



## BENEFITS OF PASTURE CROPPING REVEALED

No. 39 Autumn 2013



NSW farmer Col Seis developed the concept of Pasture cropping over a few beers with a mate back in the 1990's, and has since been refining and sharing the practice with farmers worldwide. Mr Seis delivered a pasture cropping workshop on March 7 at Dadswells Bridge with Project Platypus. Pasture Cropping is a technique of sowing cereal crops directly into native perennial pastures.

It combines grazing and cropping into a single land use, where each one benefits the other economically and environmentally. Pasture Cropping was developed out of necessity when



the Seis family farm was struggling under conventional farming methods. The concept was well received by workshop participants, as Col is able to provide his first hand knowledge and experiences, and because pasture cropping requires fewer inputs, improved soil health and creates higher productivity. These are obviously appealing outcomes which farmers are keen to know more about. It was also great to be able to host the event at a local property who have begun trialling pasture cropping, as they we're able to provide a physical example of the benefits of pasture cropping.



### Feature Stories:

Benefits of Pasture Cropping Revealed

Chicks in the Sticks

Platypus Found in the Wimmera

Open Kitchen Garden

Southern Brown Bandicoot

### Regular Features:

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Perennial Pasture Systems Update

On Ground Works - Update

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FOR YOUR DIARY

### Upcoming Events

PLANTOUT JULY 2013

registrations open soon



# PROJECT PLATYPUS UPDATE

Leigh Blackmore, Manager

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Project Platypus & Upper Wimmera Catchment Landcare Newsletter. As always, there is plenty going on with everyone involved in Landcare working hard to achieve environmental and sustainable agriculture outcomes. 2013 Plantout dates are now out and listed in the events section of this newsletter – keep an eye on our website as details for each event become finalised.

This newsletter contains concerning information about local native fauna, in particular the Southern Brown Bandicoot and the Platypus. With recent research we are quite confident that the Southern Brown Bandicoot is now locally extinct from the Black Range, near Stawell (we hope we are wrong, and would love to be proven otherwise). Also with a recent report commissioned from CESAR consulting it states that the “Platypus should now be considered locally endangered and there long term survival in the region is in doubt”. Since the major land use changes that took place about 150 years ago, it is unclear whether these situations have arisen simply due to a lag time of cause and effect, the cumulative effect over time, or whether it's due to the increased pressure from drought and fire. With a prediction of increased extreme events due to climate change it is alarming to think what the full impacts of climate change will be on our native fauna. The impact of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere also has a lag time between cause and effect, with climate change impacts inevitably getting more severe before they start to reverse.

On a more positive note, it's great to see so many people getting involved to reverse this trend through native vegetation protection and establishment and reducing their reliance on fossil fuels. Let's hope our grandchildren's children will look back and appreciate the actions that we are taking today. If you would like to get involved in native vegetation programs, whether it is putting in a shelterbelt along a fence line or excluding stock from a patch of trees on an unproductive corner of the farm, then please get in touch so that we can register your interest and seek support to help you undertake these works. Re-establishing and protecting native vegetation not only addresses the cause of climate change, but can also help address the impact of climate change. In addition there are other farm productivity benefits from this type of work. Project Platypus has recently compiled some of this information and can be found on our website, or contact us for more information.

It's great to see Landcare Groups of the Upper Wimmera continuing to be active with lots of weed and rabbit work, hosting events and general involvement in all sorts of Landcare work. I'd also like to thank all those people getting involved in landcare events over the last few months, there is plenty going on and it's a great way to learn new ideas, discuss land management issues and spend time with others who share this great patch of land in the Upper Wimmera.



I'd also like to recognise the great contribution that Project Platypus Subcommittees are having in setting the direction of landcare works in the Upper Wimmera. If you would like to find out more please get in touch and express your interest.

Finally, I'd like to introduce Brendan Barbetti who will be taking over the Manager position at Project Platypus for 6 months from April to September. Brendan brings with him a suite of skills and experiences which I have no doubt will provide a positive contribution to Project Platypus over this time. Feel free to pick up the phone and get in touch anytime to discuss Landcare issues with him.

