



## Project Platypus Upper Wimmera Landcare

### MISSION

Support and empower community.  
Improve environmental health of  
Upper Wimmera Catchment.  
Maintain and improve productivity.

### Find us:

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PO Box 838 Stawell 3380  
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## Down to Earth

December 11th UPDATE

G'day and welcome to ***Down to Earth***,

Rippa month ahead as the chrissy decorations go up, the gifts are bought and those pesky, take you a month of Sundays, grant applications are written up. Project Platypus have several grant applications sent off and a few more to write up before the end of the year!

This issue of Down to Earth looks at projects, workshops, rabbits, surveys and scholarships amongst other things.

We hope you enjoy  
Project Platypus team

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## Events at a Glance

**Tue 12th Dec** Christmas BBQ & strategy meeting. Stawell Urban Landcare

**Wed 13th Dec** Native Grasslands workshop. Jallukar Landcare

**Fri 15th Dec** Christmas meeting. Jallukar Landcare

**19-22 Feb 2018** [Master Class](#) Climate Smart Agriculture, Seymour, Vic. Applications close 15 Dec

**16-18th March 2018** [Women on Farms Gathering](#), Rosebud, Vic

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## Icons of our Waterways

### What we found:

Our sewn together, secretively nocturnal, venomous, odd but wonderfully delightful, egg laying mammal and iconic Australian...the PLATYPUS is on the decline nationally!

Now if we aren't up in arms, mortified and ready for action on the plight of this little Aussie battler in dire need of our deserving attention I'll go he!

The DNA study of the upper Wimmera River in western Victoria has revealed the local population of platypus has gone "functionally extinct". Josh Griffiths of CESAR (The Centre for Environmental Stress and Adaption Research) with EnviroDNA have undertaken the research through Project Platypus with Wimmera CMA funding and of course all the school children as citizen scientists.

### Why are they gone? Will they come back?

The millennium drought took a major toll on platypus numbers along with the combined factors of our own activities such as land clearing and dam building have altered habitats.

There is a possibility of reintroduction of wild platypus in the future.

## **How can you help platypus and other waterway animals?**

Big and small “I can help platypus” ideas:

- Fence off that river or creek, reduce run-off and siltation
- Pick up that plastic, especially lacquer or silicon bands - these have been found tightly hugging platypus necks
- Avoid Opera house nets – about a dozen deaths have been recorded of platypus this year in Victoria alone - most would never be recorded
- Be water-wise - your water is their water too
- Clean up/adopt the local creek

## **Have you seen a platypus in recent years?**

Locals know their place best and we would love to hear from you. Stories new or old would most gratefully be received. These stories and memories further build a picture of our local rivers and creeks and fauna within. Best story will be written up on the newsletter!

The absolute best place to record a platypus sighting is via the [Platypus SPOT](#) website or app - it is the Australia wide database... or contact us here at Project Platypus.

Last known sighting of a platypus. Follow link: [Upper Wimmera Platypus 2012](#)

Map below of survey sites for *Icons of our waterways* project.



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## Project Platypus staff out and about

Keep a look out for Project Platypus staff and the IPA work they are currently smashing out: spraying St Johns Wort at Black Range; gorse at Buangor for Ararat Shire; woody weeds and horehound on the roadsides for Northern Grampians Shire.

Over November and December Project Platypus are monitoring and rehabilitating sites where Navarre Minerals have air-core drilled as part of their exploration of the region.

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## **WORKSHOP 2** Jallukar Native Grasslands Plant Project

Last week's workshop proved a hit with 20+ participants hovering near expert Landcarer Neil Marriot as he identified rare species and each person set out collecting the seed.

**Native grasslands workshop** - all welcome

**Field Collection** - learn in-field seed collection techniques

**Rarer species** - identify rare native grassland species, collect & catalogue for storage, bags provided

**Bring: gloves, secateurs, water, lunch, hat & appropriate clothing**

**10-2 pm Wed 13th Dec**, at the Jallukar Nature Conservation Reserve, meet at the cnr of

Bellellen and Jallukar North roads.

**Enquiries:** Ange Turrell 0429 521 121

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## Rabbits

RHDV2 is replacing endemic RHDV strains in the Australian landscape within 18 months of its arrival

Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (or RHDV2), affects European rabbits and various hare species. It was first detected in France in 2010 and subsequently caused epidemics throughout Europe.

The exotic virus was first detected in Australia in May 2015 and within 18 months had spread to all states and territories.

The [CSIRO-led study](#), a collaboration between Australia's leading rabbit researchers, has found by reconstructing the evolutionary history of the virus that it was likely already circulating several months in Australia before its initial detection. It further shows that RHDV2 is currently the dominant strain of RHDV circulating in Australia, and ongoing surveillance is critical to further understanding its interactions with other rabbit biocontrol agents.

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## 2017 Regional Wellbeing Survey - OPEN

Every Australian is welcome to take part – just follow the link to the online survey, or call 1800 981 499 if you'd prefer to be mailed a paper copy of the survey. The [Regional Wellbeing Survey's](#) mission is to support research that improves the wellbeing and quality of life of people living in rural and regional Australia. To achieve this, each year we ask people across Australia to take part in our survey. Taking part lets you have your say on issues ranging from how your community is changing to your health and your wellbeing.

Run by University of Canberra

All survey participants aged 18 or over can enter the draw to win one of **16 prizes worth a total of \$7,000**. You can choose to do a short or long version of the survey. The survey is voluntary, confidential and anonymous, and **closes on 21.12.2017, at midnight.**

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## National Rural Women's Coalition 'What do rural women want in 2017/2018?' Survey

### I n t r o d u c t i o n

The National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) is a collaborative national voice for women living in rural, regional and remote (RRR) Australia. The NRWC seeks to ensure better social and economic outcomes for women in RRR Australia and works as a conduit between rural

women and the Government on key policies affecting women.

In 2018 the United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the 62nd session's priority theme is "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality & the empowerment of rural women and girls". The NRWC is updating it's 2013 'What do Rural Women Want?' survey to better reflect issues and challenges facing women throughout Australia to ensure your voices are heard in Australia and internationally.

This short [survey](#) will take between 15-20 minutes of your time to complete

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## Do you know any new or prospective landholders?

The Victorian government's [Agriculture Victoria](#) may be a good starting point. It offers information for new landholders on what to expect when they move to rural Victoria, how to meet their new obligations as a landholder and tips on farm management for landholders starting out in commercial agricultural production.

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## Scholarships

### **AgriFutures Horizon Scholarship**

In partnership with industry sponsors, the [AgriFutures Horizon Scholarship](#) is an initiative supporting students enrolled in full time study at an Australian university by providing:

- a bursary of \$5000 per year for the first two years of your degree
- professional development workshops
- annual industry work placements aligned with the scholar's areas of interest and their sponsor's industry
- opportunities to network and gain knowledge at a range of industry events