



Project Platypus Welcomes New Manager

Sadly we farewell Luke Scott in this edition of Project Platypus News. In his short time with us Luke made a fantastic contribution to the organisation and can be happy that he leaves it in a healthier state than when he arrived. Luke also leaves a groove in the road to Warrnambool caused by his many trips back and forth. Now he can be a full time husband and father. We wish Luke every success in his new job with Warrnambool TAFE.

Project Platypus now has a new manager, Leigh Blackmore. Many of you will know Leigh from his work with the WCMA and his membership of Stawell and Jallukar Landcare groups. For those who don't, Leigh introduces himself below.

I would like to introduce myself to the Upper Wimmera Landcare community by writing a bit about my background.



Leigh coming to grips with Project Platypus paperwork

It is a lot easier to do this in person, so please feel free to invite me to your next landcare meeting, give me a call or drop into the office anytime to have a chat and a cuppa.

My father's family comes from a dairy farming background in a small town called Glencoe, near Mt Gambier. We left the farm when I was quite young. I spent most of my childhood days growing up in Casterton just over the border before heading off to Melbourne for Uni. After Uni I headed up to Cairns and spent four years working with volunteers and landholders involved in conservation work. My wife and I had our first child in Cairns and as he started growing up we thought it would be a good idea to come back home to be around family. Our family are scattered over Western Victoria, so the Grampians seemed like a nice central spot. We have found a nice little home in Pomonal and have decided to settle here. The Grampians and the Upper Wimmera are a beautiful part of the world and we consider ourselves very lucky to be here.

Over the last three years, since I've been back in Victoria, I have been working with the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority as the Upper Wimmera Waterwatch Coordinator. I have really enjoyed my time in this role working with schools, landholders and volunteers. During this time I have learnt a lot about the Wimmera River Catchment and everything that goes on within it. I have also been actively involved with Landcare as an office bearer for Stawell Urban Landcare Group and now as a member of Jallukar Landcare Group. I'm really excited about joining the Project Platypus team and am looking forward to working with all the staff, management committee, landholders, landcare groups, volunteers and other agencies. I am keen to hear if you there is anything you would like to discuss – be that past, present or future projects, or anything NRM related and I'd be happy to help where I can.

Leigh Blackmore, Project Platypus Manager.

Project Update

Bernie Rudolph

Seeing new projects come to fruition is a major focus for all Project Platypus staff. Each year the number of projects and total area we work on tends to increase. This year is no exception. Up to date we have 48 individual landholders with projects



Successful direct seeding project, Stuart Coggin's property.

for this coming season. Of the 48 landholders 26 are landholders who Project Platypus have not worked with in the past. Most of these new landholders are either neighbours to, or have friends, who have worked with us in the past.

Our smallest project is simply to supply 120 red gums as paddock trees for a plot that is already fenced off. Another of our projects involves the supply and planting of 8,000 plants.

We have several remnant protection projects ranging from 5ha to 40ha. The 40ha project, to protect a stand of predominantly red stringybark, is already completed.

With 48 projects we have a great variation from the smallest to the largest as mentioned above. The total area combining revegetation, remnant enhancement, remnant protection and paddock trees we will protect or revegetate is 208.5ha.

The length of fencing required to achieve this is 41.93km. A total of 48,980 plants and 10km of direct seeding will be needed to finish all these projects.

A new direction for Project Platypus this year has been to target the establishment of deep rooted perennial pasture in the Six Mile catchment. Up to date we have a verbal commitment from nine different landholders to establish 149.5ha of perennial pasture. On top of this is our ongoing soil conservation program also targeting the Six Mile. To have all of the above mentioned projects finished this season will be a major achievement for all the landholders involved.

Bernie Rudolph

Platyfact

Lisa Moore sent in an article on platypus fossils recently dug up at Flat Rocks near Inverloch. Examination of jawbone specimens date back to at least 112 million years, tens of million years more than when the creature Teinolophos was previously thought to diverge from the echidna.

Such colossal time periods put humans period on earth into perspective and bring up thoughts on what the fossil records will be telling about this particular time in history in a million years time.



Farewell Luke



When Luke first arrived at the PP office in January 2007 the staff were a little hesitant about how we would get on with our new "boss". After Emily's fantastic leadership and our sense of being a great team, we doubted that we could be so lucky again. It wasn't long before we found out that we and the Project Platypus organisation were winners again!