Thanks for your interest in Landcare,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leigh'.

Leigh Blackmore, Project Platypus Manager

## CHICKS IN THE STICKS TRIP TO BRESS WINERY

Bronwyn Bant

A group of Upper Wimmera Catchment Ladies headed off on our second Chicks in the Sticks adventure, taking a trip across country to Bress, a biodynamic winery in Harcourt. The Winery has a restaurant open over the summer months, using fresh vegetables from their market garden, as well as locally sourced produce. Despite the February heat, we enjoyed a delicious three course meal. Chicks in the sticks is a women only event, giving local ladies the chance to visit farms that practice sustainable agricultural techniques, gain ideas and provide an opportunity for ladies to network. Contact Project Platypus on 53584410 if you would like to be on a list for future details Chicks in the Sticks events.





# PLATYPUS FOUND IN THE WIMMERA RIVER

Bronwyn Bant

Project Platypus are optimistic that platypus populations in the Upper Wimmera are viable after a local fisherman sent in footage of one of the locally rare mammals paddling in the Wimmera River in the Greens Creek area northeast of Stawell, the first confirmed sighting in the upper Wimmera for over ten years. People can view the footage on the Project Platypus Facebook page. The most recent surveys of the Wimmera River, Mt Cole Creek and Mt William Creek surveys in October failed to find any platypus, with researchers suggesting the platypus be considered regionally endangered.



We are so excited to see this platypus swimming in the upper Wimmera River and it gives us hope that there are still viable populations of this unique and precious mammal in our rivers and creeks. We urge members of the public to report any sightings and if they're able to catch it on film that's even better. During October, Project Platypus engaged Melbourne-based researchers from Environmental Stress and Adaptation Research (cesar) to undertake surveys over four nights in the Wimmera River, Mt Cole Creek and Mt William Creek. Unfortunately, cesar researchers didn't trap any platypus, despite finding reaches of suitable habitat. This is why seeing this footage and hearing reports of platypus sightings from the public is so encouraging. It

gives us hope that platypus are surviving. Survey results in 2005 indicated that a population of approximately 120-130 platypus resided in the upper Wimmera River catchment. Since this time, the Wimmera has experienced a long period of drought, followed by significant high flows as a result of flooding. So we remain keen to determine how platypus populations are coping in the aftermath of these conditions so we can build a picture of their distribution and abundance. The major inhibitor for platypus populations was a lack of water and connectivity between pools of water. If you've seen a platypus, please call Project Platypus on 5358 4410 or email [bronwyn@platypus.org.au](mailto:bronwyn@platypus.org.au). Visit the Project Platypus Facebook page or the Project Platypus website at [www.platypus.org.au](http://www.platypus.org.au) to see vision of the platypus.



## OPEN KITCHEN GARDEN WEEKEND

Bronwyn Bant

Stawell residents had a unique opportunity to take a sneak peak at some of the most productive vegetable gardens in the region on March 16 and 17. Stawell Urban Landcare, together with Project Platypus hosted an Open Kitchen Garden Weekend in the Stawell area with a range of workshops and productive gardens on display. The weekend was designed to inspire and motivate local residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables. A number of local veggie patches that have used innovative approaches to ensure a bumper supply of fruit and vegetables to feed their families was on display.

It was also great to have the support of the Stawell Community Garden, who opened to display their gardening plots, and held a composting workshop in collaboration with Grampians Regional Waste Management Group. Workshops on seed saving along with a seed swap, and keeping chooks was on offer over the weekend.



Angela and Nathan Baker share their knowledge with Lauren Bourke



Stawell resident John Pye opened his vegetable garden to the public as part of the Open Kitchen Garden weekend. John uses water efficient wicking beds to grow a range of produce.



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY





# ON GROUND WORKS UPDATE

## INVASIVE PLANTS & ANIMALS :

Since the last newsletter, Project Platypus has been undertaking roadside weed and rabbit control work for Ararat Rural City Council (ARCC). This came at a time when we had just stood down one of the spray crews going back to one crew made up of Graham and Dene, our permanent supervisors. We then re-instated the extra crew and treated most of the targeted roadsides for the ARCC until the end of January. Now back to one crew again, the ARCC roadside work is drawing to a close with many kilometres of roads travelled and hectares of control work completed.

