

Merry & BRIGHT



Project Platypus

Newsletter

of the Upper Wimmera Landcare Network



**PROJECT
PLATYPUS**
UPPER WIMMERA LANDCARE



Project Platypus mission is to support and empower the community to improve the environmental health of the Upper Wimmera Catchment while maintaining and improving productivity.

Summer Issue
45

Who is Project Platypus?

Project Platypus is a Landcare Network, established in 1994 when it became obvious that the huge land and water degradation problems in the area were too extensive to be managed by individual landholders and Landcare groups. Project Platypus acts as an umbrella organisation for the eleven Landcare groups of the Upper Wimmera Catchment to deliver large scale projects.

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Have you got an
email address??
If so please contact us
to receive
the newsletter by email.



hello

from the Landcare team

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Project Platypus Upper Wimmera Landcare Newsletter. In this edition you will find lots of information on events held in the latter part of 2015 including **this year's Plantout**.

Over the last few months many Landcare organisations will have held their Annual General Meeting (AGM), this includes Project Platypus, who held their AGM in October. For Project Platypus there will be a changing in the guard as two of our Board members will be standing down. We would like to say a heartfelt thankyou to Lachie Green and Richard Kelleher for putting in the hard yards and it shows in how well the organisation is operating. We would also like to congratulate Lachie on receiving a Nuffield Farming Scholarship to study strategies for reducing stress in free range hen systems, well done Lachie and best wishes with your studies. We welcome new Board members Tricia Sweeney and Angela Turrell and look forward to working with you both. We also said goodbye to long serving Manager Leigh Blackmore, we would like to thank Leigh for his dedicated service over the last eight years, his commitment to the organisation has been much appreciated and we are fortunate that he will continue as a member of our local landcare community. We would like to welcome Amanda Kilpatrick into the role of Manager, and look forward to a successful and long term working relationship.

Many Landcare groups will also have had a change in executive and we would like to thank all those outgoing executives (who all volunteer their time) and welcome new executives and look forward to the enthusiasm they bring.

This is also a time when landholders are faced with the perils of a long dry summer, **many farmers will struggle with below average yields** and below average rainfall. It is important to know that drought support is available and Landcare, as well as having a sustainable agricultural focus, is also recognised as a social network for farmers who often work in isolation, if you require assistance please contact your local Landcare group, more information is available on page 11.

It was very exciting when Project Platypus was presented with the Landcare Network Award by Her Excellency The Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria at the 2015 Victorian Landcare Award ceremony at Government House in Melbourne earlier this year. We believe the success of Project Platypus can be attributed to our community support, grass roots approach and our ability to relate to land managers and investors. We would like to extend a big thank you to all the Landcarers of the Upper Wimmera Catchment for their continued commitment and enthusiasm. Without such a strong Landcare community, this award **wouldn't have been possible**.

Lastly, the team at Project Platypus would like to wish you all a healthy and happy festive season. Thanks to all for a great year in landcare and look forward to a productive 2016.

Regards
Phil Hall
Chair

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Cover photo by Marty Schoo

We Farewell a Dedicated Manager



Leigh Blackmore

Project Platypus is saying “goodbye” to Leigh Blackmore as Manager, and we are fortunate that he will continue as a member of our local landcare community.

Leigh has been a quietly spoken Manager, but we could be sure that he was listening, problem solving, and that when he did speak, it was worth paying attention.

Leigh began with Project Platypus in 2009 in a casual role, soon after taking on the role of Manager to Project Platypus. He has taken the level of professionalism of



Project Platypus to a whole new level with his focus on policy and governance. Leigh’s energy and commitment over close to eight years in the role has earned him great respect in the community. His focus on ensuring landcare groups and individuals are heard, and actively shaping and guiding policy around that, has empowered local landcarers to achieve sustainable production and environmental outcomes.

One of Leigh’s great strengths has been creating strong and lasting partnerships between community, agencies, land managers and other government groups. Leigh has willingly given his time and knowledge to educating and building community capacity. His commitment to everything sustainable has created a valuable culture in the Project Platypus office, and the Upper Wimmera community that he, and we should be proud of.



Thankyou Leigh for your invaluable leadership, and we look forward to having our new manager, Amanda Kilpatrick, bringing her energy to achieve community and environmental outcomes into the future.



Small Landholder's Day

A Bit about the Small Landholders Day held by Moyston Landcare Group

Moyston Landcare Group recently organised and hosted a Small Landholder's Day, with sessions on Rabbit Control, Fire Readiness, Soils, Beekeeping, a Cheese Making demonstration and a Grasses & Weed ID Walk. The idea for the day came from a member who noted that there weren't any information sessions targeting small landholder in our area.

The sessions were all of a practical nature, a 1.5m deep soil pit was of particular interest as Clem Sturmfels could show participants what lies beneath the surface.

A free lunch was provided showcasing homemade or home grown ingredients. Those attending showed a lot of interest in holding another day next year. A variety of topics have been suggested with the focus to be **"What can I do with my land?"** The proposed timing is April/May 2016.

