



Project Platypus Upper Wimmera Landcare

MISSION

To work in partnership with the Landcare community to improve the environmental health of the Upper Wimmera Catchment while maintaining and improving productivity.



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Down to Earth

DECEMBER UPDATE

Seasons greetings,

December is big, it is full and it leads up to the busiest, most stressful, most fun, family and friend catch-up time of year. December's e-newsletter is much the same: big and full and best

read over a cuppa or two!

This is the last e-newsletter until February 2020, so from all of us here at Project Platypus we wish you a safe and celebratory Christmas and New Year.

Cheers Andrea

Local Landcare Facilitator



DECEMBER

Fri 13 Project Platypus Board end of year BBQ, Warrak

Mon 23 Project Platypus office closed for Christmas break

JANUARY

Mon 6 Project Platypus office opened

MARCH 2020

20-21 Lake Bolac Eel Festival

[PacificHydro Crowlands Sustainable Communities Fund](#)

[Best Christmas pressies ever](#)

[Leadership training 2020](#)

[Smart Farms Small Grants: round 3](#)

[Farmher dinner](#) and National Agriculture Day

[The Nook](#) flora walk

[Community Power](#) - is it for us

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[A bit about Clive Carlyle](#), new chairperson of PPUWLN

[Restoring Native Grasslands & Mitchell's Australia Felix](#)

[Climate -this is what it looks like](#)

THUMBS UP

2020 National Landcare Conference and Awards confirmed for 11-13 November in Sydney. Our very own John Pye will be Victoria's representative in the top award category.

Introducing the new PROJECT PLATYPUS BOARD

At the September AGM, Project Platypus elected and welcomed three new members to the board for 2019 - 2020: Bronwyn Bant, Jess Gardner and Ange Turrell. The board are the local community representatives from the Landcare network. They would be happy to hear from you, so let them know of your ideas for Landcare locally.

Project Platypus also farewelled long-standing board members Phil Hall and Richard Kelleher. Project Platypus are extremely grateful to Phil and Richard for the work they put into Project Platypus, especially in its rebuilding phase.

Clive Carlyle was elected president of Project Platypus at the first board meeting.

Geologist Ross Cayley spoke to the Project Platypus Landcare AGM and community gathering in Stawell in September 2019. Here is an audio link to his speech that has been edited and made into a sound scape by Mick Douglas [On Deep Time](#)

Ben Hughes spoke about Mt. Cole Creek Flows Investigation. Below are some of his the findings:

- Flow releases from Mt Cole Reservoir to Mt Cole creek are possible in principle
 - Some investment in infrastructure would be required
 - Some aquatic fauna populations are hanging on due to groundwater links to Mt Cole Creek
- Some key species found through the electro fishing survey included:Obscure Galaxias; Pygmy Perch; Flathead Gudgeon; Western Swamp Cray. No Carp, Redfin or native Blackfish were found.



Project Platypus Board

L-R back: Ian Nicholson, Clive Carlyle, Michael Greene, Ben Hughes, Mark Greene, Paul Harrington

L-R front: Jess Gardner, Bronwyn Bant, Leanne Jackman, Ange Turrell, Joel Boyd

A bit about Clive Carlyle, new chairperson of PPUWLN

In my professional life I spent about 25 years engaged in research and research leadership, primarily with CSIRO where I ended up as a Senior Principal Research Scientist and Assistant Chief of Sustainable Ecosystems (with 350 staff focused on research into natural and managed ecosystems including agriculture and forestry). My work focused on understanding and managing forests to enhance and deliver ecosystem services; carbon, water, biodiversity, and socioeconomic benefits.

My personal research focused on forest ecology and biogeochemistry with emphasis on nutrient dynamics in forest soils, tree nutrition, and improved nutrient management strategies in planted forests. Latterly my interest, and responsibility, focused on agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and the potential for mitigation through integrated landscape strategies including management systems to increase carbon storage in soil and trees. I resigned from CSIRO in 2008 to pursue a range of external interests including travel, wilderness walking, and mountaineering.