In the western section of the shire, Sweet Briar was the most common species controlled with Sweet Briar and Gorse most commonly controlled in the eastern zone. Various other species including Spiny Rush, Horehound, Broom species, Blackberry and Box Thorn were commonly encountered as well.

Rabbit burrows along Adelaide Hills road Moyston have been ripped by a local contractor as part of a neighbourhood compliance control program initiated by DPI. Various other roadsides across the municipality are targeted for rabbit control works as part of the roadside weed program.

After this program is completed the spray crew will again be targeting weeds along waterways and flood-plains using Wimmera CMA flood recovery funding. Any property owners with regionally controlled weed issues along waterways and flood plains should give Project Platypus a call to take advantage of this funding before it concludes at the end of this financial year. **For further information please contact Allistair Stephens on 5358 4410 or email [allistair@platypus.org.au](mailto:allistair@platypus.org.au)**

## NATIVE VEGETATION :

**Woodlands Revival:** Woodland revival: We now have 37 landholders with agreements in place as part of our revegetation and remnant protection for the coming season. This is 375 Ha in total and around 100,000 plants to be planted, making this the biggest planting season for a number of years. Many of the landholders involved have made a start on their fencing and site preparation will become more active as soon as we get a little more rain. **Contact David Margetson on 5358 4410 or email [david@platypus.org.au](mailto:david@platypus.org.au) if you would like to be apart of this program in 2014.**



**EROSION CONTROL :** Erosion control Work did not start until February due to contractor holdups. A storm filled core trench with water and had to be pumped out. This project is possible with support from GWMWater.

## LANDMATE :

**Ararat –** The Ararat Landmate crew have been focusing their efforts on a wide range of weeds in the Upper Wimmera catchment since the start of the year. The crew have been assisting Landsborough Landcare group with summer weeds, Gorse and Patterson's curse. They have been removing Sallow/Coastal wattle by hand in the Grampians National Park. Project Platypus has used the services of the crew to help with Gorse control. The Ararat Landmate crew have also

done some work supporting the community group at Green Lake on the outskirts of Ararat. The Langi Kal Landmate crew have been helping out the community affected by fire in the Carngham/Chepstowe area. The group helped out with the removal of fences that were destroyed by fire. The crew have been carrying on with Revegetation fencing for land holders at Chalicum, watering trees planted last season at Chepstowe and chipping weeds at Lake Burrumbeet. The crew are currently working on an erosion control project for the Ballarat Environmental Network at Flagstaff hill reserve.

**Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*)** – Sallow or Coastal Wattle is a weed that is becoming more prolific in the area, particularly on private ungrazed and public land around the Grampians National Park. Parks Victoria and the Conservation volunteers, including Landmate crews have been active in the control of this problem weed around the park, and Laharum Landcare group have been concentrating their efforts on private land. The weed has been mapped using satellite imagery to help identify smaller infestations. The strategy for controlling this problem environmental weed is to target smaller infestations to prevent them from getting bigger. Areas that have been affected by fire have shown that the weed grows back aggressively due to the seeds being germinated by fire. If you are a Landholder that lives in the area around the park, it is important that these infestations are recorded for effective management. If you do have small infestations on your property the weed can simply be removed by hand pulling the whole plant roots and all, for larger mature shrubs cutting the stork with a bow or chainsaw is enough to kill the weed. Do not burn piles of Sallow Wattle unless you are absolutely sure the area will be sprayed for germinated regrowth. If you have a large infestation on your property and you do not intend to graze the area effected, please contact Bob Wallace at Project Platypus on 03 53 58 4410.



**EQUIPMENT HIRE :** Check out our website at [www.platypus.org.au](http://www.platypus.org.au). for equipment hire prices. A 20% discount applies to all Landcare group members.

