



# 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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## Contact us:

11 a Ararat Rd Stawell, Victoria  
PO Box 838 Stawell 3380  
ph 03 5358 4410



# Down to Earth

DECEMBER UPDATE

Welcome to our newsletter ***Down to Earth***,

So much good information to cram in one newsletter. I hope it's not an overload, but there is plenty happening in the NRM space. I am particularly excited about the Chicks in Sticks event, back by popular demand. There is also an interactive series of maps which tells much about technology and even more about our changing planet, have a play with it.

**Cheers Andrea**

Local Landcare Facilitator

## DECEMBER

Fri 14th [CHICKS IN THE STICKS](#) Seed & Feed Tour

## 2019 SAVE THE DATE

March 29 - 31 [Grampians \(Gariwerd\) Landcare Forum](#)

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A warm invitation to **Chicks in the Sticks 2018 – SEED and FEED Tour**

### **Friday 14th December**

The Seed and Feed tour is a one-day event looking at sustainable agriculture from several perspectives. This educational tour will look at: agricultural seed development nationally in Australia at Grains Innovation Park; internationally with the connection to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault; locally at a grass roots level with horticulture at Haven Grown. And of course a salubrious lunch at local Horsham café baa 3400.

**Bus leaves from the Woolworths car park, Stawell at 8.30 am**

**Grains Innovation Park**, Horsham, with tour and talk of leading facility. GIP is a national centre for breeding pulses and also features a world class plant phenomics facility. It also contains the Australian Grains Genebank which holds around 300 million seeds, protecting genetic material for future generations. [Grains Innovation Park](#)

**baa 3400**, restaurant and lunch stop in Horsham. Haven Grown supplies its produce. [www.baa3400.com.au](http://www.baa3400.com.au)

**Haven Grown** is an organic market garden in Haven, Victoria, that supplies locally to selected cafes and community with salad mix, root veg, tomatoes, beans, peas, herbs and lots more! There will be produce available for sale on the day. The owner originally worked for GIP, but now has his own particular emphasis on growing food sustainably. [www.weeklytimesnow.com.au](http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au)

**Guaranteed to be a fabulous day out.**

**Bookings:** [TICKETEBO](#)

**Cost: \$15** (includes bus tour/morning tea). **Lunch to be paid individually** at baa 3400

**For more information contact:**

**(RALF) Lisa Oliver** mob 0429 606 749 email: [OliverL@wcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:OliverL@wcma.vic.gov.au)

or

**(LLF) Andrea Mitchell** ph 5358 4410 email: [llf@platypus.org.au](mailto:llf@platypus.org.au)



**GRAMPIANS (GARIWERD)**

**LANDCARE FORUM**

**29 – 31 MARCH 2019**

**UC CAMPING NORVAL**

**– HALLS GAP**

This event will feature two local field trips, panel discussions and workshops. We look at

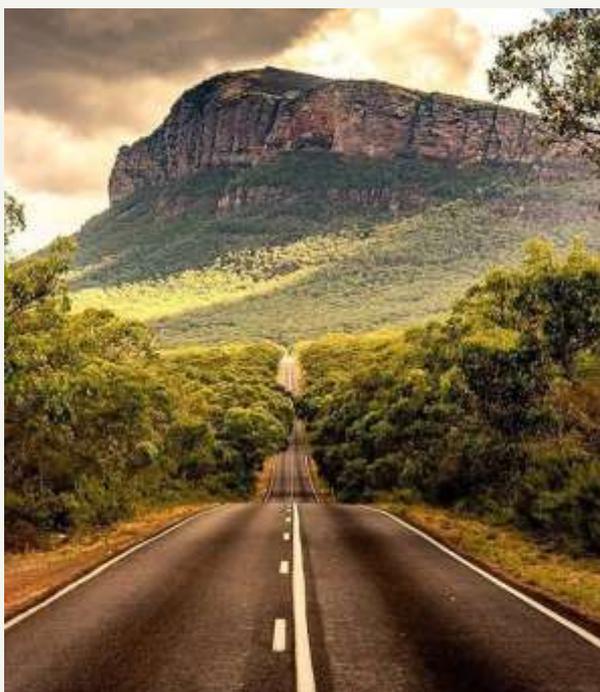
what farmers are doing to ensure productivity and sustainability. Traditional owners share river and creation stories. There will also be a poster display showcasing Landcare activities from Glenelg Hopkins and the Wimmera. **Registrations**

**open soon.**

**Contact Leanne**

**Jackman 0427 321 624**

[peter.lea@skymesh.com.au](mailto:peter.lea@skymesh.com.au)



## **GRANTS**

### **National Landcare Program - Smart Farms Small Grants**

The Australian Government is inviting organisations through an open competitive process to apply for the [National Landcare Program - Smart Farms Small Grants](#)

The program aims to protect, conserve and provide for the productive use of Australia's water, soil, plants and animals and the ecosystems in which they live and interact, in partnership with industry, communities and other governments. **(close 11th January)**

### **Recreational Fishing Grants Program**

Every year the Victorian Government, through the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account, disburses revenue derived from the sale of Recreational Fishing Licences to projects that will improve recreational fishing in Victoria.