Both Catherine and I have always loved the outdoors and spent much of our spare time climbing and walking in the Grampians, and elsewhere, and we have always been keenly interested in conservation and our environment. So, buying our property at Fyans Creek six years ago and moving there permanently from Mt Gambier, SA three years ago aligned well with our lifetime interests. I now spend much of my time managing the property for conservation values which includes feral animal and weed control, wetland restoration, and revegetation. Given our activities and interests joining Jallukar Landcare in 2016 was a “no-brainer” and we have greatly enjoyed, and benefited, from the interactions with like-minded and dedicated landcarers.

Joining the Board of Project Platypus and having the opportunity to work with, and learn from, the other vastly experienced and committed members has been a real privilege. When I was first nominated for the Board I had only a vague notion of what Project Platypus was all about. I now see it as an incredibly important, effective, and dynamic organisation that has delivered incredible outcomes for the environment and sustainable agriculture. Thanks to the particular efforts of Michael Green, Phil Hall, Leanne Jackman, and John Pye the organisation is now well positioned to continue to deliver well into the future.



Community Power - is it for us?

Moyston Landcare organised a forum with presentations on innovations in the Community Energy space on Sunday, 6th of October. The forum began at the Moyston Recreation Reserve and finished with a bus tour to the Maroona Wind Farm.

The first guest speaker was Ross Irving, from Sustainability Victoria. He gave an overview of the five main models of Community Energy, from a community-owned power generation plant, to locals banding together to acquire bulk deals on solar panels and batteries.

Ross also gave useful tips on accessing existing hourly/daily/weekly personal power consumption from an energy website such as Powercor. This information helps to identify ways to save money and become more energy efficient by better understanding the factors that influence personal power consumption.

David Sparks, a retired engineer, who was a consultant to the Hepburn Community Power Project was the other speaker. He spoke about his journey on sourcing, and retrofitting a wind turbine on his daughter and her family's farming property, just outside Ararat as part of his retirement super portfolio.

Moyston Landcare President Madelene Townsend thanked the speakers, "Everyone will go home with a better understanding and appreciation of what a huge commitment going down this path is for a community. It was a very interesting."

After a delicious morning tea, it was off to the Maroona Wind Farm and Sheperds Hut Sanctuary. The group were greeted by three generations of the Tucker family. Jack Tucker talked about his family's process to set up the Wind Farm and,

"The two 150 metre turbines connect to the existing electricity network in the area and will produce the equivalent energy usage of around 4000 households. This equates to supplying power to 8,000-10,000 people." Jack said.

A 50 ha vermin-proof fence surrounds one of the turbines on the property and the area is called Shepard's Hut Sanctuary. Southern Brown Bandicoots, a near threatened species in Victoria, were reintroduced to the site as part of the Tucker's goal to increase in abundance and diversity of native reptiles, mammals, birds and invertebrates,

"There has been no visible negative effects of this partnership, and the bandicoots have successfully bred up their numbers. Constructing and maintaining the 2 km of vermin proof fencing is vital for the continued success of the sanctuary" said Jack Tucker.

Not only does the windfarm combine energy generation with protecting wildlife species, it also gives to the local community,

"Right from the start, a commitment was made to ensure that the entire Maroona community benefits from the wind farm. This is being achieved through an ongoing Community Fund." said Jack

Moyston Landcare group's 27 attendees went home feeling inspired and uplifted by the day and by the hard work and commitment of the Tucker family who combined a strong commitment to improved environmental outcomes, renewable energy generation and sustainable agriculture.



PacificHydro Crowlands Sustainable Communities Fund

Yay, Project Platypus received grant funding for the project 'Liven Up Landcare' through Pacific Hydro's Crowlands Sustainable Communities Fund. A lovely presentation ceremony was held at Mountainside Wines in the rolling hills surrounding Warrak with wine and nibbles on October 30th. [2019 grant recipients](#)

About Pacific Hydro

Pacific Hydro is a renewable energy owner, operator and developer with operations in Australia, Chile and Brazil. In 2019 they have celebrated the opening of their first solar farm in Northern Queensland and also the Crowlands Wind Farm.