Luke started work on the areas which Emily hadn't managed to solve and in particular the accounting system which the new manager should find easier to learn and use. Luke's persistence with grant writing applications eventually paid off when the successful notification of a number of projects came in. Luke championed the role of Project Platypus at many levels and wasn't afraid to tell it how it is in the Upper Catchment.

The role of Project Platypus is one of the hardest gigs going as there are so many areas to get on top of. A day might involve doing the accounts and wages and grant accounts, greeting visitors off the street at the PP office, meeting Work for the Dole supervisors and participants, arranging and attending meetings, planning and overseeing Bernies works program etc.

Luke has done a great job maintaining the Project Platypus role and profile and improving the efficiencies of the organisation. We wish him well in his new role at Warrnambool TAFE as Sustainability Officer and as full time husband and Dad again.

Jane Marriott

Have You Visited Our New Web Site Yet?

Project Platypus - Microsoft Internet Explorer
Address: http://www.platypus.org.au



PROJECT PLATYPUS
UPPER WIMMERA LANDSCAPE

Mission Statement
To improve the land and water quality of the upper Wimmera River catchment, achieving enhanced biodiversity, a sustainable catchment and a sustainable catchment community.



Project Platypus - Upper Wimmera Landcare, formed in 1994, is dedicated to improving land and water resources in the region and engaging farmers, volunteers and the broader community in land degradation issues.

Project Platypus is an Incorporated Association established as an umbrella body for all of the Landcare Groups in the upper Wimmera River catchment.

Project Platypus Landcare Region



- 1. Northern Grampians Landcare Group
- 2. Navarre Landcare Group
- 3. Concoongella Landcare Group
- 4. Landsborough Landcare Group
- 5. Stawell Urban Landcare Group
- 6. Black Range Landcare Group
- 7. Great Western Landcare Group
- 8. Crowlands Landcare Group
- 9. Jellibar Landcare Group
- 10. Myrton Landcare Group
- 11. Elmhurst Landcare Group



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Revegetation



Sustainable Agriculture



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[View our Current Plant Out Newsletter \(2008b\)](#)



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PADDOCK TREES

The depletion of paddock trees has long been a concern for many people, none more so than Jane Williams. It was through her persistence, and Luke's grant application skills and subsequent success with the Helen McPherson Trust, that money became



Paddock trees dying

available to offer an incentive to landholders to plant individual or small groups of trees in their paddocks. The take up of this offer was quite swift with fourteen different landholders taking up the opportunity. Two have opted for scattered plantings of individual trees with a large sheep proof guard. Twelve have opted for block plantings with between 20 and 160 trees in each plot, depending on their size. A total of 2320 trees have been taken up by these landholders.



Paddock trees....dead

As this is our first experience at paddock tree establishment we will be trialling different tree guards and planting methods to ascertain the most successful and cost effective. As part of this program we decided to offer a further 900 trees and guards for distribution in July. Most of these trees are either red gum or yellow box. If anyone is interested in planting some paddock trees please contact me so I can set some aside for you. **0427 881 021**

Circle This 2009 Date Now!

Following on from the success of the 2006 Mountains to Mallee Walk, Landcare groups and agencies are planning a Mt William Walk, where individuals will be able to cycle or walk all, or sections of, the Mt William Creek. Mt William creek is a tributary of the Wimmera River and runs from Mount William in the Grampians to east of Dadswells Bridge. It will be a chance for Landcarers to journey together appreciating the beauty of stretches of the creek, meeting adjoining landowners and planning activities and projects to improve the health of the creek.

The event is planned for the 4th to 9th April 2009.

Targeted for Eradication – Gorse

Also known as furze or *Ulex europaeus*, Gorse is a particularly prickly invasive weed which has the potential to proliferate and take over agricultural and bush land. Gorse is readily identified from its narrow spiny leaves, the yellow pea like flowers and its habit of forming dense clumps.

Originally used in gardens and hedgerows, Gorse favours wetter sites in our region on a wide range of soils, preferring low fertility acid soils on disturbed and undisturbed sites. Prolific hard coated seeds ensure its survival in the vicinity and its spread, particularly by roadworks.

Funding through the WCMA will enable Colin Snooks, part time Project Platypus works employee, to undertake 16 days of spraying Gorse on private property on known sites in our catchment. If you have infestations of Gorse that you would like eradicated contact Project Platypus with the location and your site will be added to the list for the next round of spraying.

