee was elected (see committee inset) and thanks were given to the previous committee as well as to the staff for all their efforts and commitment over the past year. Please see articles inside this edition to catch up on all that has been happening recently. Margaret Crompton, a long time committee member, past president and manager of the Upper Beaconsfield Indigenous Nursery has resigned and is moving to Castlemaine. Margaret's commitment, unselfish generosity, wisdom and sheer hard work have been instrumental in getting the CEC to where it is today. Margaret was one of the first people to join the CEC and has continued to put in where ever there is a need. She will be sorely missed.

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### CARDINIA ENVIRONMENT COALITION

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*THE CARDINIA ENVIRONMENT COALITION INC (CEC) is an umbrella group comprising over 30 local Friends, Landcare and conservation groups. The CEC Newsletter presents information about our work and our local groups.*

The CEC works across the Central Western Port and part of the Southern Yarra Ranges catchments.

#### OUR VISION

By 2020 our catchment is an area where people live ecologically sustainably, aware that they are connected to their environment which is protected and enhanced by their action.

#### OUR MISSION

Leading significant positive environmental change through community based awareness and action.

#### OUR STRUCTURE

The CEC is best reflected by the six portfolio areas shown here in the diagram.



Two Past and Current CEC President at a recent landcare meeting (from L-R) Margaret Crompton, Ian Chisholm and Joan Szalman

For the CEC and in particular the Landcare network things are changing rapidly. In the recent round of Caring for our Country funding the government has changed how it funds natural resource management projects and the environment which has resulted in the CEC being amongst the 1240 submissions which were unsuccessful. This has had deep repercussions throughout the landcare community in particular with the majority of Landcare facilitators in Victoria losing their positions. At the CEC we have managed to hold onto our facilitator by cutting down Bridgette's hours to two days per week and attracting new projects in partnerships with Baw Baw Shire & Bass Coast Network. We still have funds available for revegetation projects on private properties over the next year, so keep those projects coming in. We will certainly be lobbying the Government, with the support of our local politicians, and putting in more submissions in the next round of funding. Other measures we are undertaking are exploring how the committee and the operations side of the CEC can be made to work more efficiently and to restructure where appropriate. We are also

diversifying our funding resources by applying to non government organizations such as corporate and trust funds. As partners with the Port Phillip & Western Port CMA (PPWCMA) in the Spirit of the Bunyip project we will be taking part in a venture to protect and enhance Woodland remnant vegetation in our area. The PPWCMA has been successful in attracting substantial funds for this project from the Federal Government. In this way we hope to capitalize on the changes and keep the CEC, the Landcare network and our community vibrant and strong.

### New CEC Executive Committee:

**President:** Joan Szalman - Cardinia Catchment Landcare Group

**Vice President:** Elizabeth Fraser - Deep Creek Landcare Group

**Secretary:** Susan Davies - Western Swamp Landcare Group

**Treasurer:** Geoff Hudson - Labertouche Landcare Group

**Chairperson of the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network:** Jim Armstrong - Labertouche Landcare Group

#### Ordinary Committee members:

Kelly Brooks MacMillan - Trust for Nature  
conservations group & Fishers Loop  
Conservations Groups

Alison Chatfield - Australian Plant Society &  
Cardinia Catchment Landcare Group

David Saint - Deep Creek Landcare Group

Phillip Burrell - Deep Creek Landcare Group



## PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT

### *BNCR Fire Ecologist update*

The CEC has over the years been in discussion with Fire Ecologists and flora and fauna experts in relation to the development of the Beaconsfield Nature Conservation Reserve Management Plan.

More recently contact has been made with the DSE's Fire Ecology unit to find someone who can engage with communities on fire and ecology risk management. Fortunately we were led to Owen Gooding who was working with the CFA as a Senior Policy Advisor but is now back at the Department of Sustainability and the Environment (DSE).

On Thursday August 13th the CEC organized a site visit to the BNCR with committee members.

The group walked across part of BNCR for initial comment by Owen. This initial visit was reassuring in that Owen was able to support the works the CEC already did in terms of fire risk management but also in protecting the ecological values of the BNCR.



Owen Gooding visiting the BNCR site with CEC Committee/ Subcommittee members in August



It was very interesting to note that though some minor sections of the community were being vocal in management of the BNCR around fire risk management, the fuel loads in the sections discussed were very much lower than that where prescribed burning can be suggested.

It is important to note though, that the BNCR is not like some areas of public managed land, it has a higher environmental significance, and as such its fire ecology and general ecological needs will be managed with that in mind.

Owen has received the BNCR management plan chapters of interest to him and we will pursue his input.

It is planned to hold a community forum on fire ecology with Owen's assistance so that we can all ask questions and educate ourselves. However, it is important to note that the DSE also holds community fire learning sessions.