#### **[Small Grants](#) (continually open)**

To provide funding of up to \$5,000 (GST exclusive) for small recreational fishing projects which benefit public recreational fishing in Victoria

### Large Grants (close 28th Feb 2019)

This program provides funding for projects in the following categories:

- recreational fishing access and facilities
- recreational fisheries' sustainability and habitat improvement
- recreational fisheries-related education, information and training and
- recreational fisheries research.



### **GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and the environment**

Although its been around since the 1960's, it was was the early 1990's that this technology started making a difference for business and the public - now we use it every day without thinking. Below is one way GIS technology is truly amazing, especially in understanding our environment. Of course we use it on our phones, in agriculture, business and almost everything else!

GIS stands for Geographic Information system. It is a computer framework that collects, analyses, stores and disseminates location (geographic) information to reveal deeper insights to help users make smarter decisions.

### Atlas for a Changing Planet

Understanding natural and human systems is an essential first step toward reducing the severity of climate change and adapting to a warmer future. Maps and geographic information systems are the primary tools by which scientists, policymakers, planners, and activists visualize and understand our

rapidly changing world. Spatial information informs decisions about how to build a better future.



### **ITCHY FEAT - from France to Stawell**

\*Please note the below is a French-English Google translation

French journalism students **Itchy Feat** visited the Project Platypus and the Grampians National Park in the heart of the Victoria region to discuss the protection of fauna and flora. 🌿

They met Hannah, young ranger in the park, as well as Julie and Andrea, two volunteers from the Project Platypus Upper Wimmera Landcare working on the surrounding lands.

Two separate bodies but two joint missions: protecting the environment, and changing behaviour (well yeah).



*Julie Andrew and Itchy Feat crew; Leopold, Justine, Marine, Justine*

[Les Parcs Nationaux, seule solution pour protéger l'environnement ?](#)

## **National Parks, the only solution to protect the environment?**

**4th November 2018**

As in France, Australian nature is on some spaces drastically protected by restricted areas, national parks. A week ago, Itchy Feet met a young park ranger, Hannah, and two members of the Platypus association, Andrea and Julia. Two separate organizations, one to protect the Park, and the other to conserve the hinterland, less spectacular but equally vital.

On one side, the Grampian Mountains National Park, 235 km west of Melbourne. 1,700 km<sup>2</sup> of protected areas since 1984, populated by endemic fauna and flora and charged with ancestral aboriginal culture sheltered in the various rocky sites of the park.



*Park Grampians Balconies*

View of the Park of the top of Balconies

On the other, the Victoria State Outback, which surrounds the park, an area more or less equivalent to the size of the park. A neutral space, with fauna and flora rich but more common.



*Grampians Platypus Outback Victoria*

The outback protected by the association Platypus, seen Grampians.

However, the same issues arise on both sides. Impact of human presence, invasive species and global warming are endangering the environment of both areas. In both zones, organizations, with different means and organization, are mobilizing for the same cause: protecting the environment.

Rangers, as in France, are responsible for the park area, from prevention to protection. The Platypus project brings together 11 associations responsible for the attractiveness of the outback, the fight against erosion, invasive species, or the protection of crops.



In blue, the area managed by Platypus. In green, the

Grampians Park, managed by rangers.

### **Two missions for these two organizations: protecting the environment and changing behaviour.**

Preserve the fauna and flora

At the Grampians, the State of Victoria gives the ranger teams the means to put in place strategies for protecting the environment. Hannah is a young ranger in the field for about a year.

After the heat of recent weeks, Hannah is asked about the impact of global warming: "This is a complicated question because I think there are several impacts on the environment in the long term. It has an impact on firefighting, that's why we have our fire team start working earlier in the year. "



*Grampians, Park, Fires*

The fires in the park are becoming more regular.

Climate change is fundamentally changing the way the organization operates. "We need to increase staff and steer our operating process towards new solutions. We must therefore be more prepared on different aspects of our work. "

The main problem of the park, more than climate change, seems to be the tourist activity: hundreds of people plow the roads of the park day and night.

"Within the park, visitors are allowed to drive in many places but do not have garbage cans available.

They must therefore manage their detritus themselves. We realized that many of them leave their garbage everywhere in the park, which is a real problem for the fauna and flora. "For an Instagram photo or a live Facebook, many individuals come out marked trails. They disturb the fauna and flora.