Community Investment Program

The Community Investment Program is the key part of Pacific Hydro's community investment and support strategy. An Australian wind industry first, the program delivers a portion of revenue back into local communities each year. The Program aims to support local communities in identifying initiatives and projects that Pacific Hydro can support. Since its launch, the program has provided more than \$3.7 million to over 800 sustainable projects across regional Australia. Ararat alone, has received more than \$652,000 since the fund was established and 227 projects have been supported.

Launch of Crowlands Sustainable Communities Fund

The fund will deliver a portion of revenue from Crowlands Wind Farm back into the local community each year, for the life of the project. The expected donations will exceed \$2 million invested into the region over the operating life of the asset. All applications are reviewed by a panel consisting of a local council representative, members of the local community, and Pacific Hydro staff.



Kim Van Hattum, Bernadette Holland
(Pacific Hydro) & Andrea Mitchell (PP)



Grant recipients, Mountainside Wines, Warrak

National Landcare Program: Smart Farms Small Grants Round 3 OPEN

The purpose of [Smart Farms Small Grants](#) is to support land manager practice change that will deliver more sustainable, productive and profitable food, fibre and forestry business while protecting Australia's biodiversity; protecting and improving the condition of natural resources; and assisting Australia meet its international obligations.

CLOSE 19th December 2019

Wimmera Leadership Training 2020

[Leadership Wimmera](#) provides two inspiring leadership programs to enhance and develop your leadership skills and promote leadership in the region. As a participant you will not only learn plenty about leadership but also about who YOU are and how to successfully work and achieve with others around you. It will provide challenges, light bulb moments and plenty of experiences to take you into a more confident, involved, connected and engaged future.

2020 [applications](#) open (till end of December)

More info ph 5381 6500 or info@wda.org.au *Scholarships available

FLORA WALK AT THE NOOK

Last month Project Platypus, organised a guided flora walk and talk at 'The Nook' (the local name for the Moyston Flora Reserve).

Situated just out of Moyston, Victoria, The Nook is a quietly hidden environmental gem which covers an area of 132 ha and is managed by Parks Victoria.

Black Range Landcare members and knowledgeable guides, Neil and Wendy Marriott spoke about the local flora at the reserve, especially the indigenous orchids.

“The Nook is one of the richest reserves in our Wimmera region for orchids, with many thousands of Wax-lip Orchids *Glossodia major*, Spider Orchids *Caladenia* spp., Donkey Orchids *Diuris pardina*, Wallflower Orchids *Diuris orientis* and many, many more every winter-spring,” Mr Marriott said.

“It also supports good populations of the rare Grey Grass-tree *Xanthorrhoea glauca* ssp *angustifolia* as well as spectacular springtime mass displays of native grassy-woodland and heathland wildflowers.”

Attendees remarked that they had no idea that The Nook even existed. Others said they were amazed at the rich diversity of wildflowers.

The Marriotts have also contributed their expertise to Moyston Landcare Group’s recently published book "Flora Survey - The Nook, Moyston". The book is an informative guide to the plant species present at the reserve and is obtainable at the Moyston Store.

“It has proven to be very popular with both locals and tourists, so if you would like to buy a copy you should get to Moyston soon before they are all sold out!” said Neil Marriott

Moyston Landcare Group have further obtained funding to research the flora of the two other parcels of adjoining crown.

“The morning was a great opportunity to enjoy the bush, share knowledge and promote Landcare” said Andrea Mitchell

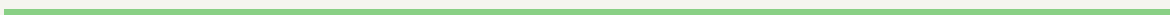
The walk ended with a cuppa and cake at the Moyston General Store, with another guided walk planned for 2020.



Neil Marriott with his copy of The Nook



The Nook, Moyston Flora Reserve





National Agriculture Day
Farmer Dinner 20

GPPCP FARMher Dinner was a huge success, held at [Buangor Cobb & Co](#) last Thursday 21st November. The dinner was the culmination of a twelve month project that aimed to increase awareness of gender roles and stereotypes in rural communities through discussion, storytelling and providing leadership training. There were many positive messages and feedback, with over 70 FARMhers, partners and guests in attendance. The evening buzzed conversation as attendees caught up with one another or made new acquaintances.