# SOUTHERN BROWN BANDICOOTS RECOVERY PROGRAM



Over the past three months, Project Platypus has been intensively surveying the Black Range near Stawell to ascertain the presence of Southern Brown Bandicoots. Using remote cameras that take a photograph when triggered by movement, forty-nine different camera locations have been surveyed with no Bandicoots recorded. Other animals commonly photographed included kangaroos and wallabies, reptiles, birds, Antechinus, brush tail possum, fallow deer, goats and cats.

It can now be proven fairly conclusively that Southern Brown Bandicoots are locally extinct in the Black Range. The last positive sightings pre-date the 2006 fires and it is postulated that after the fires the lack of habitat combined with predation by foxes and cats has resulted in the local extinction of the species.

Southern Brown Bandicoots are still relatively common in the Grampians National Park and fringe areas. The species was once commonly seen in the Black Range and had proven to be able survive predation by foxes and cats in the Black Range before the devastating 2006 fires. There is some hope that in the future a reintroduction can occur either by human intervention or the building of suitable vegetation links between the Black Range and Grampians

National Park to facilitate natural migration. A major component of the Bandicoot recovery project is a 1080 baiting program to control foxes. This program was planned to take place in and around the Black Range but due to no Bandicoots being found in the ranges the program will now take place to protect the remnant Bandicoot population around the Halls Gap zoo. The baiting program will comprise of thirty seven bait stations covering 1500 hectares of land between the Halls Gap zoo and Lake Fyans. The Parks Victoria fox baiting program within the national park will also be extended to include the area behind Pomonal and north to Halls Gap along the Mt William range. The Pomonal zoo trial program will be timed to coincide with the Parks Victoria program so both efforts will complement each other. **For further information on this project, or if you have seen the Southern Brown Bandicoot in your area, please contact Al Stephens on 5358 4410 or email on [allistair@platypus.org.au](mailto:allistair@platypus.org.au)**



## PERENNIAL PASTURE SYSTEMS - 2013

Rob Shea

The agenda for the coming year's PPS activities was commenced at a planning meeting in February. PPS started the year with a Lucerne seminar at Joel with leading speakers including Dr Bill Knipe from Forage Genetics Idaho in the United States. Bill presented the latest Lucerne research in America, while James Sewell from PPS Wrightsons will bring people up to date with the latest varieties suitable for this region. The final speaker Cam Conboy from Gorst Rural discussed management of lucerne after the very dry summer just experienced; a complimentary BBQ tea followed the day's proceedings. The seminar was held at the Joel Hall on Monday March 18<sup>th</sup> with about 50 in attendance.

A soil workshop is planned for Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup> of April at Elmhurst where DPI scientists will conduct a soil pit inspection and discuss the relationship between soil test results and physical soil characteristics. The day will finish with a presentation on the Victorian soil carbon project results, several PPS members had paddocks tested as part of the project. The workshop will commence at 3pm and conclude with a complimentary BBQ tea.

PPS is also commencing work on a new research project looking at the effectiveness of variable lime application technology. This project follows presentations at the 2012 annual PPS conference where examples of the technique's use in cropping paddocks were presented. Variable lime technology involves the testing of one hectare sections of paddock for soil pH and constructing maps of soil acidity. Lime is then applied at variable rates throughout the paddock according to the recommendations generated from the mapping instead of blanket rate applications. PPS will be testing if effectiveness and economic value in pastures throughout the planned trial. This project is supported by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and the Wimmera CMA.

PPS has recently completed the final report on the pasture comparison trials at Elmhurst (winter active fescue & phalaris), Jallukar grazing brome & phalaris) and Joel (Uplands cocksfoot and phalaris). The trials were funded through the MLA producer demonstration scheme and some interesting findings resulted from the trial paddocks. PPS will continue to use the trial paddocks to measure long term persistence of the sown varieties. The full report is available on the PPS website [www.perennialpasturesystems.com.au](http://www.perennialpasturesystems.com.au). The PPS committee is also working on the agendas for the annual study tour in winter and the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in September.



