

# *The Journey*

**Project Platypus and Landcare  
in the Upper Wimmera Catchment**







### **Acknowledgements**

The publication of this booklet was made possible with funds from the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority for the Celebration of 25 Years of Landcare in Victoria.

Jane Marriott from Project Platypus wrote and collated the Project Platypus history with editing by Phil Williams and others. Members of Landcare Groups who researched and wrote their histories for this publication - Alan Green, Annette May, Michael Greene, Rosie Nater, George Holden, Harold Thomas, Liz Kelleher, Rob Shea and others are thanked for their valuable contribution.

In publishing this history of the organisation, Project Platypus recognises the hundreds of people who have been involved in many ways in the Project Platypus and Landcare journey.

### **Photo Credits**

Photos by Project Platypus staff, Management Committee and Landcare group members. Front cover photo by David Fletcher.



# Contents

## *Part 1 – History and Development of the Project Platypus Organisation 1994-2012*

1.1	Beginnings.....	4
1.2	Project Platypus Management Committee .....	6
1.3	Project Platypus Staff .....	9
1.4	Sponsors, Funding and Partnerships .....	11
1.5	Volunteers and Works Teams .....	14
1.6	Project Platypus Projects.....	16
	Integrated Sub Catchment works - Astons, Six Mile, Mt Drummond, Glendhu Platypus, Bandicoots & Biodiversity Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink Weed Control	
1.7	Engaging the Community .....	21
1.8	Plantouts.....	24
1.9	Reflections on Project Platypus and Landcare.....	29

## *Part 2 – History of Landcare Groups in the Upper Wimmera Catchment 1987-2012*

2.1	Moyston Landcare Group .....	30
2.2	Black Range Land Management Group .....	32
2.3	Concongella Landcare Group.....	34
2.4	Northern Grampians Landcare Group .....	36
2.5	Great Western Landcare Group .....	38
2.6	Navarre Landcare Group .....	40
2.7	Jallukar Landcare Group .....	42
2.8	Elmhurst Landcare Group .....	44
2.9	Stawell Urban Landcare Group .....	46
2.10	Crowlands Landcare Group.....	48
2.11	Landsborough Landcare Group.....	49
2.12	Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group.....	50
2.13	Perennial Pasture Systems .....	52
2.14	Project Platypus and Landcare Milestones .....	53

# 1.1 Beginnings

## Issues...



*Steep bare, overgrazed hills causing erosion and salinity*



*Massive erosion problems, silting streams, reducing productivity*



*Saline discharge areas with low production values*



*Vast areas of sub catchments needing land rehabilitation works*



*Multiple issues rabbits, weeds, erosion, loss of biodiversity - ripe for a project!*

The Wimmera River in Western Victoria forms part of the Murray Darling Basin. It is a large land locked system with its source in the Mount Cole Range above Elmhurst and terminates at Lake Hindmarsh and Wyperfeld National Park beyond Lake Albacutya. The Upper Wimmera Catchment refers to the 3,027km<sup>2</sup> catchment area upstream of where the Mt William Creek adjoins the Wimmera River near Dadswells Bridge.

The main land uses in the region are mixed farming, mostly sheep and dryland cropping, but also includes enterprises such as grapes, olives, forestry, vegetable production, cut flowers and other livestock such as goats, cattle, pigs and poultry. The population of the Upper Wimmera is estimated to be around 15,000 people with over 800 farming families and a population of 6000 in the largest town of Stawell.

The region is home to an extensive array of flora and fauna including a large number of threatened and endangered species. Since European settlement, private land has been subject to significant clearing of native vegetation, primarily for agriculture and also gold mining, which has resulted in numerous environmental issues. These include loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, salinity, loss of soil and soil fertility and reduced water quality.

Landcare in Victoria was established in 1986 by a group of farmers in Winjallock near St Arnaud to encourage a concerted response to land degradation and was a formal recognition of a movement that had been evolving for many years. Initially the focus was on planting trees, reflecting Landcare's origins in the Farm Tree Groups that sprang up in Victoria in the 70's and early 80's. Over its 25 years Landcare has engaged the support of thousands of Victorians and more than 700 groups work together to shape the future of Victoria's land, biodiversity and waterways with a broad focus on sustainable management.

In 1994 when Landcare in Victoria was 8 years old, the movement had been embraced in the Upper Wimmera catchment by rural communities centred in Moyston, Elmhurst, the Black Range, Concongella, Great Western, Jallukar, Navarre, Crowlands and by the Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group. These local Landcare groups met regularly

and undertook on-ground works with grants mainly through state government funding, primarily the Land Protection Incentives Scheme. Works included pest plant and animal control, revegetation, salinity control and erosion control works.

However, Landcare groups were struggling to maintain their enthusiasm, because the tasks of applying for and administering grants as well as participating in the labour and management component of projects could become overwhelming. The workload of an active group could be so onerous it became a disincentive to take on major or more projects. Mary Bignell and Dave Munday, facilitators from the Dept Natural Resources and Environment, Barry Clugston from the Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group and a number of far sighted Landcare members saw the benefits of establishing an umbrella group to take on some of the grant application and project management tasks. This group could provide a broader and prioritised focus for potential projects to best address the land degradation issues across the whole of the Upper Wimmera Catchment.

During 1994 regular meetings of representatives of all the Upper Wimmera Landcare groups, Julian King and Alex Arbuthnot from the VFF and DNRE staff discussed how such an organisation could work. It is a testament to the commitment and enthusiasm of this group that by June 1995, after numerous meetings, many late nights and a lot of hard work, Project Platypus was born. The organisation now had a clear and unique identity - the platypus symbolism suggested by Barry Clugston reflected the proposed land rehabilitation works which would improve the environment and water quality for platypus and guarantee their long term survival as well as the long term health and future of the rural communities. The





## 1.2 Project Platypus Management Committee



Inaugural President Michael McMurtrie and George Holden



Great Western farmer Bill Kilpatrick at a Landcare display



Michael Greene on his Elmhurst farm Karingal



Phil Williams took on many roles including here as MC at a Jallukar Plantout



Alan Green showing a visiting group some of the improvements on his Great Western farm

Translating a good idea into a reality doesn't just happen and the idea of forming an umbrella group to represent regional Landcare Groups was a novel concept in 1994. Fortunately the region had enough people with a passion for the idea, the environment and Landcare to turn the idea into a reality.

The Project Platypus Management Committee has been the driving force for the organisation for 18 years, developing the structure of the organisation and overseeing its direction and operations.

The basic role and structure of the PP Management Committee evolved over the first few years and has been reviewed at regular intervals to respond to changing needs and conditions, particularly as part of the development of the Project Platypus Strategic or Corporate Plans.