Anyone interested to be included in the email list should contact Rosie Nater at ianibs@skymesh.com.au



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Project Platypus AGM

The Project Platypus Annual General Meeting and Landcare works tour were held on Friday the 9th of October. At the AGM, we officially said goodbye to long serving Project Platypus Manager Leigh Blackmore, and welcomed Amanda Kilpatrick into the role. Board member Lachie Greene stood down to focus on his Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship. We wish Lachie all the best, and thank him for his contribution to the board. Richard Kelleher also stood down from the board, after four years of steering the strategic direction of Project Platypus as a valued board member. We welcomed new board members Ange Turrell from Jallukar Landcare and Tricia Sweeney from Navarre Landcare onto the board.

The Landcare works tour stopped in at the Iron Barks forest on the Stawell fringe where Bob Wallace spoke about the success of the Stawell Urban Landcare nest box project, and Stawell Urban Landcare member Julie Andrew spoke about the long running school Ironbark walk excursion they host annually.

From there, we visited Lake Fyans, where a West Australian native, the Blue Bell Creeper, has the potential to threaten the rare candy spider orchid found in the area. Project Platypus has received funding to spray the Blue Bell Creeper.

Finally, Bernie Rudolph led a tour of an erosion control site in the six mile creek catchment which was undertaken in 2008.



Welcome New Board Members



Angela Turrell

Ange is an accomplished marketing strategist, with over 30 years of advertising, marketing and insights experience, most recently with General Mills International (as Innovation Manager for Australia and Europe working from Switzerland). Currently, Ange is Marketing and Communication Manager for Grampians Community Health and is busy following her true passions: nature, art and a simple, gentle “country life”. It's long been an aim to be more involved with Project Platypus.



Tricia Sweeney

Tricia lives at Paradise with husband John, she has recently retired from off farm work and as a Support Worker with Wimmera Uniting care. Tricia has two children and five grandchildren and runs a prime lamb enterprise as well as producing White Suffolk seed stock. Tricia is a member of the Navarre Landcare group, a founding member of Paradise Sustainable Soils Group, an active member of Perennial Pastures Systems and Best Wool Best Lamb Group and a long time member of CFA. Tricia has had a long association with Landcare being a founding member and active participant of the Mudgegonga and District Landcare Group in the North East Catchment since 1993. She is looking forward to contributing as a board member of Project Platypus.



Landcare Forum Comes to the Wimmera

A Word About the Wimmera Regional Landcare Forum - July 2015

One of the main aims of the Wimmera Regional Landcare Forum was for Landcare groups to learn from and be inspired by each other. A large component of the day was allocated to giving participants the chance to network and share ideas. Recent Volunteering Western Victoria Regional Landcare award recipients Laharum Landcare Group kicked off proceedings by sharing some of their Landcare group's secrets to success, which included organising a range of events aimed at the larger community as well as school students.

Mike Nurse is the manager of the Southern Otway Landcare Network. Wimmera Landcarers were the first to hear about a framework Mike has designed that helps Landcare Groups and networks self-assess where their strengths and weaknesses in capacity lie; and secondly to identify areas for improvement. The logic behind the Landcare Resilience Framework is that if Landcare and its partners are better able to understand current capacity and the capacity building needs of Landcare Groups and Networks, then investment in

capacity needs can be more targeted and groups and networks will be better supported to deliver on Natural Resource Management outcomes.

Mikes presentation was well received and landcare staff across the Wimmera are happy to hear from groups who would like to trial the use of the framework.

To finish the day, Graeme Hand provided plenty to contemplate with his presentation "Improving soil health at a profit". Graeme's presentation provided an overview on profitable, regenerative management practices aimed at improving the health of stock, pastures and land; while increasing profit and managing workloads.

It was great for Landcarers from right across the Wimmera. We hope that the Wimmera Landcare community enjoyed their forum, and can return to their landcare groups with an array of fresh and inspiring ideas.

Article written by Bronwyn Bant - Events Coordinator.
Photos by Marty Schoo



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PERENNIAL PASTURE SYSTEMS

7th annual study tour

The Perennial Pasture Systems (PPS) group recently completed their 7th Annual Study Tour which took thirty five members for a weeklong visit to leading farms in New Zealand.

PPS conducted its first study tour in 2009 and it has ranged from one day visits to leading enterprises in Victoria to multi day interstate visits to S.A. and Tasmania; this year was the group's first overseas tour.

PPS President Wayne Burton commented that "the annual study tour is an important part of the PPS calendar; it a great learning experience as well as adding to the social fabric of the group".

PPS was fortunate to obtain assistance from Charlie de Fegely (a group member) who had great knowledge and contacts in NZ. Charlie's assistance was invaluable in assisting PPS Project Manager Rob Shea in planning the tour.

Wayne Burton also stated "it was great to have such a large group go to NZ, we all learnt a lot and will be producing a full report for the rest of our members".

PPS flew into Wellington for a free night before heading to the Masterton area for the first two days of farm visits. The first farm was the Warren family's Turanganui Romney Stud in South Wairarapa where they operate a large lamb, cattle trading and dairy cow enterprise. The group heard about the business including the comprehensive pedigree measurement in the stud and the impressive 170% lambing compared with the NZ average of 115%. A farm tour was then held with the magnificence of the views over Palliser Bay complimenting the productive pastures.