If you are interested in finding out more contact Matt Campbell, Knowledge & Learning Team, Office of Land & Fire Management, Department of Sustainability and Environment



### *Bandicoot Corner - Update*

Following on from an earlier working bee in which six 'bandicoot palaces' were constructed, a community planting day and BBQ were held on 30 May to plant out the tops of the palaces with native ground covers and vines. To protect the new plants from rabbits, some palaces were fenced off with chicken wire and others were spread over with Blood-and-Bone. So far the plants are surviving well and although there is no indication that bandicoots have moved in yet, Swamp Rats seem to be using at least two of the palaces!

In other news, we have finally had clear confirmation that bandicoots are using the tunnels through the predator proof fence. During a weekly fence check, Erland snapped this picture (above) which clearly shows bandicoot footprints moving both in and out through the tunnel. This is great news, as Bandicoot Corner is not intended to trap bandicoots, but to act as a safe haven from which they can move freely around the landscape to breed and colonise new areas.

The CEC is pushing for the Melbourne Water drains that run alongside Bandicoot Corner to be revegetated with native shrubs and groundcovers to allow bandicoots to move more freely between Bandicoot Corner and the Bayles Fauna Park, which lies on the other side of the drain, only about 200m to the south.

To find out more about Bandicoot Corner or what you can do to help bandicoots on your own property, please go to the CEC website



## MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

### *Fox Control for Western Port Swamp*

The Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation (MPWBRF), and now the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) have been coordinating a large-scale program to control foxes across the Western Port Swamp area using 1080 poison baiting. The Western Port Swamp Landcare Group and the CEC supports this program in recognition of the huge threat that foxes pose to native animals in this area, including the endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot. Foxes also kill domestic animals (such as chickens and lambs) and spread weeds.

Stage one has been completed with 80 bait stations being set up within the period December 2008-March 2009. The first few months involved "free-feed" baiting where non-poison baits were laid to measure fox activity and allow time for foxes to find and get used to taking baits.

Baits are buried in sand so it is possible to tell when and by what type of animal the bait was taken. During the free-feed period, bait-takes rose quickly to around 80% of bait stations. After poison baits were introduced in March, the proportion of bait-takes fell to 12%, indicating successful kill of foxes.

The project managers have assessed the results and are currently formulating stage two. We would like to applaud the cautious scientific manner in which the program has been conducted so far, and considers it a great credit that no domestic dogs were affected.

Some great news is that there is a possibility that Melbourne Water may do some fox control within the drains that they manage, involving den fumigation or destruction during the fox breeding season in the next month or so meaning no need to use 1080. This could complement the baiting program planned on private land for November / December when foxes are starting to disperse.

More landholders willing to allow monitoring-only or poison baits on their properties are being sought – please contact David Nicholls, MPWPBRF on 5990 7166 or Bob Edgar (Philips Agribusiness, on behalf of DSE), 9789 2480 or mobile 0408531594.

### *Farewell from Sarah*

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has been part of my experience working at the CEC over the past two years, during which I have learnt so much and had so many valuable experiences: the Landcare and Group members who have inspired me with their passion, hard work, community spirit and sense of fun; my wonderful and talented co-workers who over the time have included (in alphabetical order!) Adele, Amy, Bec, Bridgette, Carol, Carolyn, Dan, Erl, Joan (when she did her stint as Office Manager), Julie, Lucy, Mark, Peter, Simon, Tara and Troy; and the CEC Committee and Subcommittee members, past and present, whose dedication (which sometimes borders on "extreme") is the essential ingredient that makes this unique organization 'tick'. It has also been a pleasure to meet and work alongside people from a wide range of other organizations, including Port Philip and Westernport CMA, Melbourne Water, Cardinia Shire, City of Casey, Baw Baw Shire, DSE, DPI, Trust for Nature, MPWP Biosphere, and many others including Matt Sykes and Dr. Pat Macwhirter. In our own ways, we are all working on being part of the solution.



## Western Port DVD & Website

The Western Port Seagrass Partnership (WPSP) has launched a comprehensive new web site and DVD on Western Port. The DVD contains a documentary by John Clarke and earlier footage from the 1970s and 1980s. You can register online for a copy of the DVD to be mailed out free of charge within 5 days. Make sure you have a good look around the website while you are there, as it contains fascinating information and great pictures of the bay and its catchment, and the flora and fauna that live there.

Visit the new website at [www.seagrass.com.au](http://www.seagrass.com.au) and order your free DVD.



Photo: Leafy sea-dragon – one of the creatures that lives in Western Port (WPSP).