### Project Platypus Management Committee Members

The 1994 committee - subsequently the Project Platypus Management Committee - contains many names that feature in Project Platypus and Landcare Groups throughout the following years.

The original executive committee members were Chairperson Michael McMurtrie, Secretary Jane Williams and Treasurer Scot Douglas with representatives from each Landcare Group on the committee. The member representative was often the regular attendee but could be substituted by another group representative at the monthly meetings.

The Chairpersons of the Management Committee over the lifetime of Project Platypus have all been committed to Project Platypus and have made valuable contributions of their time, energy, expertise and enthusiasm.

**Michael McMurtrie** steered the ship for 5 productive and busy years. Michael was, and still is an outspoken champion for Project Platypus and never misses an opportunity to promote the organisation to politicians, potential sponsors and board members. Michael recalls *"The thing I remember most about those early meetings was the absolute commitment and*

*enthusiasm of all involved. There was so much energy and excitement that we felt nothing was going to stop us!"*

In 1999 **Michael Greene** from Elmhurst Landcare Group was elected as chair and worked towards the consolidation of the organisation. During Michael Greene's leadership the inaugural Plantout was held which went on to become an annual highlight of the Project Platypus calendar.

Great Western farmer, **Bill Kilpatrick** took up the baton in 2002 and celebrated the 10 year anniversary of Project Platypus in 2004. Bill recalls *"Steering the organisation through the difficult time following the end of the Rio Tinto Partnership required considerable energy and vision by the Management Committee."*

Having been heavily involved with Project Platypus since its inception and with a wealth of experience, **Phil Williams** took on the Chairperson position in 2005. He recalls, *"The highlight of my term as chairman was seeing Project Platypus settled into its new 'shop front' in Stawell's Main Street. The lowlight was the terrible bushfires which ravaged the area in 2006"*. Phil was the also the editor of the newsletter that served as a monthly communication of Project Platypus progress and happenings to Management Committee members and for many years compiled the informative and more widely distributed Project Platypus News.

**Alan Green** has also been involved in Project Platypus since its inception and was elected to lead the Management Committee in 2007. He brought his business acumen and agricultural experience to the organisation and helped raise the profile of Project Platypus.

Current chair, **Leanne Jackman** brings strong people skills and thoughtful leadership to the organisation. She believes *"A focus to strengthen and build partnerships with Local, State and Federal*

*Government and Corporate organisations will see Project Platypus better placed to support the sustainability and growth of our Landcare Groups and Projects into the future."*

Many Management Committee members have been long serving and their contributions have been wide and varied including serving on sub-committees, representing Project Platypus on various external committees and making delegations to politicians and potential sponsors.

**Scott Douglas** was the inaugural treasurer and served on the Management Committee for 7 years.

**Jane Williams** held the position as Secretary for 8 years and worked diligently and with a passion for the organisation which would play an important role in improving natural resource management in the region. As well as being Secretary, Jane also served as a member of the Project Portfolio subcommittee and, along with Phil, used their local knowledge and expertise to encourage revegetation and remnant protection, including writing many of the early submissions and other documents as well as being a driving force behind Jallukar Landcare Group.

**George Holden** has been a longstanding member of the Management Committee and a number of sub committees. He has been a mentor to the organisation and landholders on agricultural and erosion issues.

Other members of past and present Management Committees whose volunteer contributions have contributed to the growth and development of the strong Project Platypus organisation we have today include –

Ross MacPhie, Graeme Price, Greg Dean, Emile Wilkinson, James Brady, Ken Readwin, Ray Graham, Neil Marriott, Ferg Anderson, Colin Snooks, Vern Hutton, Rupert Bibby, Paddy Bourke, Patrick Monaghan, Ken McPhee, Dominic Browne, Ron Bibby, Leigh Blackmore, Lil Isles, Howard Frampton, Mark Farrer, Bernard Boatman, Robert Vance, Jan Ibsvon Seht, Peter Laidlaw, Jon Wilkinson, Barry

Clugston, Phil Hall, Athol Mackay, Lyle Driscoll, Peter Brazier, Lisa Moore, Rosie Nater, Phil Hall, Richard Kelleher, Steven Ware, Harold Thomas, Stephen Start, Tristan Kennedy, Howard Frampton and Mark McKew.

To round out the expertise of the Management Committee, ex officio members are invited to participate in and contribute to the monthly Management Committee meetings and typically include a local DPI officer, a local Landcare facilitator, a representative from GWMWater, a representative from the WCMA and from Rio Tinto when they were partners. Julian King (VFF) attended many early meetings and provided much needed guidance and support in the early days of Project Platypus.

Peter Jackson and Nigel Binney from GWMWater have been involved with Project Platypus and have applied their expertise to the decisions of the Management Committee since the inception of the organisation and have made a valuable contribution to the development of the organisation as well as supporting our bids for continuing sponsorship from GWMWater.

As representatives of sponsor Rio Tinto, Helen Fenney and John Smart attended Management Committee and Sub-committees and worked hard to ensure that Project Platypus projects maintained their integrity by using the best science available and drew on their corporate experience to mentor Project Platypus.

Staff from the Department of Primary Industries (and its predecessor departments) and the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority have been close partners often serving on the Management Committee – informing, guiding and participating in the development of Project Platypus. Julie Andrew and Max Skene in particular were long serving and supportive members.

The Project Platypus Manager has always been a vital contributor to the Management Committee, and as an employee is able to provide the administrative support, background to issues and the links between partners, sponsors, staff and the management committee.



*Leanne Jackman at home on the farm*



*The present Management Committee*



*The late Jane Williams, inaugural secretary and plant guru smiling despite the very wet 2005 Plantout*



*Max Skene, Regional Landcare Facilitator and great supporter of Project Platypus*



*Bill Pyke consulting engineer on a bus tour with the Management Committee 2011*





Julie Andrew from DPI in discussions with Athol Mackay



Management Committee regularly undertake site visits to look at projects



One of the most enjoyable tasks – releasing platypus back into the river



Meetings of staff, Landcare Groups and Management Committee are important



Three Management Committee chairs and Emily at Project Platypus 10th anniversary

Sub-committees or Action Groups have been an ongoing feature of the Project Platypus structure. They have functioned to garner the expertise of landholders, sponsors and agencies to develop plans, projects and priorities and make recommendations to the Management Committee. Typically sub committees have included groups such as Revegetation and Biodiversity, Erosion Control, Climate Change, Project Oversight, Implementation and Scientific Accountability, Partnerships, Funding & Finance, Organisational Development and Communications. Many members have made valuable contributions to the direction and actions of Project Platypus by participating on these committees.