It was then onto Pahautea Partnership, an equity partnership dairy farm managed by Matt & Tracey Honeysett. Their business structure created a lot of interest as did the dairy system.

A big first day was completed with some jet boating on the Ruamahanga River before the PPS group were guests of the "Shepherds Group" (a mix of farmers and professionals servicing the farming sector) for dinner. An early start was needed on day two as the group's first visit was the hill country farm of the Wairere Romey Stud: a tour was taken along the ridges of the farm while observing

the high level of management accompanied by views of snow-capped mountains not far away from Wairere.

A drive down from the hill country led to the village of Wainuioru, where the group listened to Will Beetham in the local hall talking about his highly productive plantain based pasture system and his extensive record keeping vital to profitability of Beetham Pastoral.

The final stop for PPS on day two was the "Spring Valley" farm of Matt and Lynley Wyeth, where the group had lunch. A presentation by Matt was followed by Brian Eccles of Cash Manager Rural and a farm tour which rounded out the day. Spring Valley has an 1800 mm average yearly rainfall and has an intensive grazing system producing 10,000 lambs annually. A feature of the Wyeth's system was the indoor lambing of triplet bearing ewes and the large scale rearing of orphan lambs using colostrum from a nearby dairy farm.

The day at "Spring Valley" finished with a clay target and paintball challenge, the New Zealanders managed to win but official enquires showed the use of a steel clay target and frozen paintballs for the Australian's round in scenes reminiscent of the infamous underarm incident. The good humour of all participants, NZ beer and a spit roast dinner ensured that there were no international incidents.

On Wednesday the PPS tour headed for the South Island on the Cook Strait ferry where calm and picturesque sailing was enjoyed by all.

It was back to business on the Thursday with a visit to the Dawkins family property "The Pyramid" near the wine growing region of Blenheim. Chris Dawkins gave an entertaining talk before leading a farm tour around the property which included a recently acquired section which showed the country in a rundown state prior to weed control and pasture renovation. It was good to see the contrast so the group could understand what is needed to bring the country into full production. After travelling a bit further south the Avery farm "Bonavaree" was reached; where Doug Avery had presented at the PPS conference in August so everyone was keen to see their

operation. Fraser Avery gave a comprehensive overview of the farm before the group toured the lamb and trading operation conducted on lucerne pastures and hill country. The land type and rainfall was similar to that of many of the tour participants land in the upper Wimmera, so the Bonavaree farm visit created a lot of interest.

After leaving the Avery's it was a long but spectacular drive along the East Coast to Christchurch, a highlight of the tour especially for those of the group on their first overseas trip.

Friday was targeted for pasture research and the first stop was Lincoln University where Dr Derrick Moot held the group's attention with his presentation on lucerne systems. PPS was so impressed that they have started discussions to bring Derrick to their annual conference next year.

It was then onto the PGG Wrightson research facility where there was an inspection of individual grass plantings which were being field tested as one of the initial stages of new cultivar testing. A visit to a hybrid fodder crop testing trial was next before travelling to Marshdale where new pasture mixes are trialled under paddock conditions.

A dinner and review session completed the day as tour participants started to come to terms with the amount of information that was gleaned during the week. The group had a chance to walk around Christchurch on the Saturday morning before the flight home and it became clear just how much devastation was caused by the 2012 earthquake.

Although the tour was funded by the tour participants; PPS did receive support from Rural Finance, PGG Wrightson, Allflex, Quality Wool and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority through the Federal Govt National Landcare Program which helped offset some of the costs.

PPS President Wayne Burton summed up the study tour by saying "it was a huge learning experience for us and the hospitality of the New Zealanders allowed us to visits farms at the highest end of the scale, we will take many lessons from them as well as being inspired by their dedication and pride in the agriculture".

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State Landcare Award

Project Platypus was presented with the Landcare Network Award by Her Excellency The Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria at the 2015 Victorian Landcare Award ceremony at Government House in Melbourne .

The Victorian Landcare Awards are held every two years to **celebrate the achievements of landcarers in Victoria**. “It’s a welcome chance for us to say **thankyou to them.**” said Minister for Environment, Climate Change.

In Victoria, there are currently 67 Landcare networks, comprised of Landcare and other community-based natural resource management groups that work together at a broader landscape level, so to be recognised at a state level given the number of networks is a great achievement.

Over the life of Project Platypus approximately 2800 hectares of land has been revegetated with more than one million indigenous plants. On private land more than 3200 hectares of native vegetation has been fenced out to be managed for conservation.

Each year more than 100 landholders work on revegetation, remnant vegetation protection, weed and rabbit control, erosion control and sustainable agriculture projects. Added to this large numbers of students and community volunteers assist on these projects each year.

The native vegetation protection program undertakes 200 hectares of revegetation and 100 hectares of remnant vegetation protection work each year.

Project Platypus has helped shaped a culture of farmers in the upper Wimmera who regularly undertake environmental **protection works with the aim of improving the region’s** production capacity and general environmental health.

We also have a broad strategic objective to involve the wider community in Landcare activities. This means lots of farm visits, workshops, guest speakers and events for women in agriculture. The community plants outs, often with as many as 250 volunteers, are also a great way to reach out to people and give them a chance to get involved.