## Wildlife Detectives

Forty-five people attended this field day held on 13th June at the Toomuc Valley Hall and I believe a good time was had by all. Retired Ranger and Wildlife Ecologist Phil Burrell gave us a talk about different techniques for detecting shy or nocturnal animal species and showed us some photos he'd taken with his infra-red camera. Simon Dunstan and Rod Shelton from Toomuc Valley Landcare Group then led a workshop to create hair tubes, which are used to trap hairs from curious animals that poke their noses in to try to get to the bait inside. Different wildlife species can be identified by the types of hairs they leave behind. The next stage involved heading out into the field to put the new hair tubes to use. We set off in the bus to Meryll and Keith Waterhouse's property and enjoyed a lavish morning tea before laying out traps in both the revegeta-



tion area and some remnant bushland at the back of the property. We then popped over to a bushland reserve along the Toomuc Creek to retrieve some hair tubes that had been previously laid. The day ended with lunch back at the hall. Funding for the event was provided by Envirofund.

As a result of this field day, there are now three fully equipped hair tubing kits available at the CEC office to be borrowed out and used at home. Each one contains hair tubes, bait ingredients and instructions on what to do. The only cost is \$3 for the analysis of each sample by expert Hans Brunner in Frankston.

Anyone interested in borrowing one of the kits should contact the CEC office.

## Nest Box Workshop

On Friday 17th July more than 40 people descended on Bunyip Hall with screwdrivers in hand to construct nest boxes for local wildlife. Nest box expert Steve Kurec came from North Gippsland to lead the event. Fifty pre-made kits were available for species ranging from



tiny bats to the large Barking Owl. These kits were prepared by inmates at the Fulham Correctional Centre near Sale and were made to a very high standard. At the end of the night, everyone took their completed nest boxes to erect at home.

Over 300 species or 15% of Australia's native terrestrial vertebrate fauna are dependent on natural tree hollows for shelter and breeding. Unfortunately, large trees have been removed from many areas and although many new trees have been planted, hollows can take hundreds of years to form. In the meantime, nest boxes make great substitutes. Funding for this event was provided by Envirofund.



## SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

### Indigenous Nursery & Seedbank

Our new nursery site for the CEC's Indigenous Nursery at the Tynong Recreation Reserve is coming along at last. The fence has been erected and water connected. Thanks to the Mayor Bill Pearson and Ian Chisholm in securing a new site and to the Nursery subcommittee for their assistance and a special thanks to Margaret Cromb who has resigned and moving from the area. A big thank you to the Cardinia Shire for funding of \$8000 towards the cost of putting up the fence

Our Nursery manager Adele Richardson has had a very difficult year coping with the time it has taken to get a new nursery going. Adele has still managed to grow all the plants required and coordinate the Seed Bank under the most trying of conditions. Imagine having plants in 6 locations, being on the edge of the fires, trying to keep plants alive in the heat, coordinating the other nurseries and plants for landcare plantings and assisting in planning and reestablishing the new nursery and you have some idea of what Adele's life has been like this year. We appreciate all your efforts Adele. A working bee will be held later in the year to relocate all the igloos, sheds etc. We will let you all know of the date and hopefully get a good turnout so that the nursery can be up and running for next year.

## CEC & WPCLN Events Calendar

### OCTOBER

- 6 OCT FOOD FARMS HEALTH CONFERENCE
- 8 OCT CEC GENERAL MEETING
- 18 OCT CANNIBAL CREEK PLANTING DAY
- 18 OCT BUSHFIRES, VEGETATION & YOUR GARDEN - PRESENTED BY DR. GREGORY MOORE
- 19 OCT DR BAYU WIRAYUDHA TO VISIT CEC SITES
- 20 OCT DR BAYU WIRAYUDHA SPEAKING TOUR COMMENCES
- 27 OCT MAARTEN STAPPER FIELD DAY – FRENCH ISLAND

### NOVEMBER

- 3 NOV WPCLN MEETING
- 10 NOV VICTORIA IN FUTURE POPULATION FORUM
- 12 NOV CEC EXECUTIVE MEETING

### DECEMBER

- 10 DEC CEC GENERAL MEETING

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER YOUR EVENT IN THE CALENDAR PLEASE CONTACT THE CEC OFFICE.



## PRIVATE LAND MANAGEMENT

### Western Port Catchment Landcare Network - Central Region

#### *Landcare Chairperson's Report*

It is 6 months since the bushfires and people are starting to get back on their feet. The support from the wider community has been fantastic, with the WPCLN playing a very big role in the recovery. Thousands of trees have been replanted, with over 20 kilometres of fencing being re-built of past landcare plantings, plus many more kilometres of boundary and internal fencing.

The \$100,000 from the PPWCMA – Victorian Government, Drought Employment program, was much appreciated for the hiring of local farmers, whose employment was directly affected by the fires, not to mention the assistance it provided start to the re-building process on their properties.