## Management Committee Achievements

The Project Platypus we see in 2012 is a testament to the successful management by previous and present Management Committees. To take an idea of an umbrella landcare group and develop this into the organisation we see today with a full time Manager and a dozen staff, an annual budget of \$800,000, up to a hundred project sites per year and regular community events all funded through successful applications for grants and sponsorship is an outstanding achievement.

The Management Committee continues to support “a strong and innovative community-driven organisation, providing leadership in improving the environmental health of the Upper Wimmera Catchment and contributing to the prosperity and health of the community.” Some of their major achievements have been

- Obtaining funding to employ managers and to undertake on-ground works. Without the funds for projects, for project facilitators and a manager, not much can happen on-ground or in the office. The committee has successfully achieved their aim to supplement funds from government grants with funds from sponsors and philanthropic organisations to increase the resilience of the organisation.
- Developing an organisational model which has grown and responded to changing circumstances. Ensuring appropriate

governance through legal compliance, producing an up to date constitution, instituting financial tracking and accountability have all contributed to the viability and credibility of the organisation.

- Building a strong financial base and accounting system to serve the growing organisation has been an ongoing task of Managers, Management Committees and book keepers. Running the Project Platypus “business” effectively has only been achieved by constantly reviewing accounting systems and procedures.
- Promoting and building a credible profile for the organisation is important for sponsors want to see a well run organisation, Landcare Groups who want to deal with an effective umbrella organisation and the Management Committee and staff who want to work for an efficient and responsible organisation. Project Platypus continues to be viewed as an innovative and skilled natural resource manager and an effective leader for its rural communities.

The 2012 Management Committee has recently completed the Strategic Plan for 2012-2014, which reviewed the Vision, Purpose and Guiding Principles of the organisation and listed the objectives for the next 3 years and the measurable outcomes on which the success of the organisation can be judged. The relationship between the 11 member Landcare Groups and Project Platypus and the function and membership of the 5 sub-committees has also been revised to ensure a continuing healthy and mutually beneficial relationship.

The present committee continues to reflect on the past and plan for the future of the organisation. Current Chair Leanne Jackman acknowledges all the committee members who have generously volunteered their time and skills over the years *“For all the energy and enthusiasm freely given, we have been rewarded with a wealth of stimulating social and community interaction with the added bonus of enjoying and enhancing our beautiful natural environment. The mix of experienced and fresh faces on our current committee sees us not only enjoying our time together, but also well placed to make the most of challenges and opportunities for the future.”*



## 1.3 Project Platypus Staff

### Project Platypus Managers

Whilst the Management Committee oversees the development of the organisation, the day to day running of the business requires the regular and constant attention of a Manager who also provides leadership for the Project Platypus team. Project Platypus has been extremely fortunate in the calibre of its Managers, each making a unique and valuable contribution to the organisation.

The first person to fulfil this part time role with the title of Project Officer was **Sherrie Christian** in early 1996. Sherrie's role was to contact landcare groups about possible projects and try to find potential sponsors. In August 1996 **Kerryn Shrank** was appointed as the first Manager. Kerryn was seconded from the NRCL (Natural Resources Conservation League) which operated out of the Wail Nursery. Kerryn organised the launch of the partnership with CRA at Seppelts in 1996 and was instrumental in bedding down that partnership in its first year. One of the biggest events organised by Kerryn was a weekend workshop at Halls Gap in July 1997 at which the Management Committee priorities and objectives for the next 3 – 5 years were developed. Through diligent applications for funding Project Platypus was able to employ Kerryn full time. At the end of 1997 Kerryn took up another position after having set up an excellent framework for the structure and operation of Project Platypus.

In 1998 Project Manager **Peter Hilbig**, a science teacher and assistant principal at Stawell Secondary College began the task of consolidating and expanding the role and activities of the organisation. Setting up the systems and structures to take the organisation forward and looking for avenues for funding were Peter's key tasks. *Peter recalls "When exploring the possibility of applying for the manager position at Project Platypus I visited work in progress at Aston's Scour and spoke with landholders and other stakeholders. I was struck by the commitment of the people, their concern for a sustainable future and the scope of their projects. Their infectious passion inspired me to proceed with my application and I was excited to join Project Platypus to support its*

*significant vision. This was turned out to be a very rewarding opportunity."* After a stint teaching in Malaysia, Peter returned to Stawell Secondary College as Principal.

When **Emily Anderson** (nee Tyson) began work as Manager in 2004, she brought experience as a Landcare facilitator and an enthusiasm for engaging with the community. Up until this time Project Platypus had been housed in the DPI/DSE office in Patrick St, occupying a space about six square metres, so with the steady growth of the organisation looking for a new office was a priority. In 2005 an old building on the corner of Patrick and Main St was secured, renovated and its three rooms set up as a display area, a five desk office area and a kitchen meeting area. *Emily describes the office "This space, coined the 'Project Platypus Landcare Centre' really established Project Platypus as an independent leader in the NRM industry, it was a wonderful place to work and encouraged many people such as Landcare members, colleagues, volunteers and the general public to drop in and find out what Project Platypus was all about."* Today Emily lives with Nick and two children on the farm near Willaura and keeps in touch with NRM issues as a board member of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.

**Luke Scott** began in 2007 and he capably filled the shoes of previous incumbents using his background as a zoologist to address biodiversity in revegetation projects and promote our icon, the platypus. A humorous presentation on platypus with a variety of props at an AGM was typical of Luke's sense of humour. Luke found that commuting between family living in Warrnambool and work in the Wimmera took its toll and at the end of 2007 he resigned to take on a sustainability role at Warrnambool TAFE. This was followed by two years as store manager on a NT aboriginal community. Luke is presently working in the Dept of Climate Change, Canberra.