Further to winning the Wimmera Regional Landcare Network Award, Project Platypus volunteer Callum Nicholson received a Highly Commended Certificate for the Young Landcare Leader Award. Callum has been instrumental in organising a Plantout event each year over the last three years, and has helped us attract a new and large younger volunteer base from Melbourne.

Project Platypus would also like to congratulate local farmer Simon Brady for receiving the sustainable farm practices award for the Wimmera region. **Simon Brady’s Jallukar Park enterprise** is recognised as a leading example of how to achieve continual increases in production while demonstrating sustainable farming practices.



Thankyou

We would like to extend a big thank you to the Landcarers of the Upper Wimmera Catchment for their continued commitment and enthusiasm. Without such a strong Landcare community, this award wouldn’t have been possible.

Wimmera Regional Landcare Award Winners

Project Platypus Upper Wimmera Landcare would like to congratulate the Wimmera's Regional Landcare Award winners, announced as part of the [2015 Volunteering Recognition Awards!](#)

- **Callum Nicholson - Young Landcare Leader**
- **Laharum Landcare Group - Community Landcare Group**
- **Mark McKew - Individual Landcarer**

Callum Nicholson - Young Landcare leader

Over the last three years Callum has brought hundreds of young Melbourne-based, inter-state and international volunteers to join forces with locals involved in Project Platypus community tree planting activities in western Victoria.

He has achieved this by combining Landcare activities with 'Bush Doof' outdoor dance parties. Callum has developed social media and webpage resources to promote the Plant Out events, as well as flyers which were distributed to Youth Hostels and Backpacker accommodation all over Melbourne.

As a result of Callum's initiative, participation in large scale revegetation activities has increased, Project Platypus has linked with a new demographic, and urban-based young people have gained firsthand experience of farm life.

Plant Outs have helped these young people understand the challenges many farmers face, breaking down negative stereotypes and perceptions of farmers as bad land managers.

Importantly, Callum has been able to give hundreds of young people the opportunity to be proactive and be part of the solution to environmental problems about which they care about deeply.



Mark McKew - Individual Landcarer

Mark has championed the Landcare movement in our region by promoting sustainable agriculture, conservation grazing, the value of group-based projects and learning.

Fellow Landcarers have benefited from Mark's long-running involvement with Project Platypus, the Perennial Pasture Systems group and Crowlands Landcare Group, which he has supported strongly while running fine wool and prime lamb production as well as cattle near Mt Cole in the Pyrenees Ranges.

Mark has supported revegetation projects to protect and improve biodiversity. He has established perennial pastures for improved pasture and practiced conservation grazing by late-start deferred and rotational grazing.

His steep hill country has been managed to promote the establishment of native pastures. Bare hilltops and active erosion gullies on his property were fenced out and revegetated.

Mark has coordinated the control of problem weeds like gorse in his Landcare group area. He also had greenhouse gas audits done on his farm, with the aim of being carbon neutral.



Laharum Landcare Group - Community Landcare Group

Laharum Landcare Group has been an extremely important contributor to the collective Wimmera Landcare effort over many years.

The presence and passion of the group was extremely important in the aftermath of the 2014 Northern Grampians fires.

The group continues to deliver a large scale Sallow Wattle control project, high quality community events such as bat awareness nights, effective partnerships with a range of local organisations, and strong support for surrounding groups through the Local Landcare Facilitator based at Laharum.

Thanks a million

Plantout 2015



Project Platypus would again like to extend a heartfelt thankyou to this years Plantout volunteers, who braved wind, rain and cold weather (and the occasional day of sunshine) to plant over 20,000 trees across the upper Wimmera Catchment. This could not be achieved without your help and is the result of a collaborative effort between local Landcare Groups, Project Platypus Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and the Federal Government. Many thanks to the landholders for hosting the Plantouts, to Livefast Cafe, Red Rock Olives and lead Plantout Organiser at Project Platypus Al Stephens for delivering four fantastic events.



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Drought Support

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
FARMER
HEALTH

The National Centre for Farmer Health website has a page dedicated to support during drought

For information on emotional and social wellbeing, climate information, Victorian emergency water supply maps, farm business support services & rural support organisations visit <http://www.farmerhealth.org.au/drought-support>

The Wimmera Development Association website is another excellent site; visit <http://wda.org.au/special-projects/building-resilience-in-farming-vasp/67-building-resilience-in-farming>. The Wimmera Development Association has been appointed to deliver the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership (VASP) Project "Building Resilience in Farming." The regional project has been developed and auspiced by West Wimmera Shire Council and will provide a link between existing agricultural networks, councils and regional organisations, to share and promote sustainability and adaptation information to the region. A program of forums and activities are planned to build our regional capacity to grow agriculture - the economic driver of the Wimmera Southern Mallee.

There is a regular and useful Building Resilience in farming newsletter and calendar of events which you can subscribe to. For all the details, visit <http://wda.org.au/brif>.