Cobb & Co was the ideal venue with its rough hewn walls providing the perfect backdrop for the FARMher photographic display. Each of the FARMhers were captured in their natural environment with a personal quote from their story. Some of the photo posters have been displayed at the recent Chicks in the Sticks event, the Perennial Pasture Systems Christmas get together and will be at other events over the coming months.

The evening which coincided with National Agriculture Day was as a great chance to celebrate rural women, their contribution to agriculture, business and the strength they bring to their communities.

A fitting locally sourced menu was prepared and served by Quigley and Clarke from Clunes. They had arrived early, to prepare food on site, as they'd lost power and were evacuated from the Clunes township because it was under threat by fire - a power effort!

Another highlight of the evening was the key note speaker Cathy McGowan, [former Federal Member Indi](#). Cathy spoke about her journey from a young age growing up in a large farming family and being told that she couldn't farm 'because she was a girl', going on to be a teacher because that's what was

considered more appropriate for women back then, the steps she took to progress her career in agriculture, agricultural politics and finally Federal politics. Cathy's speech was inspirational and showed that, by taking a step by step approach nothing is impossible. The take home messages to rural people were; 'Don't down play the crucial role you undertake, shine your light and be the change you want to see - show up, step up and speak up'.

Project Platypus is one of several local organisations on the steering committee for FARMher

Ps Call in to [Quigley and Clarke](#) cafe for a coffee and say hi, next time you are in Clunes.

By Anna Greene (GPPCP)

10 BEST CHRISTMAS PRESSIES EVER:

You have all the power, buying power that is, consider this:

Your pick - I want to...

...save the world with solar

1. One Dollar for one Watt

A \$1 donation to Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions ([BREAZE](#)) Social Solar program funds 1 watt of renewable energy and more renewable energy means fewer emissions! How good is that? But [One Dollar for One Watt](#) equals even more. Each time a combined total of \$1,500 is donated to BREAZE, they will install 1.5kW of solar panels on the roof of a social housing property

...give a gift that is used everyday and then gives back

2. Who Gives a Crap

[Who Gives a Crap](#) Toilet paper products with **environmentally friendly materials of which 50% of the profits** go to help build toilets for those in need across the world (2.3 billion people (roughly 40% of the world's population) don't have access to a toilet). Since 2012 over \$2.5 million dollars has been donated to charity and saved a heck of a lot of trees, water and energy.

...support a local Landcare group

3. Flora Survey 'The Nook' Moyston by Moyston Landcare Group

Moyston Landcare have produced their very own book about bushland in their patch - the perfect gift for a local. Just drop in at the Moyston Store to buy a copy.

...support drought affected famers

4. Farmer, Recipes and Stories from the land by Jody Vassallo

[Farmer Cookbook](#) is a book of hope and optimism, and a celebration of the resilience, courage and grit of our Australian farmers. All sales go to CWA (to distribute to drought affected farmers)

...support a drought-affected town to purchase my gifts

5. #buyfromthebush

[#buyfromthebush](#) shines a light on drought-affected towns struggling to maintain their businesses. You can follow the hashtag #buyfromthebush on Instagram and Facebook to source your gifts

...rid the world of weeds (well Australia anyway!)

6. BIOME - Camphor Laurel cutting board

Camphor Laurel is a serious environmental weed species in Australia and control programs advocate removal and replacement with native tree species. So why not a lovely [camphor laurel chopping board](#) a

...cosy up in a chair and read a book about a most outrageous future

7. *Super Power Australia's low-carbon opportunity* by Ross Garnaut

Australia has unparalleled renewable energy resources. We also have the necessary scientific skills. Australia could be the natural home for an increasing proportion of global industry. Rich in ideas and practical optimism, Superpower is a crucial, timely contribution to this country's future. [ABC NEWS](#)

...use my buying power on an upcycled, repurposed bag where 100% of profits are donated to rural communities

8. Ag Bags

A voluntary group supporting rural communities by repurposing agricultural feed sacks into sellable supermarket [shopping bags](#)

...support rural mental health, the Royal Flying Doctors Service and young people who have a red hot go

9. The Naked Farmer 2020 Calendar [ORDER HERE](#)

...buy something that will outlast me and provide future generations

10. Project Platypus donation for trees

Every dollar counts and we are happy to plant thousands of trees on your behalf. Just call the office 03 5358 4410



CLIMATE ALARM

Climate Council

UNPRECEDENTED. As predictions about climate change increasingly become observations, we are witnessing firsthand the impacts of more frequent and severe weather events. These events are playing havoc with our health, our agricultural systems, our communities and our economy. But they are also having devastating impacts on our natural ecosystems and unique wildlife.