Having served as Stawell Urban Landcare Group representative on the Project Platypus Management Committee and as the local Waterwatch facilitator **Leigh Blackmore** was able to hit the ground running when he was appointed as Project Platypus Manager in



*First full time Manager Kerryn Shrank got the organisation off to a great start*



*Project Platypus manager Peter Hilbig hands over the reins to Emily Tyson*



*Manager Luke Scott directs proceedings at a Plantout*



*Leigh Blackmore the current manager making a presentation to Landcare*



*Jane Marriott at a seed collecting workshop*



Bernie Rudolph out on site discussing erosion projects with Bill Pyke and George Holden



Project Platypus staff and volunteers in 2006



A staff BBQ meeting at Halls Gap in 2010



Current staff members in the bush behind the office



It is hard to escape the mobile phone!  
Peter Hilbig and volunteer

2008. Leigh's first task was to review the accounting system of the ever growing organisation, organising the payment of the wages for up to twenty employees and a dozen different funding sources at any one time. Leigh has overseen the biggest growth in the organisation since its inception and has developed and implemented streamlined systems for managing the organisation that have improved the efficiency of Project Platypus. Leigh recalls *"Relocating Project Platypus to the Western Highway site which would house the office based staff and the increasing number of vehicles and equipment in one location was an important step in the consolidation and efficient operation of Project Platypus."*

### Project Platypus Staff

Since its inception more than 30 staff members, many of them part time or casual employees have made contributions to Project Platypus. The nature of the organisation has attracted people with passion and enthusiasm for their role and the organisation. Because of the ephemeral nature of landcare funding jobs are often short term, part time, seasonal and project based.

**Jane Marriott**, one of the first employees, began as Seed Bank Co-ordinator in 2000 and is still working part time on various projects. Jane recalls *"The seed collection role saw me out and about the catchment and I loved exploring the region looking for remnants to collect from and for potential revegetation sites."* Other roles and projects that Jane has applied her passion for the environment and organisational skills include Works Co-ordinator, Engaging Small Landholders, Community Engagement, organiser Agrifest 2011 and author of the Project Platypus & GWMWater Partnership 15 year celebration book and the Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Plan.

**Bernie Rudolph** began as a part time Navarre's Rabbit Facilitator and in March 2004 commenced as 'Weed facilitator and revegetation support' but became full time Works Co-ordinator when Adam Merrick resigned. Bernie's relaxed and friendly manner led to many landholders signing up for revegetation and remnant protection

projects and the annual plant and hectare totals reached new records each year. Although the roles of project officers could be described as Natural Resource Management positions, it is the people management and interaction that determines the success of projects and Bernie's record was excellent. Bernie left the organisation in 2010 for a break from the hectic round of Works Agreements, Plantout planning, compiling tree orders, organising plantings etc. He reminisces *"I spent a lot of time chatting with landowners about projects, the weather etc but it is critical to build rapport, understanding and trust to ensure the success of projects long after the project is completed."*

**Sean Malloy** worked on weed and rabbit control projects for almost 10 years. Sean's annual Bridal Creeper spraying program has seen a dramatic reduction in the spread of this invasive weed. Sean has also been involved in facilitating rabbit and weed control for Landcare Groups and other organisations. The capacity of Project Platypus to address pest plants and animals has increased dramatically and today two spray trailers operate for a large part of each year with six part-time staff. These well resourced and experienced work teams are in a good position to undertake complementary weed and rabbit control for local councils or for landholders undertaking independent works.

Other people who have been employed by Project Platypus and made valuable contributions to rabbit or weed control, administration, revegetation works, bookkeeping, are - Judy Sheppard, Allistair Johnson, Linton Argall, Anne Dempster, Tristan Kennedy, Joe Facey, Michael McMurtrie, Peter Greenberger, Lisa Moore, Jacqueline Young, Victoria Leeke, Michelle Simpkin, Colin Snooks, David Margetson, Cathy McDermott, Bronwyn Bant, Graeme Pearson, Angela Jones, Bob Wallace, Barry Curtis, Adam Merrick and Allistair Stephens. There has been a number of casual staff who have undertaken short term projects and tasks, as well as participants in Labour Programs who have all contributed getting the jobs done at Project Platypus.



## 1.4 Sponsors, Funding and Partnerships

A major driver for establishing Project Platypus as an umbrella Landcare Group or network was to reduce the workload of Landcare Group Office bearers and members in keeping up to date with Landcare initiatives and applying for and administering funds, particularly for broad scale projects across several Landcare Group areas and whole of catchment projects.

Worthy projects don't just appear and can require considerable research and ground work often beyond the scope of Landcare Groups to prepare and execute. In addition, the sources of funds and their pre requisites have and continue to be ever changing and rarely ongoing. Having an umbrella group such as Project Platypus to negotiate, apply for and administer the funding of projects has greatly reduced the workload of Landcare Groups.

The common theme of early Management Committee meetings was applying for grants and seeking sponsorship. Project Platypus relied on the enthusiasm and vision of the inaugural Management Committee, Landcare Group members and supporters such as Dave Munday and Barry Clugston to attract funds. In 1994 a Project Platypus newsletter described the need for sponsorship "... so we can accelerate the adoption of Landcare solutions to the problems of the catchment." A talk by Susan Holmes from Telecom in 1995 detailed the requirements of a potential sponsor, how to approach a sponsor and what a company would expect to receive for their sponsorship. In early 2005 a two day Sponsorship Workshop facilitated by Landcare Australia clarified some of the issues and approaches. The support and sourcing of sponsors by Rob Youl, Landcare Australia and the Landcare Foundation has contributed to the success of Project Platypus.

To provide potential sponsors with the information on which to make a decision the comprehensive document Project Platypus – A Major Landcare Initiative for the Upper Wimmera Catchment was produced identifying the aims of Project Platypus, Landcare targets and potential budgets. This document along with persuasive conversations, meetings and presentations established the bona fides that sponsors would require to fund the new organisation.

### GWMWater

In late 1994 Wimmera Mallee Water was approached for sponsorship and in 1995 Project Platypus efforts were rewarded with funds for undertaking 'The Upper Wimmera Catchment Support Initiative', described by Wimmera Mallee Water as "an investment in land rehabilitation works ... sparked by the need to improve water quality in the Wimmera River."

GWMWater (previously Wimmera Mallee Water and Grampians Water) annual funding has continued, typically for erosion control works which have taken place in the Six Mile Catchment, Astons Scour, Ironpot Creek, Mt Drummond, Glendhu, Daves Avenue, Salt Creek Elmhurst and smaller projects across the catchment. Funds also supported the setting up and operation of a seed bank which supplied seed for the ever growing revegetation projects undertaken by Project Platypus each year. Over a 16 year period annual funding from GWMWater has provided over \$400,000 to implement projects on over 100 different sites.

Besides the GWMWater financial contribution, the input of the staff and the board of GWMWater has enhanced the operation of the Project Platypus organisation and the quality of projects. The ongoing advice, expertise and commitment by Nigel Binney and Peter Jackson from GWMWater have been another positive and rewarding component of the partnership. A publication Project Platypus and GWMWater - Celebrating the 15 year Partnership in Landcare Works 1995 - 2010 describes the history and details of the GWMWater and Project Platypus partnership. As the first and continuing sponsor of Project Platypus, GWMWater has played a pivotal role in the history of Project Platypus.