Nesting Boxes Available

Project Platypus has nesting boxes available for free to landholders that have completed revegetation projects through Project Platypus and the Wimmera CMA. The nesting boxes are also available to members of the public at a small cost, to cover materials - \$15 for a small box, \$20 for a medium and \$30 for a large. The nesting boxes are excellent quality and were made by students from the Stawell Secondary College. Funding for this project was made available through the Wimmera Regional Community Grants.

The nesting boxes have been made for the following species...

SMALL – Feather tail / Squirrel / Sugar glider, owlet-night jar and tree creeper.

MEDIUM – Pardalote, Brush tailed Phascogale, Eastern and Western Pygmy possum, Red Rumped (Green grass) Parrot, Eastern and Crimson Rosella.

LARGE – Common ring tail, Common Brush tail, Gang Gangs, Yellow Tail (Black) Cockatoos and Rainbow Lorikeets.

The nesting boxes come with site selection and installation instructions.

If you are interested please contact Bob Wallace (Regional Landcare Facilitator) on (03) 53 58 4410.

Water Your Trees

Water your trees to give them a fighting chance this summer. Project Platypus have a tandem trailer with an 800 litre water tank available for all Landholders to borrow, to water trees over the summer. The trailer is available for **FREE** to Landcare members. If you are interested in borrowing the trailer please contact :

Bob Wallace (Regional Landcare Facilitator) on 03 5358 4410.





Established Revegetation Site Enhancement & Management

Established revegetation site enhancement and management

Revegetation projects are completed for a variety of reasons and deliver multiple benefits regardless of the initial reason for the planting. The obvious purpose for planting a corridor or larger areas of trees are for stock shelter and conservation benefits but there are more subtle reasons also; linking areas of remnant vegetation, dividing a paddock and planting certain species to benefit a particular animal. Whatever the reason a landholder has for initiating a revegetation project it means more trees across our landscape which is a win for everybody.

The initial planting of a revegetation site may start out like the frame work of a building; providing the basis for all other things to be built on. A building is completed with the addition of cladding, roofing and all the finer details that make it a functional and aesthetically pleasing; revegetation sites are much the same. The planting of additional species to recreate the different levels of vegetation (grasses and herbs through to the addition less common larger plants) and installation of habitat in the form of nesting boxes, ground debris and litter will build upon the frame work of established trees and shrubs to complete a site as a self-sustaining and functioning ecosystem that may in years to come be a reproduction of what vegetation was on the site prior to European settlement.

Enhancement of existing revegetation sites

- ◆ Supplementary planting of additional plants to replace any plants lost in initial planting.
- ◆ Enhancement planting of understorey plants and herbs to build up natural biodiversity
- ◆ Address any upstream issues such as soil erosion and weed issues that will adversely impact the site in the future
- ◆ install nesting boxes of varying sizes (contact the Project Platypus office) and provide habitat for ground dwelling animals in the form of conserving or bringing in fallen timber, rocks and ground cover.
- ◆ Consider expanding sites and / or linking to other sites with additional plantings to encourage the natural flow of flora and fauna across the landscape. The shape of a site will also affect its suitability for habitat and a properly functioning ecosystem. Long linear sites of minimal width (20 metres for example) will have on both sides a large area of the site exposed to weather, herbicide drift, invasive plants / animals and stock and will have **a greater impact from what is known as the 'edge effect'**. The wider or larger a site is will negate this effect and provide areas away from the margin without the adverse effects of surrounding cleared farmland.
- ◆ Maintain control of invasive plants and animals by direct control measures (herbicide, fumigation etc.) and by managing harbour through grazing and burning.
- ◆ Maintain fencing to control access of stock to areas.

Management of existing revegetation sites

Phalaris is an issue in the majority of revegetation sites in our area and depending on the purpose of the planting can be either a bonus or a problem. If the site is for example a corridor of trees dividing a paddock that will be used for stock shelter and crash grazing when the trees mature then a good coverage of Phalaris will provide feed and shelter for stock but will compete with trees and slow their development. If the site is for conservation benefits and the intention is to re-establish a naturally diverse and healthy vegetation community that mirrors pre European vegetation then all invasive species need to be excluded and Phalaris needs to be controlled pre planting and the site maintained. Dense areas of Phalaris and vegetation can also provide harbour for rabbits and foxes. This negative is outweighed by the **positive benefits to production and conservation (see "Benefits of trees for farm productivity" fact sheet in the publications section of our website) and needs to be** taken into account when condemning an area as just being a home to feral animals. Areas need to be actively managed like any other part of the farm with regular monitoring of invasive plants and animals and appropriate control measures put in place.

Grazing of revegetation sites is generally permitted and encouraged as a management option once the trees are mature enough not to be damaged by stock. When you can graze an area will obviously depend on the site location, species planted and seasonal conditions but as a general rule if the trees canopy is above the height of the grazing animal then the trees should cope. It is important that revegetation areas are not grazed too hard to deplete the ground cover too much (maintain 70% or higher), over grazing will leave the soil open to erosion and weed incursion. This is especially important for sites that are on slopes or drainage lines that may be more susceptible to soil erosion. Crash grazing is exactly that, a short period of intense grazing to reduce the amount of standing feed to cut down on fuel for the fire season but also to keep the feed fresh and palatable. Revegetation areas are handy for lambing and sheep off shears but keep a close eye on them and pull them out if trees start to be damaged and ground cover is starting to be depleted. Kangaroos are worth a mention here as they are becoming prolific across the landscape and can damage revegetation sites if the numbers are excessive. Keep an eye on things and get a destruction permit to keep the numbers in check.