Once sprayed, it is likely that the massive seed bank in the soil will continue to germinate for some years. Burning can encourage this process and the carpet of regenerated seedlings can be sprayed the next year. It is not advisable to revegetate or plan other uses for the site which will impede subsequent spraying.

From a distance Gorse looks similar to the Prickly or Hedge Wattle, *Acacia paradoxa*, which has leaves between the spines, and is an indigenous plant which can provide valuable habitat. In the Black Range, prior to the fires, the Gorse also provided valuable refuge for Bandicoots - so whilst it is a weed it is sometimes important to look at the bigger picture and do some replacement plantings before removing plants which might have habitat values.



Another of the priority weeds treated by Colin Snooks and volunteer Ian Pavey over the last few months is Patersons Curse.

FARMING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Innovative Farming Series 2008



Farming in the 21st Century will require fundamental changes in thinking and practice. The effects of drought and long term climate change is a major catalyst for the agricultural community to re-assess their enterprise and adapt to survive the challenges of changing weather patterns, rural industries, markets and community structures.

The **Farming in the 21st Century: Innovative Farming Series 2008** is a combined initiative of the Northern Grampians Shire Council, the Ararat Rural City, Project Platypus, the Department of Primary Industries and University of Ballarat. The series aims to bring farming families from across the region together to share new farming techniques, opportunities and innovations. Farmers will also learn how to improve and grow their farm business and increase their long term resilience and sustainability in response to climate and market variability.

The series incorporates farming forums located in the St Arnaud, Stawell and Ararat regions together with a selection of on-farm site visits. Each forum will have a different focus and will provide information, case studies, ideas and motivation to assist farmers to plan for the future. Farmers are encouraged to attend all of the events. All events are free and are open to everyone.

Innovative Farming Series 2008 – Calender of Events				
Event	When	Where	Detail	Contact
<i>Forum part 1</i> Dry Land Farming	Tues 26 th Feb 4pm – 8.30pm	Banyena Hall	Cropping innovations and decision making <i>Speakers:</i> Alexandra Gartmann – BCG projects Mike Stephens – Profiting in drought Local and regional farmers Free evening BBQ!	Northern Grampians Shire Council Ph 5495 1500 Registrations by 22 nd Feb
Field Visit Navarre	Mon 17 th March 8.30am–11am	Colin and Carol Snooks property	Hydroponic stock feed and stock containment area site visits Free BBQ Breakfast!	Project Platypus Ph 5358 4410 Registrations by 13 th March
<i>Forum part 2</i> Carbon Opportunities	Thurs 27 th March 9am–12am	Stawell Entertainment Centre	Growing Carbon In soils, forestry and fodder crops. What are carbon sinks and credits? Is carbon sequestration & trading relevant to me? <i>Speakers:</i> To be confirmed	Project Platypus Ph 5358 4410 Registrations by 25 th March
Field Visit Great Western	Wed 2 nd April 12.30pm–3.30pm	Alan and Shelley Green's property	Sustainable land management and diversification into egg production Free BBQ lunch!	Project Platypus Ph 5358 4410 Registrations by 31 st March
<i>Forum part 3</i> Positive Farming	April 24 th 4pm – 9pm	Gum San (upstairs) Great Hall, Ararat	Productive Farming, Farming Economics and Regional Opportunities <i>Speakers:</i> Colin Creighton – Managing Climate Variability Chris Sounness – Forecasting Tools Mike Stephens – Farming Economics Sarah Paterson – Local case study Laurie Norman – CHAF Demo Farm Daryl Scherger – Blue Mallee Gum trials Geoff Saul - Life Time Wool Free Evening meal!	Ararat Rural City Ph 5355 0267 Registrations by: 18 th April

Group Offsets Car Emissions with Project Platypus



Luke Scott, Project Platypus Manager presents Grampians Regional Waste Management Group Director Cr Kevin Erwin with the greenhouse gas offset certificate with Regional Education Officer Kendall Billington and Executive Officer Dory Russell.

Grampians Regional Waste Management Group has taken their own initiative to offset the greenhouse gas emissions produced by their company vehicles. The Group was concerned over the amount of driving that is inevitable in their daily roles. Regional Education Officer Ms Kendall Billington said, "After finding a simple method of calculating the greenhouse gas emissions our cars produce per annum and then how many plants we would need to plant to offset these emissions the answer seemed quite clear, donate the money for these plants to Project Platypus who will purchase, provide tree guards, collect their seeds and maintain the trees until they are established".