*The launch of one of the first projects completed at Ron Bibby's hill*



*Landcare Australia and Rob Youl have been long term supporters and promoters of Project Platypus*



*The signing of the major sponsorship deal with Rio Tinto (CRA)*



*The official launch of Rio Tinto Project Platypus partnership with Minister Pat MacNamara and Michael McMurtrie*



*Sponsorship celebrations by the Management Committee and John Smart from Rio Tinto*



*Rio Tinto guided some on-ground works such as here in the Iron Pot catchment*



*Signs reflected the new partnership with Rio Tinto*



*Nigel Binny and Barry Clugston from long term sponsors GWMWater were shown prospective works*



*A booklet was produced and launched to celebrate the 15 year partnership with GWMWater*



*A bus trip around the catchment with the WCMA and Management Committee on board*

## Rio Tinto

In 1995 when CRA Limited (later Rio Tinto) was undertaking exploratory work for mineral sand extraction at Burnt Creek near Dadswells Bridge, local CRA manager John Smart was approached and the possible sponsorship of Project Platypus was discussed.

In subsequent discussions with Helen Fenney, the PR consultant for CRA, a partnership agreement was developed which was mutually advantageous. Their sponsorship would fund the setting up a demonstration site(s) which would facilitate the establishment of a credible and scientific response to catchment problems. The list of issues to be addressed in documenting the partnership agreement was daunting but with good will on all sides and extensive communications, a partnership was forged. In November 1996 CRA Project Platypus – A Landcare Partnership was launched by the Hon Pat McNamara at Seppelts, Great Western. This certainty of funding with \$100,000 each year for the next three years, and later a further three years, gave the Project Platypus organisation a very welcome boost in morale and capacity.

A requirement of the partnership was that all projects should have a scientific basis and that they should be monitored to assess their success or failure. The Astons Scour and Ironpot Creek projects were developed and became the two funded demonstration sites. Bores and other monitoring methods were incorporated into the projects to measure their success. A Scientific Advisory Committee was established in 1996 and recruited a range of experts in their field, Project Platypus members and CRA representatives to ensure that these and future projects fulfilled the requirements set out in the partnership agreement.

In addition to the generous funding agreements, the valuable mentoring and support from Helen Fenney and John Smart in particular continued throughout the 8 year life of Rio Tinto involvement. The certainty and on-going nature of Rio

Tinto funding allowed the Project Platypus organisation to grow, consolidate, develop and enhance its professional profile.

## Federal and State Government Partnerships and Funding

Since the inception of Landcare in 1986 there has been bipartisan support from Federal and State Governments. However, periodical changing of the funding priorities has led to Landcare operating in an uncertain environment. Without continuity of funding and changeable overarching structures, Project Platypus and Landcare have at times struggled to maintain momentum.

Today funding for Landcare activities has increased and the need to support Landcare is better recognised. Whilst Project Platypus has been fortunate to obtain sponsorship funds and grants from Philanthropic Trusts, it is funds such as the federal Natural Heritage Trust, National Landcare Program, Caring For Our Country and state initiatives such as Land Protection Incentives and 2nd Generation Landcare Funding which have enabled Project Platypus to undertake large scale revegetation and remnant protection projects across the Upper Catchment.

The support of state government officers from DSE and DPI (and their previous incarnations) has been crucial to the success of Project Platypus. In the early years Mary Bignell promoted the formation of Project Platypus and she developed the first Project Platypus Action Plan which provided clear direction for future projects. Project Platypus and the Landcare Groups are fortunate to have had an excellent sequence of state government funded Landcare facilitators - Dave Munday, Felicity Brown (now Christian), Emma Bayley Stark, Jayne Holmes (now Drum), Victoria Leeke and presently Bob Wallace. For a number of years Julie Andrew from DPI provided the Management Committee with an important link with state government initiatives and helped ensure the co-ordination of works across the catchment. Max Skene as the regional Landcare facilitator with the WCMA made an outstanding contribution to the



development of the Project Platypus organisation. Joel Boyd is now the Regional Landcare facilitator supporting Project Platypus and the Landcare Groups.

Developed from the previous Catchment and Land Protection (CALP) boards, the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (WCMA) is the regional Statutory Authority Natural Resource Management body in the Wimmera. Funded by the State Government, it is responsible for creating a healthier and more sustainable environment in partnership with a range of organisations and stakeholders such as Project Platypus.

## Philanthropic Trusts

Government funding requirements may exclude important projects that have been identified by Landcare Groups or Project Platypus as having merit. To this end obtaining Philanthropic Trust grants have enabled a broader range of worthwhile projects to be achieved across the Upper Wimmera Catchment. These funds have also been used to leverage government grants when matching funds were required or to fund wages for project managers or co-ordinators.

Project Platypus is extremely grateful to the trustees of the following organisations for their confidence in the organisation to

deliver a wide variety of projects which have contributed to the environmental and social health of the catchment.

- Mazda Foundation – part funding manager position
- Myer Foundation – to establish the Project Platypus website, to undertake platypus surveys
- Ian Potter Foundation – part funding manager position
- Helen McPherson Smith Trust – Protecting Paddock Trees project
- Norman Wettenhall Foundation – Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Plan
- William Buckland Foundation – part funding manager position
- Reichstein Foundation - early support for setting up Project Platypus

## Other Sponsors and Partners

Project Platypus has been privileged to enjoy excellent relationships with other organisations and businesses, many of them local, and with other NGO's involved in natural resource management. We thank the following for their past or continuing contribution to Project Platypus and the Landcare community.

Greening Australia	Woolman/Advance Petroleum	Coles
Grampians Community Health	Ararat City Council Council	Pyrenees Shire
University of Ballarat	Workco	Stawell Gold Mines
Conundrum Holdings	Seppelts /Southcorp	Powercor
SP AusNet	Pomonal Wildflower Nursery	Vicroads
Conservation Volunteers Australia	Parks Victoria	Northern Grampians Shire Council
Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal	RACV	Landcare Australia
Victorian 4WD Mobile Landcare Group	Warratah Fencing	Trust for Nature
Green Eggs	SES	Landmark Australia



Besides funds for revegetation sponsors and grants have funded a wide range of projects



Aerial flights over the catchment have been pivotal for planning and monitoring



Rabbit control is an essential component of land management



Funds provided materials for volunteers to construct and erect nest boxes



For many years local seed was collected to provide diverse revegetation plants

## 1.5 Volunteers and Work Crews... getting the work done



Skene St students can turn their hand to many tasks including folding and stapling newsletters



Green Corps crews undertake fencing, planting and in this case seed collecting



A Greencorps spraying team prepare sites for planting by eradicating weeds



The Avoca scouts and their leaders are a great planting team



The Landmate crew undertake the huge task of spreading hay to stabilise an erosion site

The contribution made by volunteers and various works crews to the operation, development and success of Project Platypus is perhaps the most outstanding feature of the organisation. From the many thousands of hours spent by Project Platypus and Landcare Group committee members attending meetings to the hundreds of people participating in Plantouts, the contributions of volunteers is what makes Project Platypus and Landcare happen!.