**For further information on Perennial Pasture Systems contact PPS project manager Rob Shea on 0438 521357 or email: [yadin@netconnect.com.au](mailto:yadin@netconnect.com.au)**



## UPPER WIMMERA LANDCARE GROUPS UPDATE

- Black Range:** President: Neil Marriott Secretary: Helen Rosenbaum
- Concongella:** President: Malcolm Nicholson Secretary: Phil & Trudy Hall
- Crowlands** President: Dennis Harrington Secretary: Harold Thomas
- Crowlands Landcare group were successful in their grant application to control Spiny Rush, in and around the Crowlands Landcare area.
- Elmhurst:** President: Bill Langcake Secretary: Christine Baines
- Elmhurst Landcare group discussed the legal requirements for baiting rabbits using 1080, the group were briefed about risk assessments, user declarations and proof of notification to surrounding landholders. The group discussed the next round of Community Landcare grants and would like to apply for Spiny Rush, riparian fencing, and pest animal control in the area.
- Great Western:** President: Mark Kindred Secretary: Paul Dakis
- Jallukar:** President: Terry May Secretary: Fred Rich
- The Jallukar Landcare group are concerned about African Weed orchid in the Jallukar Landcare area becoming more prolific. They discussed the possibility of installing a tap at the Millers creek reserve where they have recently installed picnic tables. The group are supportive of a proposed wild life art museum in the Pomonal area. The group discussed the Community Landcare grants with pest plants and animals being their main focus.
- Landsborough:** President: Daryl Leslie Secretary: Greg Dean
- Landsborough Landcare Group have been using the services of the Landmate crews to spot and spray Spiny Broom, Patterson's Curse and cut and paint Gorse. The group are using Project Platypus to spray more Patterson's Curse in the Landsborough district.
- Moyston:** President: Adam Merrick Secretary: Rosie Nater
- The Moyston Landcare group recently held an ACUP and 1080 handlers course. The group discussed ideas for a walk from Mt Ararat to Kalimna Falls, the Pacific Hydro planting with the school, clean up Australia Day the Moyston Easter Market stall. The group were updated about recent inspections in the area for rabbits and Bathurst Bur by the DPI. The group are developing a new brochure for potential Landcare group members. The group are purchasing and trialling cat traps for land holders to use.
- Navarre:** President: Shane Bibby Secretary: Richard & Liz Kelleher
- Northern Grampians:** President: Ray Graham Secretary: Judy Dunkley
- Stawell Urban:** President: Angela Baker Secretary: Cathy McDermott
- Stawell Urban Landcare Group recently received funding for their Nesting Box Project, through the Mazda Foundation grant. The group intend to install and monitor these nesting boxes to enhance the Iron Barks Walk. Neil McCumber was a guest speaker at the March meeting.
- If you would like to include more information about your group please send your article to Cathy McDermott at [admin@platypus.org.au](mailto:admin@platypus.org.au) or for further information contact Regional Landcare Facilitator, Bob Wallace 53584410.**



## GRANT INFORMATION DETAILS

Title/Provider	Grant Detail/ Aims	Closing Date	Value
<b>Small Grants Programs</b>	The principal purpose of this program is the protection and enhancement of eucalypts as a significant aspect of the natural environment and the provision of information or education about eucalypts. Through small grants the Trust will provide support to the community for the undertaking of eucalyptus education, promotion, cultivation, establishment and conservation. For more information contact the Regional Landcare Facilitator, Bob Wallace on 53584410 or visit the website at <a href="http://dahltrust.org.au/grants/">http://dahltrust.org.au/grants/</a>	1st May	\$15,000
<b>Inspiring Environmental Solutions</b>	Projects should enhance the environment in a public place, or undertake environmental activities for the benefit of the community. Projects should have a clear connection to the prosecuted offence, enable affected residents to have a greater connection to their local environment and engage directly with affected residents throughout the project. For more information contact Regional Landcare Facilitator, Bob Wallace on 53584410. or visit the website at : <a href="http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/inspiring-environmental-solutions">http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/inspiring-environmental-solutions</a>	Ongoing	various