The Climate Council's new report, '[This is What Climate Change Looks Like](#),' highlights recent examples of these impacts. In many cases, our ecosystems and species were already under threat from other human-associated causes – like land clearing, over-harvesting, and invasive feral animals and weeds. **Climate change is adding to this litany of woes, in some cases providing what might be the last straw for species and systems already under grave stress.**

Restoring Native Grasslands

by Lloyd Thomas (Jallukar Landcare)

After early settlement, the spectacular sight of the grasslands of Western Victoria soon diminished, with the degradation of the area to now less than 1% of native grasslands remaining, mostly on roadside verges.

Over the last 12 years, however, reliable techniques have been applied, including the scalping of the top soil (to remove weeds, remnant pesticides and fertilisers, as grassland plants can survive in low nutrient environments, but weeds suffer) and mechanical sowers (as the seed is very light compared to normal pasture seed).

The Jallukar Native Grasslands Project was set up as an offshoot of Jallukar Landcare Group towards the end of 2016 and working bees were held to identify the species involved and to collect the seed at peak time. Around 80 species were collected from several sites to give the best diversity.

These seeds were subsequently sown in hycos trays in a special low fertilised potting mix and reared in a hothouse at a local nursery. Later when the seedlings had outgrown the hycos they were transplanted into polystyrene boxes and placed in the open. Upon flowering the plants were monitored and the seed pods harvested and labelled. Next the seeds were separated from the husks and the weight recorded.

A variety of seed has been harvested including *Leptorhynchus squamatus* (Scaly buttons), *Linum marginale* (Native flax), *Vittadinia gracilis* (New Holland daisy), *Xerochrysum viscosum* (stick everlasting), *Eryngium ovinum* (Blue devil) and *Microlaena stipoides* (Weeping grass).

Some of the seeds will be allocated to several prepared sites and thus help in restoring grasslands of Victoria. The remaining seeds will be either held in a seedbank or sown to

increase the seed bank.



Mitchell's Australia Felix

"We got through that night of misery as well as might have been expected and succeeded in keeping the fire alive, although, while twigs were blown into red heat at one end, icicles remained at the other..." Mitchell Diary 14th July 1836 at a camp on the summit of Mt William.

Major Mitchell approached the Grampians from Richardson river, north of Stawell, near where Callawadda is today. The party included 25 men, 11 horses, 52 bullocks, 100 sheep, 22 carts and a boat carriage and boat.

After reaching the Wimmera River, the party moved on the next day to Bellellen near the banks of Mt. William Creek. From here Mitchell decided to send a party to the summit of Mt William (Named by Mitchell after the reigning monarch King William IV). The route taken was parallel to the present Stawell - Pomonal road and then between Watterhole and Long Gully Roads past the Bomjinna picnic ground and on to the summit.

Mitchell noted the change in the plant life amongst the rocks which were full of dwarf bushes of banksia and casuarinae. Near the highest point of the plateau, Mitchell found *Eucalyptus alpina*, a new species with short sticky leaves. Mitchell and John Richardson (collector of plants) collected several new species including *Grevillea alpina*, *Grevillea aquifolium*, *Epacris impressa*, *Pultenaea scabra*, *Baeckea ramosissima* and *Leucopogon rufous*. Mitchell named the mountain range Grampians after the mountain range in his homeland Scotland. It was not until his return to Sydney that Mitchell reported that he had named the Western volcanic plains of Victoria, stretching from Portland to Melbourne, as "Australia Felix" translating to "fortunate Australia" or "happy Australia". There was a huge land boom to the area soon afterwards.

Following the land rush after Mitchell's praise of the area, squatter Alfred Taddy Thompson wrote in 1841, "the fertile region which has represented itself to his (Mitchell's) delighted view has been converted into an arid waste, destitute of either grass or water".



THOMAS LIVINGSTONE MITCHELL

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