Some of the teams who have featured in projects and tasks are

**Schools** have been involved in a range of Project Platypus activities. Jane Schmidt from Skene St School has organised students to help with tree planting, painting nest boxes, folding newsletters and catering. John Pye, past teacher from Stawell Secondary College has given students the opportunity to be involved in tree planting, erosion control work and catchment studies. Students from the three Stawell Primary schools, Marian College and small rural schools have been involved in planting days and have done a great job assisting landholders getting a large number of trees planted and guarded. These activities with local schools are mutually rewarding partnerships that contribute to the future health of our environment.

Project Platypus has regularly had **Greencorps** and Conservation Volunteers Australia teams assisting with various projects from seed collecting to planting and spraying weeds. An experienced team leader comes with the team who can work independently of

Project Platypus staff. These crews with their comprehensive training are able to achieve significant outcomes in fencing, revegetation and weed control projects. Adam Blake, Joel Hastings and Bob Wallace are some of the Greencorps team leaders who have taken a group of teenagers and developed them into a "green team".

Part of the **Scouting** experience involves participating in community projects and Project Platypus is fortunate that the Avoca and Ararat scouting groups have contributed to our annual planting efforts since 2001 at sites at Glendhu, Elmhurst, Bulgana and Dadswells Bridge. An overnight camp out and camp food is part of the environmental experience which has enhanced the horizons of the scouts and contributed to the success of a number of revegetation projects.

The **Landmate** prison works crew have provided thousands of hours labour, assisting landholders undertaking large projects. Several thousand kilometres of fences to protect vegetation or fence out erosion control works from stock have been erected and their skill and organisation in planting thousands of trees a day is something to be seen - often in harsh weather and with tough site conditions! For many years Keith Price was the Landmate supervisor, followed by Wilber Wilde - both skilled in motivating and organising Landmate teams.

Because of the variety of work available and its willingness to involve the community, Project Platypus has benefited from many individuals engaged in **employment projects**. Participants have joined weed spraying teams, planting, fencing and office work and





have increased the labour available to assist landholders to complete their Landcare projects. Some of the participants have gone on to full time employment based on their positive work experiences at Project Platypus.

The **Men's Shed** in Stawell led by Brian Winters, built dozens of bird and mammal nest boxes as part of a Stawell Gold Mines grant to Project Platypus and these were distributed across the region. The nest boxes and the picnic tables constructed for a walking track project were completed to a high standard.

**Plantout Volunteers** account for the greatest number of people involved in Project Platypus activities. Volunteers come from far and near attracted by the opportunity to make a real contribution to the environment and have fun being part of a large, well organised team. Many planters return each year for the experience and some go on to become involved in Project Platypus in other ways. (See Plantout section)

The **Landcare** movement is essentially founded on the volunteer activities of all the Landcare Groups and their individual members – putting their hand up as office bearers, attending meetings, participating in working bees, undertaking works on their own or members' properties, organising or participating in community events, catering!

The contribution and achievements of each of the Landcare Groups in the Upper Wimmera Catchment are detailed and further celebrated in Part 2 of this publication.

Project Platypus acknowledges the wonderful contribution that thousands of volunteers have made to all aspects of Project Platypus operations and to Landcare in the region. All the volunteers groups and individuals are thanked. Because Project Platypus values their volunteers they have set in place systems to ensure the volunteer experience is rewarding and safe, so volunteers will return for more of the same!



*A variety of employment projects have benefited participants, Project Platypus and landholders*



*Volunteers hard at work planting and guarding in freezing conditions at Warrak*



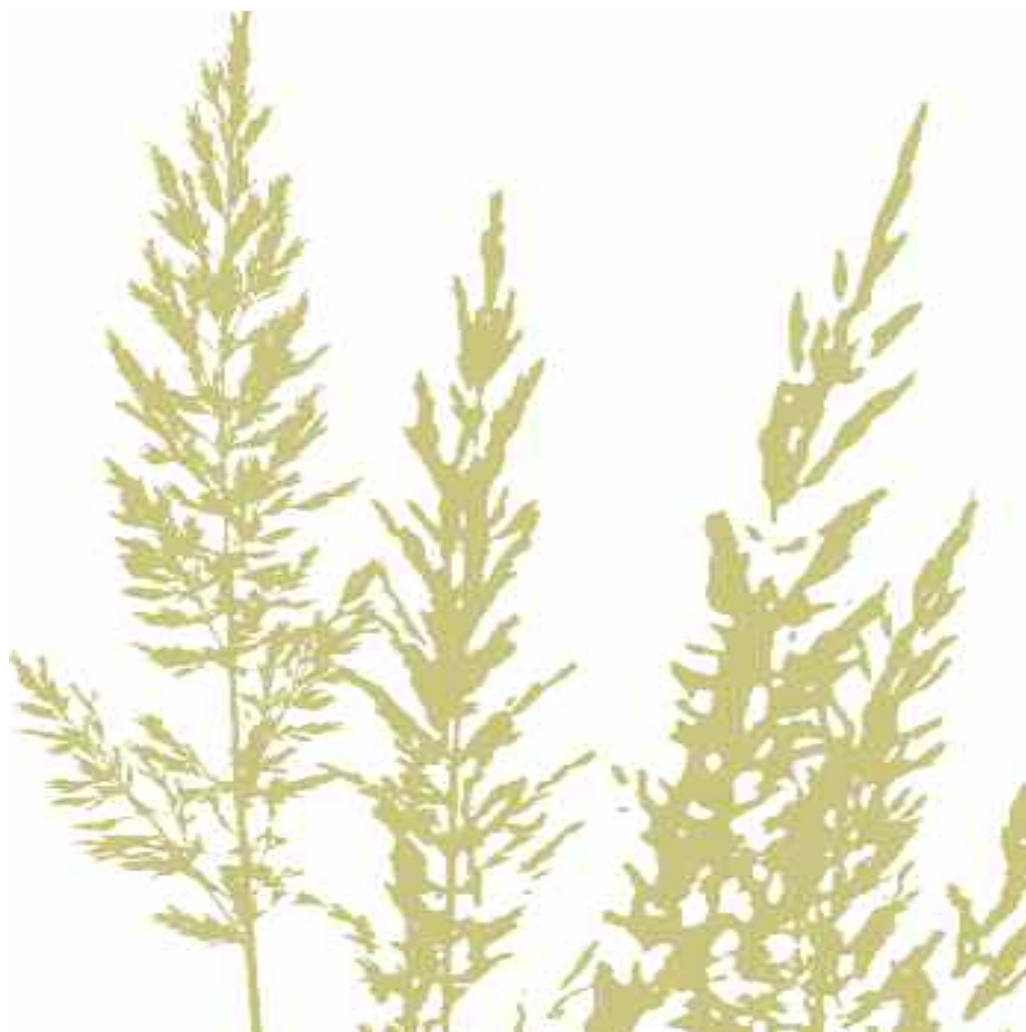
*The Stawell Mens Shed group made nest boxes as part of a wildlife project*