# EVENTS CALENDAR

April 2013	
9	<b>Stawell Urban Landcare Group Meeting 7.30pm @ Project Platypus office</b>
10	<b>Carbon Farming Field Trip (Free)</b> 2.00pm to 5.30pm meet at Cavendish, Victoria for lunch. Participants will be split into two groups. Group 1 travel to Jigsaw Farm, Hensley Park/Group 2 travel to Branhholme. For bookings or for more information contact Bob Wallace on 5358 4410
10	<b>Native Vegetation &amp; Waterways Subcommittee meeting 7.30 pm @ Project Platypus office</b>
11	<b>Carbon Farming Field Trip (Free)</b> 10am to Bullock Hills (Victoria's first carbon farming initiative project). Hosts Peter & Christine Forster 1.00pm lunch at Ararat. For bookings or for more information contact Bob Wallace on 5358 4410
17	<b>PPS Soil Workshop</b> Elmhurst 3pm start A BBQ tea will be provided as part of the seminar. RSVP 0438 521 357 or <a href="mailto:yadin@netconnect.com.au">yadin@netconnect.com.au</a> by Monday 15th April.
May 2013	
14	<b>Stawell Urban Landcare Group Meeting 7.30pm @ Project Platypus Office</b>
23	<b>Green Eggs farm tour 8am-11am, Allanvale Road Great Western - register by 16th May 53584410</b>
24	<b>Wimmera Landcare Forum, Little Desert Nature Lodge for more details phone 53584410</b>
June 2013	
11	<b>Stawell Urban Landcare Group Meeting 7.30pm @ Project Platypus Office</b>
29	<b>Plantout 1 - Halls Gap</b>
July 2013	
6	<b>Plantout 2 - TBC</b>
13&14	<b>Plantout 3 - Navarre</b>
20	<b>Plantout 4 - Deep Lead</b>
27&28	<b>Plantout 5 - Elmhurst</b>

## PROJECT PLATYPUS COMMITTEE & STAFF MEMBERS

### Project Platypus Management Committee

Leanne Jackman, Chair (Northern Grampians Landcare Group)

Phil Hall, Vice-Chair (Concongella Landcare Group)  
Michael Greene, Treasurer (Elmhurst Landcare Group)  
Mark McKew, Secretary (Crowlands Landcare Group)  
Rosie Nater (Moyston Landcare Group)

Michael McMurtrie (Jallukar Landcare Group)  
Lachie Green (Jallukar Landcare Group)  
Ian Nicholson (Stawell Urban Landcare Group)  
Richard Kelleher (Navarre Landcare Group)  
Steven Start (Crowlands Landcare Group)

### Sub-Committee Members

Partnerships & Funding  
Native Vegetation & Waterways

Invasive Plants & Animals

Sustainable Agriculture

### Staff

Leigh Blackmore  
Brendan Barbetti  
David Margetson  
Bob Wallace  
Barry Curtis  
Allistair Stephens  
Bronwyn Bant  
Graham Pearson  
Catherine McDermott  
Dene Marshall

Manager  
Acting Manager/Project Officer  
Project Manager (Native Vegetation)  
Regional Landcare Facilitator (Sustainable Ag)  
Accounts and Payroll Officer  
Project Manager (Invasive Plant & Animal)  
Events Coordinator (Community Engagement)  
Works Crew Supervisor  
Administration Officer (Native Vegetation)  
Weed Control Officer

Sustainable Agriculture, Community Engagement, Partnerships  
& Funding Subcommittees  
Native Vegetation & Waterways Subcommittees  
Partnerships & Funding Subcommittee  
Sustainable Agriculture Subcommittee  
Invasive Plants & Animals, Native Vegetation & Waterways,  
Sustainable Agriculture, Community Engagement Subcommittees  
Partnerships & Funding Subcommittee  
  
Partnerships & Funding Subcommittee  
  
Invasive Plants & Animals Subcommittee

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This newsletter has been put together by staff of the Project Platypus Landcare Team with contributions from local Landcare group members. Please forward any contributions for future newsletters to Catherine McDermott at [admin@platypus.org.au](mailto:admin@platypus.org.au)

**Project Platypus Landcare Network**

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**PROJECT  
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UPPER WIMMERA LANDCARE



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