In the Platypus Project, the protection of the environment is based entirely on the motivation of the volunteers and the subsidies of the State.



*Andrea and Julia of the Platypus association*

Climate change is not their main concern, although Andrea and Julia have noticed that farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to anticipate the weather. Harvests are less prolific than before. Invasive species are the main problem: "Invasive species are a scourge in the outback, they are animals that do not come from Australia, rabbits, pigs, cats, foxes, which destroy wildlife and wildlife, local flora".

Raise awareness to better protect

The other mission common to the Grampians Rangers and the Platypus Project members is to create a link to the land for future generations.

Hannah is a so-called community commitment to tidy up: "I take care of the park's volunteers, I try to federate a community more committed to the environment and make it aware of the fact that the environment has a physical and mental impact on well-being. It's a full time commitment for and with the community. "

At the Grampians, this translates into a junior ranger program run by Hannah. "I am doing environmental education with young people aged 6 to 12 to make them aware of nature protection." An awareness that she also tries to convey to older people, through the federation of a community of volunteers invested in protecting the park.



*Juniors Rangers Grampians*

A junior rangers program has been put in place. (© JuniorRangers)

At Platypus, we spend time in schools. Meeting students, working with youth groups on environmental protection are important activities for Julia and Andrea. "We try to keep young people at a maximum, to be a kind of voice to guide them. on the right path by teaching them to connect with nature even if they are not in contact with everyday life," details Julia.



*Platypus is trying to recreate a link to the land in*

*Outback children. (© Platypus)*

Before the age of 12, nearly 70% of young people never went to the forest just behind Stawell, the seat city of Platypus.

The conclusion will be Hannah's words: "If I were to bequeath something to future generations, it would simply be appreciating what we have and protecting that. When I walk in nature, I know it will be different next time. It is important to work hard for the environment."

## **FARMER - IFARMWELL**

***Live more in the present and less in your head***

[www.ifarmwell.com.au](http://www.ifarmwell.com.au) is a new, **FREE**, **online tool kit** to help Australian farmers cope effectively with life's challenges and get the most out of every day. It has been developed by Australian farmers in collaboration with a range of organisations from across the agricultural, health, mental health, university and financial sectors.

*The developers are now looking for farmers to trial the website and help determine the most helpful aspects of the site and how it could be improved for future users.*

*If you're interested in helping on this very important project, please visit [www.ifarmwell.com.au](http://www.ifarmwell.com.au) and register to start the trial today.*



## WEEDS

**Serrated tussock** is a perennial tussock-forming grass. It takes only seven years from establishment to dominate a pasture or native grassland, threatening rare native plant species and resulting in a loss of flora biodiversity. The plant is unpalatable and infestations commonly expand as other species are selectively grazed out. This excludes other ground flora and eventually reduces habitat for native fauna. [Serrated tussock](#) is a serious weed of pasture with significant impacts on carrying capacity and a reduction in agricultural return. Its presence greatly affects land value. Livestock are unable to digest the plant due to its high fibre and low protein content, resulting in a loss of condition and in extreme cases starvation.

Follow the link for an excellent brochure on [serrated tussock control](#)



## FARMher

Project Platypus is one of the partners of GPPCP's (Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership) FARMher project. This project will celebrate rural women in the Grampians Pyrenees region, by promoting their contribution to life on the farm and in small rural communities and addressing some of the barriers that prevent rural women from achieving their aspirations.

For more information contact Anna Greene 03 5352 6224 or

email: [gppcprojects@grampianscommunityhealth.org.au](mailto:gppcprojects@grampianscommunityhealth.org.au)



## BUSHFIRE SEASON PREPARATION

**Landowners and farm managers have a legal responsibility for the safety of all people living, working or visiting their properties. Here are a few resources to help prepare:**

[Bushfire plan-the basics](#)

[CSIRO Bushfire research](#)



### **PLIGHT of the PLATYPUS (what's happening to our icon species?)**

Platypus have been in the news for the least exciting reasons, like extinction and drug use. Here is recent news on the subject:

**1. Al Stephens**, our manager, along with Josh Griffiths have recently been interviewed about the plight of the platypus. ABC News article: [\*\*Iconic platypus could face extinction unless national research is carried out, expert warns\*\*](#)

**2.** Insects near waste water could give a platypus or trout half a human **dose of antidepressants**. Guardian's article: [\*\*Platypus eating a normal insect diet could ingest at least 69 drugs, research reveals\*\*](#)

### **3. Platypus podcast:**

[Platypus: The world's most enigmatic animal](#) with ABC's Richard Glover and Professor Richard Kingsford



Image: Pachycrocuta (2016). *Imgur*