Fuel reduction for the fire season should be a priority for all established revegetation areas, particularly corridors that follow drainage and fence lines as fire will damage fencing and trees take a lot longer to replace that pasture. Fuel can be reduced by grazing and low intensity burning when the conditions are right in the spring or late autumn. As a general rule the same as grazing, if the tree canopy is above animal grazing height (1.5m for sheep) or around five years old then a cool and slow burn will reduce fuel nicely. This will also freshen up the Phalaris and assist natural recruitment of established trees by providing favourable conditions for seed germination.

Access for firefighting and stock needs to be incorporated into the initial design of fencing or added in when the need is identified. Long linear corridors that follow a creek or drainage line without regular crossing points will hamper firefighting efforts and needs to be considered. Gates for stock access and for weed control etc. need to be in place also.

Firewood removal may be possible in years to come when trees have matured but to enhance the habitat value of an area of vegetation it is great to leave fallen timber on the ground and to even bring in hollow logs and fallen timber to provide habitat.

Black Wattles have a reputation for dying and falling over after 10 – 15 years making the area untidy, providing harbour for rabbits and damaging fences. They are in fact an important pioneer species of healthy ecosystems being able to grow fast and put nitrogen into the soil to the benefit of other plants. Dead Black Wattle trees provide great habitat for native animals and insects so if rabbits can be kept in check these piles of habitat are of great value to native species.

On Ground Works

NATIVE VEGETATION: by Allistair Stephens

All planting for the 2015 season was completed by August with the last remaining sites being finished off by our Green Army team. We were very economical this year with all of our trees that were ordered finding homes before the weather warmed up and dried out **too much. In previous years, remaining trees have been handed out to the community through our annual "free trees" day** which is a great tool for recruiting new projects for the following season. With all trees placed this year a free tree event was not possible and with plenty of potential 2016 projects on the books already this has turned out alright. It is planned that the free trees day will continue into the future when surplus trees are available but it will need to be done as soon as possible after all project sites are completed to give the trees the best chance of establishing where they are planted before the season dries out too much.

Numbers of participants for this year's Plantouts were comparable to previous years with the usual faces returning again this year to help get trees into the ground. Of the 131 volunteers that participated this year, about 13 were new faces which is great and it is hoped that the positive experience gained over the four events for these new participants will see them returning again next year.

On top of the 38,400 trees planted this year through our own projects, 10,040 additional plants were contract planted by a team of 5 casual employees for the Wimmera CMA waterways program in the upper catchment. This brings the grant total of trees planted by Project Platypus in the upper catchment this year to 48,440 which is a respectable total.

Next year's revegetation season is shaping up to be a beauty with 21,080 ordered for 16 sites already with another 26,760 stems on three sites possible depending on the approval of a grant from the federal government. One of these sites is a massive 42 ha and 13,920 stems on steep hill country which will be a two day planting event if the grant is successful.

INVASIVE PLANTS & ANIMALS : by Loki McIntyre

There have been a few changes with staff on the Invasive Plants and Animals team since the last newsletter update. Loki McIntyre has joined the team coordinating field works, mapping and assisting in the office as the Invasive Plants and Animals Coordinator. John Spackman has also joined the team working in the field with Invasive Plants and Animals and also revegetation projects.

It's been a difficult spray season this year with the drier winter months and plant species going dormant a lot earlier than previous years. In Spring we continued our annual work on Bridal Creeper control in Jallukar Forest and St John's Wort up on the Ararat Hills for Parks Victoria. The Jallukar control program, which has been running for several years, is starting to show some real gains for this **significant area of remnant vegetation. Control works up in the Ararat Hills on public land for St John's Wort has also seen** follow up treatment. The infestation up there is proving hard to keep on top of, so next year Project Platypus hope to engage the Ararat Rural City Council, Landcare Groups and private landholders to obtain funding to broaden the attack in 2016. If anyone would like to be a part of this they can contact Loki at the Project Platypus office.

Control works for One Leaf Cape Tulip and Bridal Creeper were carried out along Mt William creek south of Dadswells Bridge for the Northern Grampians Landcare Group as an extension of work over the previous two years. We estimate the Bridal Creeper infestation along the creek has been reduced by about 80%.

Moyston Chilean Needle Grass was again mapped and treated in October/November. This year there has been a more coordinated approach between Project Platypus, Moyston Landcare Group, Ararat City Council and the CFA. Mapping has indicated a massive reduction in plants numbers around the reserve and also in satellite outbreaks. We did notice a few areas where the Chilean Needle **Grass wasn't mapped in previous years, but this is suspected to be due to slashing and the missed opportunity last year to map** it accurately. Less than 100Lt of spray was used this year and the majority of plants were chipped and removed by hand ensuring no seed from this years growth.

Work was carried out on the Western Highway east of Stawell to help control rabbits on the easements both side of the road. The field crew treated over 300 entrances and the area was mapped as part of the agreement with VicRoads.