*Hundreds of Plantouts volunteers have planted thousands of trees*



*In response to the 2006 fires Clive Crouch and volunteers constructed and distributed nest boxes*



## 1.6 Project Platypus Projects



*Works on Col Deans Astons property including flood retention dams, battering and sowing down banks*



*The after photo tells the success story with eroded banks healed and water managed*



*Water rushing off Glendhu's steep cleared hills causes massive erosion*



*Starts Glendhu property magnificent but with many issues*



*Repairing Mt Drummond's eroded gullies and retaining trees posed some issues*

Engaging works facilitators and consultants, implementing OH&S measures, purchasing and maintaining equipment, supplies and vehicles, applying for grants and sponsorship, researching, planning and prioritising projects are all prerequisites to the efficient roll out of the all important on-ground works Project Platypus undertakes.

Hundreds of landholders from across the catchment have undertaken projects facilitated by Project Platypus to address salinity, erosion, loss of habitat, remnant protection, pest plant and animal control, sustainable farming practices and carbon farming on their properties.

Once funding is secured, landholders are sought who fit the funding criteria and who appreciate the benefits of the project to the environmental health and productivity of their land. Sites are then inspected by a Project Platypus Works Co-ordinator, works agreements are drawn up detailing the commitments of both parties, site preparations commence, plants for revegetation sites are ordered and projects are underway.

Some of the first projects in 1995 and 1996 were erosion control works and planting funded by Wimmera Mallee Water on the Darbyshire and Greene's property at Salt Creek at Elmhurst, hill planting and erosion works on Ron Bibby's hill at Navarre, and saline revegetation on Ian Brady's Moyston property.

Some key areas where projects which have been undertaken over the last 18 years are

### • Integrated Sub Catchment works

- **Astons Scour Catchment** – integrated sub catchment works
- **Six Mile Catchment** – integrated sub catchment works
- **Mt Drummond** – erosion control
- **Glendhu Catchment** – integrated sub catchment works

### • Protecting Platypus, Bandicoots and Biodiversity

• **Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink** - Revegetation and Remnant Protection

• **Weed Control** across the catchment

### Astons Scour Landsborough

The high silt loads entering the Wimmera River from the 5200 ha Astons Scour catchment near Landsborough, and the erosion on the lower slopes and flats below Mt Struggle prompted its nomination in 1995 as a Pilot Project to demonstrate a well planned and scientific response to a variety of long standing land degradation issues. Funds from Rio Tinto, GWMWater, federal and state governments along with landholder commitments allowed comprehensive planning and mapping of the Astons Catchment, followed by battering of gullies, installation of gully plug dams, fencing of waterways, establishment of perennial pasture, rabbit control and revegetation works. With Rio Tinto involvement, Project Platypus was encouraged to adopt a scientific approach to projects involving comprehensive planning, costing, recording and monitoring of works. Records from stream gauging stations, site visits and photographic



comparisons have been useful tools in assessing the improvements in the functioning of the landscape from projects undertaken across Astons Scour. The positive impact of works was the result of a productive partnership between committed landholders, consultants and advisors, the Concongella Landcare Group, the sponsors, contractors, volunteers and Project Platypus. Works in the Iron Pot Creek catchment were part of a second Pilot Project.

## Six Mile Creek Catchment

The Six Mile Creek sub catchment of the Wimmera is more than 10,000ha and rises in steep hills of the Dunneworthy Forest and enters the Wimmera River near Joel Joel. Landholders in the Concongella and Great Western Landcare Groups were particularly concerned with their serious erosion. This led to these landholders coming together with Project Platypus to identify the areas of degradation, draw up a plan of action and determine priorities for undertaking works.

The first plan collated by Mary Bignall was based on landholder input and was later reviewed and updated by Lisa Moore in conjunction with landholders. Revegetation works on the steep bare hills of the catchment were followed by erosion control on the lower slopes and flats, fencing off creek lines and establishing perennial pastures and native vegetation.

In 2005 works in the catchment were funded through a NLP grant "Saving the Soils of the Six Mile" and boosted in 2008 with a \$300,000 State Government Grant which saw prioritised works undertaken across more than 12 properties. Work continues but today the much healthier catchment reflects the substantial investment of state and federal governments and GWMWater, the efforts of a group of motivated landholders and the securing of funds and co-ordination of works by Project Platypus.

## Mt Drummond

Northern Grampians Landcare Group saw the degradation of Mt Drummond and its

lower slopes as a priority for works. A partnership between the Landcare Group, landholders, engineering consultant Bill Pyke, GWMWater and Project Platypus has seen extensive works undertaken over 10 years.

The results have been dramatic – shifting soils on slopes have been stabilised by controlling grazing, active gully erosion has been repaired, areas have been revegetated with trees or grasses and various water diversion measures instituted. Because site works take time to stabilise, the site has required continued monitoring to ensure that works are not compromised by heavy rains. The Northern Grampians Landcare Group regularly undertakes monitoring and maintenance works to ensure the project continues to be successful.

The on-going partnership with GWMWater has allowed minor repair works to be undertaken when needed and highlights the value of a long term commitment from a sponsor organisation.

## Glendhu

The steep cleared hills of the Glendhu Creek catchment contribute significant silt loads to the Wimmera River. A large portion of the catchment is occupied by Jack and Lyn Start's 2400ha visually stunning Glendhu Station. Jack's ambition is to restore the property by fencing out and revegetating the steep hills to reduce run off and erosion, repair eroded gullies and farm the lower slopes and flats sustainably.