There are still some funds available through the Regional Catchment Investment Program (RCIP), local Biolinks Community Grants from the PPWCMA, Cardinia Shire's Environment and Biodiversity grant and other smaller pockets of funding still in place for the next planting season (2010) - so please review within your network possible projects and talk to your Landcare Facilitator. Funding for further on ground works funds are being sought and are still yet to be finalised, for seasons past 2010.

The 2nd of September will have passed by the time you read this newsletter and we will have by now been privileged to have been present during one of the most knowledgeable presenters Dr Martin Stapper on Soil Health and the Environment – we will have a rap of this presentation in our next newsletter.

Dr Christine Jones spoke at Bairnsdale and is continuing her good works on Climate Change and building soil carbon policy. Her web site is [www.amazingcarbon.com](http://www.amazingcarbon.com)

It is pleasing to see more people attending the network meeting, as this is a good time for discussing future projects. We are investigating the idea of an "award night and dinner" next Autumn, so stay tuned for that information.

For further information contact Jim Armstrong  
5628 7777

### Biolinks Maps Available

A year ago at the 2008 AGM, Biodiversity Project Officer Sarah MacLagan launched the "Biolinks Project Action Plan: Linking Habitats across the Western Port Catchment Central Region". This document provides strategic guidance to improve the health of the catchment and it's biodiversity by creating biolinks.

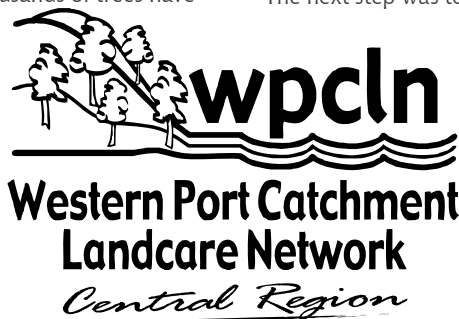
The next step was to actually map biolinks by looking more closely at each of seven 'local areas'. Sarah has been busily working away on Local Biolinks Plans for the 'Deep/Ararat', 'Cardinia/Gum Scrub/Toomuc' and 'Lower Bunyip' local areas. She is grateful to all of the Landcare members

and other interested individuals who have participated in workshops and pizza nights to provide input. Maps and descriptions of biolinks for the entire CEC area (all seven local areas) are now available from [www.ceb-biolinks.net.au](http://www.ceb-biolinks.net.au).

Sadly, funding for the Biodiversity Project Officer position has not been received from Caring for Our Country so this position will become vacant after 25th September. The CEC is investigating other funding possibilities to begin implementing the biolinks through more active community engagement and on-ground activities.

In the meantime, you are invited to look at the biolinks that have been mapped for your local area and provide feedback to the CEC. You can also start talking with your Group about which biolinks are the highest priority for your area and what actions you can take to enhance them.

To see the biolinks mapping for your local area, or to download the Biolinks Project Action Plan, visit [www.ceb-biolinks.net.au](http://www.ceb-biolinks.net.au)



One of the six bushfire affected properties which was replanted on Sunday 26th July, these are just some of the 200 volunteers that attended the Bush Fire Relief Community Planting Day.

### Bushfire Relief Community Planting Day a Success

#### *What a Tree-mendous Effort*

Sunday 26th July saw just over 200 volunteers converge on the Labertouche Hall ready to replant indigenous vegetation on six properties affected by the Bunyip Ridge Bushfire in February this year. All of the properties had previous Landcare projects, some up to 10 years old, which had been decimated by the fires. The aim of the day was to help farmers get their plants back in the ground and show

them the support of the broader community.

Planting on the six different properties began at about 9.30am and by 1pm, when everyone reassembled at the Labertouche Hall, about 8,500 indigenous trees, shrubs and ground-covers had been planted. One property alone had 2,100 plants planted in just over 3 hours. What a tremendous effort by all volunteers – families with young children, Scouts groups,

people from Melbourne and local community members.

Western Port Catchment Landcare Network Facilitator and planting day coordinator Bridgette McCallum said she "is delighted and thrilled with the response from the public to participate in such a huge planting day. The spirit of the public is amazing and I hope that the farmers can feel some hope looking into the future now."

One of the landholders stood up during the celebration BBQ to thank the 200 volunteers for their commitment and support not only to the fire-affected farmers, but also to the environment. Other landholders expressed similar sentiments, giving heartfelt thanks to the volunteers and saying that they felt inspired and hopeful about the future.

This was the second large planting on bushfire affected properties this month. On the weekend of the 11th and 12th July local Landcare members joined forces with Bass Coast Landcare Network and Visionstream to plant about 6,600 indigenous plants.

Thank you to our sponsors: Jindi Pig Butchers, Bakers Delight, Woolworths and Landcare Australia Limited. Thanks must also go to the Longwarry Lions Club for cooking the delicious BBQ lunch.