Woody weeds has been a focus of the Stawell Urban Landcare Groups for the third year running. This work has mainly been targeting broom species in and around the township. Work was also carried out in a reserve on Newington Rd in Stawell for cape tulip, bridal creeper and broom species. Treatment has produced good results on flaxleaf broom and boneseed, but the cape broom is showing some resilience to our methods of control. Project Platypus will look into other options to control this species of broom. Small plants will continue to grow in the coming years, but the cost and time to treat these species around Stawell will reduce each year. **It's important that follow up work continues so past works and the funding obtained for it isn't wasted.**

Spiny Rush near Gibbling's Bridge at Lake Fyans/Pomonal will be treated again soon. The spray program last year put out around 40,000Lt of spray which was followed up with the landholder burning a large portion of the infested area. Burning the site has made **this year's follow up control work easier due to clearer access and reduced plant size. We hope to be able to finish off the** initial treatment for the whole site and also carry out follow up works on the burnt areas. Loki has also been in discussion with a landholder downstream on the options of mechanical removal which will be interesting to observe. We hope to clear around 20hectares of spiny rush from the infested land and follow it up with revegetation to make sure soil integrity remains stable.



Landcare Group Activities

Black Range: President: Neil Marriott Secretary: Helen Rosenbaum
Black Range Landcare group have been fumigating rabbit harbour and spot spraying Bridal Creeper. Several group members have been planting tube stocks of indigenous plants. The group were able to get help with tree planting from the year 11 environmental sciences class from Melbourne Girls College.

Concongella: President: Malcolm Nicholson Secretary: Mark McLean
Concongella Landcare group held several workshops over the last 12 months. Two workshops were held to help landholder's prepare for a long dry summer. A third workshop held at 'Overdale' featured guest speakers from DELWP talking about 'farm biosecurity'. Concongella were able to assist a local landholder with a revegetation project. Funding for the revegetation project was secured through the Wimmera Regional Community Grants program. Other projects undertaken by the Concongella Landcare Group included rabbit harbour destruction and weed eradication, the money for this work was made available to the group through the Victorian Landcare Grants. Concongella Landcare Group successfully hosted the Wimmera Regional Landcare Forum at the Joel Joel Hall.

Crowlands President: Rod Vearing Secretary: Harold Thomas
Crowlands Landcare group have undertaken extensive pest plant and animal control work with the help of the Hopkins Landmate crew. Rabbit fumigation was the focus along roadsides around the Crowlands area. Several workshops were held over the year focusing on increasing farm production. As part of Plantout, the group, in partnership with Project Platypus assisted Graham Price to plant 1500 trees on his property, funding for Plantout was made available through the Wimmera Regional Community Grants. A Grose control project in the Warrak area was undertaken by the group through the Victorian Landcare Grants Program and an action planning workshop was held with Leigh Blackmore. The Wimmera **Regional Landcarer Award was won by Crowland's Landcare member Mark McKew.**

Elmhurst: President: Michael Roberts Secretary: Mandy Preston
Elmhurst Landcare group conducted their annual Rabbit Busters project.. The group coordinated their own 1080 baited carrot, pindone and fox off **campaign. This project was coordinated by the group's vermin committee. The group have undertaken Spiny Rush control, this project involved several large scale infestations of Spiny Rush. Funding for the Spiny Rush project was made possible through the Wimmera Regional Community Grants. The group completed harbour destruction work with funding obtained through the Victorian Landcare Grants.**

Great Western: President: Mark Kindred Secretary: Paul Dakis
No action

Jallukar: President: Michael McMurtrie Secretary: Phil Williams
Jallukar Landcare group assisted a Landholder in their group area with an extensive Spiny Rush control project. Funding for this control work was obtained through the Victorian Landcare Grants program. Members of Jallukar Landcare group were involved in the Mt William creek walk. Group members were able to assist the walking party with camping sites and logistical support. Jallukar Landcare group hosted a Plantout event, where group members provided morning tea. The group were able to help the Landholder secure funding for the Plantout event through the Wimmera Regional Community grants program.

Landsborough: President: Daryl Leslie Secretary: Greg Dean
No action.

Moyston: President: Roger Spratt Secretary: Rosie Nater
The group has had another busy year. After a very dry winter and spring, the CNG mapping needed to be carried out a month earlier than normal. All areas have now been sprayed, with the help of a Communities for Nature grant, showing a considerable reduction in area. Spiny Rush was also targeted. The January fire impacted on many landholders, large and small. The group assisted where they could and were part of the Blaze Aid catering roster – supplying an evening meal fortnightly to the volunteers. For the February meeting the Blaze Aid team were invited to join us for a **BBQ and a tour of Daryl and Anne Marshall's vintage caterpillar bulldozers. The group again had a display at the Moyston Easter Market and also hosted the April Community Dinner. Members assisted with two small plantings, one with the Moyston Primary School students and staff on a fire affected property and the other a community planting behind the Recreation Reserve. Whole community activities are important to the group and which lead to the group hosting a successful Small Landholders Day.**