During 2007/08 the Group's two vehicles are expected to travel 92,000 kms around their region, this is equivalent to 18.17 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions. To offset these emissions Project Platypus will plant 71 trees through their Climate Change Project at a property near Lake Fyans, which will include shelter belts, biolinks and paddock trees.

To calculate a vehicle's greenhouse gas emissions you can utilise Origin Energy's online Greenhouse Gas Emissions Calculator, then referred to the Federal Government's National Carbon Accounting Toolbox to work out how many trees would need to be planted to offset these emissions.

Luke Scott, Project Platypus Manager presented Grampians Regional Waste Management Group Director Cr Kevin Erwin with a certificate that recognizes the Group's greenhouse gas emissions offset and commitment in reducing their impact on our environment.

Introducing...

Tony Capurso



Tony Capurso was elected to the Project Platypus Management Committee at the AGM in September.

I am the principal of St Patrick's Primary School, Stawell. I have been the principal for at St Patrick's for the last four years, before this I was the principal in at St Mary's in Donald.

I began my teaching career many years ago in Adelaide. My first teaching position was in Bordertown then in Adelaide. I then left South Australia and taught for the next twelve years in the Northern Territory. During this time I spent three years in Daly River and nine years in Alice Springs. I finally left the Territory and came to Victoria and began my principal career.

I have always had a interest in the land, the environment and its people. In the Territory I was able to spend time with Aboriginal people to understand how they used the land for survival. I was also able to do some work for a friend in establishing his date plantation south of Alice Springs.

Along with my family we enjoy travelling and camping spend time understanding and learning about our environment. Last year we had the opportunity to travel through central Australia camping for five weeks. Our young family had the opportunity to visit the Cooper Creek, the Simpson Desert, Ayers Rock, Kings Canyon, Alice Springs and its surrounds.

I joined Project Platypus last year and want to be part of the team in restoring and maintaining the beauty and natural resource that our environment offers us. As part of the communication sub committee I am keen to assist in presenting the message Project Platypus has to offer.

New Beginnings

Pomonal Wildflower Nursery has been producing Australian plants for nearly 30 years. Even looking at that sentence makes my back ache and my wrists twinge! Yet it has been fun as well as hard work.



Part of the nursery when in full production

For many years a primary concern was revegetation work at the Stawell Gold Mine. Mullock heaps became wooded hills and it was from the top of one that I looked out and wondered how long it would be before some of the surrounding ranges would ever have trees on them. It must have been a prophetic thought for within a few years we became involved in a new

venture called Project Platypus and our focus turned to growing trees for Landcare. As new and better methods for tree growing became available we adapted and developed new skills. But enough is enough and although we boast that we could produce over a hundred thousand trees per year it was pretty boring.

We also did quite a lot of work for the Grampians National Park and it was wonderful to spend time in the beautiful mountains improving the look of camp grounds and carparks. But somewhat sad that so little remained after the 2006 fires. When you work with nature (and mine bulldozers) you learn that nothing is permanent. Having said that, we do hope that some of the thousands of our trees which we see wherever we go in this region, will be here for a long long time.

Phil and I intend to keep the nursery going but our output will be much reduced. Garden plants and indigenous understorey



Plans for the future?

species should be enough to finance the many weeks of wandering around Australia and indeed the world which we plan for our 'retirement.'

I once had a tee shirt which had on it: *"Take care of the environment and it will take care of you"*. I firmly believe this to be true. Thank you to everybody who planted our trees.
Jane Williams



Obviously a committed landcarer, new manager Leigh Blackmore introducing the younger generation to the skills of tree planting.



How would you like to produce 1 tonne a day of green feed for your stock over summer? Colin Snooks has set up a hydroponic feed production system in a large greenhouse to provide supplementary feed for his sheep over summer. Combined with newly installed stock containment areas and a variety of erosion control and revegetation activities, Colin's Navarre property will make a worthwhile visit on Monday 17th March. (see *Farming in the 21st Century* brochure included in this newsletter) A free barbecue breakfast will kick off the morning's activities, which should be over by 11am. Travel along Barkly Road and look for the signs to *Seven Oaks*.

STOP PRESS

Owing to a late cancellation Bernie can offer 600m fencing for a remnant protection project.

If you are interested call Bernie on

0427 881 021



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