Navarre: President: Shane Bibby Secretary: Richard & Liz Kelleher
No action

Northern Grampians: President: Kevin Jess Secretary: Leanne Jackman
Northern Grampians Landcare group assisted a local landholder with a revegetation project through the Wimmera Regional Community Grants. The group have been addressing weed issues around their area, spraying bridal creeper, cape tulip and fumigating the odd warren. Funding for the weed work came from the Communities for Nature Grant; part of this community engagement project involved a tour of the area to look at potential projects for future weed control as well as an erosion control **project near Mt Drummond.**

Stawell Urban: President: Mandy Smith Secretary: Cathy McDermott
The group held the Box Ironbarks walk for grade 3 students in September. Working bees continue to be the focus with maintenance and a clean up around Federation Park being undertaken, while other activities included participating in Clean Up Australia day and rubbish collection along the Western Highway as part of Adopt-a-Highway. **The group had great success with it's Nesting Box program with sightings of a feathertail glider making its home in one of the boxes. Funding has been applied for to continue with this program. SULC engaged the services of Project Platypus to undertake Broom control work around Stawell as part of the Victorian Landcare Grant.**

Crowlands Landcare Group Celebrates 21 years



Crowlands Landcare Group celebrated 21 years of Landcare at the Crowlands hall on Friday the 13th of November. The celebration included a BBQ dinner Crowlands Landcare group members past and present talked about the Landcare groups many achievements, and a slide show was presented at the gathering. Former group members, current and former Project Platypus managers and representatives from the Wimmera CMA and Greening Australia attended. Long term members Paul and Wendy Harrington (pictured) were recognised with a presentation of life membership. Participants were given a tree and a mug to commemorate the event. Approximately 50 people attended the celebration. Project Platypus would like to congratulate Crowlands Landcare group, and acknowledge the dedication and **commitment to Landcare by the group's members.**



Events Calendar

FEBRUARY

1	Board Meeting 7.30pm to 9.30pm at Project Platypus office
2	Invasive Plants & Animals Sub-Committee Meeting 7.00pm to 9.00pm at Project Platypus Office
8	Partnerships & Funding Sub-Committee Meeting 5.30pm to 7.30pm at Project Platypus Office
15	Native Vegetation & Waterways Sub-Committee Meeting 7.30pm to 9.00pm at Project Platypus Office
17	Community Engagement Sub-Committee Meeting 4.00pm to 6.00pm at Project Platypus Office
29	Sustainable Agriculture Sub-Committee Meeting 5.30pm to 7.30pm at Project Platypus Office

Grant Details

Title/Provider	Grant Detail/ Aims	Closing Date	Value
Ian Potter Foundation	Our environment and conservation program area aims to support Australian urban and rural communities to better manage our natural resources and pre-serve biodiversity in the face of challenges such as land degradation, limited water resources and climate change. The program considers large grants (\$100,000 and over) with two themes fostering biodiversity and water and /or land management	11th Dec 2015	\$100,000

Committees & Staff

The Board - Project Platypus

Phil Hall, Chairman
 Leanne Jackman, Secretary
 Michael Greene, Treasurer
 Angela Turrell
 Mark McKew
 Rosie Nater
 Michael McMurtrie
 Ian Nicholson
 Tricia Sweeney
 Rod Vearing

Concongella Landcare Group
 Northern Grampians Landcare Group
 Elmhurst Landcare Group
 Jallukar Landcare Group
 Crowlands Landcare Group
 Moyston Landcare Group
 Jallukar Landcare Group
 Stawell Urban Landcare Group
 Navarre Landcare Group
 Crowlands Landcare Group

Sub-Committee Members

Partnerships & Funding
 Native Vegetation & Waterways

Invasive Plants & Animals (IPA)

Sustainable Agriculture

Community Engagement

Angela Turrell, Michael Greene, Michael McMurtrie, Phil Hall
 Rod Vearing, Rosie Nater, Phil Hall, George Holden, Phil Williams, Luke Austin (WCMA), Peter Start,
 Michael Roberts, Mandy Smith, Allistair Stephens, Bob Wallace
 Ian Nicholson, Rosie Nater, Michael McMurtrie, Neil Marriott, Wendy Marriott, David Handscombe
 Kevin Spence, Shane Molloy, Ross McGregor, George Holden, Deidre Andrews, Mark Farrer,
 Peter Brazier, Michael Roberts, John Stevens, Loki McIntyre, Allistair Stephens
 Leanne Jackman, Mark McKew, Rosie Nater, Tricia Sweeney, Steph Arnts, Rob Shea, Bronwyn Bant,
 Joel Boyd, Mal Nicholson, Phil Hall, Bob Wallace
 Rosie Nater, Tricia Sweeney, Madelene Townsend, Mandy Smith, Lynley Hoiles, Bronwyn Bant
 Cathy McDermott, Bob Wallace,

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 Allistair Stephens
 Bronwyn Bant
 Loki McIntyre
 Dene Marshall
 John Spackman
 Catherine McDermott

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 Events Coordinator
 Invasive Plants & Animals Coordinator
 Weed Control Supervisor
 Weed Control Operator
 Administration Officer/Landmate Coordinator

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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 cath@platypus.org.au

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