This massive undertaking is assisted by Jack's fleet of earthmoving equipment to rip planting lines and repair eroded gullies and through a variety of funding sources. With contributions from DPI, the WCMA and Project Platypus and volunteers the partnership has been productive. Landmate has erected fences and planted trees, the Avoca scouts have contributed to several plantings and Project Platypus Plantout volunteers have planted over 50,000 plants across the steep rocky hills and along eroded gullies. The works on



*Engineer Bill Pyke and Works Coordinator Bernie Rudolph are happy with the results at Mt Drummond*



*Some solutions at Mt Drummond were as simple as establishing contour banks and intercepting with lines of plants*



*Aerial photos of the Six Mile Creek Catchment are a graphic way to see the extent of the problems*



*Site visits with landholders of the 6 Mile Creek Catchment and engineers determining the best solutions*



*Trickle pipes capture the excess flow and direct water to the base of the gully*



*Paddock trees are important aesthetically and for biodiversity*



*Researching platypus in the waterways in the Upper Wimmera has been a focus of biodiversity projects*



*Communicating the results of trapping and involving the community increases awareness*



*Increasing the linkages between the Grampians and Pyrenees will increase the resilience of fauna*



*The ultimate goal of revegetation! In this case a site protected by fencing out stock*

this property have been ground breaking and provide a dramatic example of landscape scale rehabilitation. In years to come these works at Glendhu will make a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation.

Complementary erosion control work, perennial pasture establishment and revegetation have also taken place on the adjoining properties of Perry Richards, Harold and Edith Thomas and Allen and Andrea Hart and have contributed to a substantial reduction in silt loads entering the Wimmera River.

## Platypus, Bandicoots and Biodiversity

It is fitting that the subject of the Project Platypus logo and namesake, the **platypus**, has been the basis of several Project Platypus studies in the Upper Wimmera Catchment since 1997. Historically platypus had been recorded in a number of stretches of the Wimmera River, Mt Cole and Nowhere Creeks but rigorous studies had been few and sightings largely anecdotal. During Rio Tinto's sponsorship, the Australian Platypus Conservancy (APS) in conjunction with Earthwatch Australia conducted a series of live trapping programs to determine the presence of platypus in the Upper Wimmera catchment. Melody Serena and Geoff Williams from the APS invited community members to assist with the trapping program. This involved two hourly checking of traps overnight and next day if you were lucky viewing the endearing creatures being weighed and recorded.

Reports on the health of the population and their environment were published over the several years of trapping. In the late 1990's good numbers were reported in the upper reaches of the Wimmera River, Mt Cole Creek, Nowhere Creek but very disappointing numbers between 2006 and 2010 when rivers and refuge pools dried up and surveys ceased. Just prior to the breaking of the drought a limited trapping program recorded two platypus in a deep pool near Dadswells Bridge but their wider

return since the drought broke is unknown. A 2012/2013 project will look at the affect of the prolonged drought on platypus populations, ways to secure populations, improve platypus habitat and develop a local platypus management and recovery plan.

The Southern Brown **Bandicoot** was once common in the Black Range, in the Grampians National Park and on the Grampians fringes centred on Pomonal. By the early 1990's Black Range Landcare Group members had noted their dramatic decline and received a grant from Envirofund for surveys to determine the presence of bandicoots, to increase and link areas of bandicoot habitat and to promote community awareness. Unfortunately a fire across the Black Range in 2006 is believed to have all but wiped out any remaining populations. The focus for the group subsequently shifted to providing refuges for the bandicoots and other wildlife remaining and to undertaking fox control to reduce predation on vulnerable wildlife.

In 2009 a Project Platypus revegetation project was undertaken to commence a link/corridor of continuous vegetation between the Black Range and the Grampians. Presently Project Platypus is focussing on efforts to recover the nationally threatened bandicoot by implementing a large scale and long term fox control program on private property in conjunction with controls on public land. This was the priority action listed in the local bandicoot recovery plan produced by Project Platypus in 2011.

Maintaining and improving **biodiversity** is a key pillar of Project Platypus works. In particular, its revegetation and remnant protection works aim to provide the diversity of habitat needed to maintain fauna populations. Other biodiversity projects have included nest box making and distributing, bandicoot refuges, Fauna and Birds on Farms Workshops, information sheets on Mistletoe, promotion of the habitat values of logs and hollows and paddock trees, revegetation and remnant protection.



## Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink

Historically erosion control works were the major projects undertaken by Project Platypus. Today however revegetation works and remnant protection are the major on-ground activities of Project Platypus, closely followed by weed control activities. Each year when the call for interest in revegetation works are made, many landholders from across the region respond and the Project Platypus revegetation manager inspects sites and with the landholders develops a works plan. This typically involves the landholder receiving a subsidy per metre to erect fences, the landholder ripping and spraying planting lines and Project Platypus purchasing plants and guards. Assistance with labour from volunteer groups and works teams is available for all aspects of a project if the project is large or if the landholder is unable to undertake the work.

In 2008 Project Platypus commenced a partnership revegetation and remnant protection project with the WCMA called the Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink. Project Platypus has revegetated about 300ha each year based on the need to connect fragmented landscapes, to provide habitat for fauna and to respond to climate change. Projects typically involve a range of preparations prior to planting a suite of species from grasses to trees which help provide the diversity necessary to sustain healthy ecosystems. Projects which provide the greatest benefits receive a greater subsidy per metre for fencing. Projects can vary from a 1 ha fencing out of a paddock tree to fencing off and revegetating a 50ha site. A tentative small first project often leads to further involvement in projects by the landholder.

Providing habitat for nationally or state threatened fauna species and protecting or enhancing nationally threatened vegetation communities are the principles of funding from the Caring For Our Country Federal Government funding and include the restoration and protection of Buloke and Grey Box Grassy Woodland.

It is estimated that since its inception Project Platypus revegetation projects with

over 800,000 plants planted over 1500ha in the Upper Wimmera catchment. Revegetation or remnant protection projects are changing the landscape in the Upper Wimmera but there is a long way to go before the issues of habitat loss, threatened species and restoring biodiverse habitats will be adequately addressed.

## Weed Control

Environmental and agricultural weeds are classified by regional, state and national authorities according to their potential threat or spread. Farmers, Landcare Groups and the community have their own priority weeds depending on their situation and the extent of infestations. Project Platypus aims to support community weed projects by accessing funds to address their priority weeds and providing facilitators and equipment.

Weeds which have been on the Project Platypus agenda are Bridal Creeper, Spiny Rush, Patersons Curse, St Johns Wort, Broom, Horehound, Bathurst Burr, Cape Tulip, Gorse, Blackberry and Chilean Needle Grass. Sean Malloy headed the first weed control team and over many years has reduced the spread and extent of Bridal Creeper in particular. Research into the control of Spiny Rush led to the publication of a booklet recommending the most efficient controls.

Mapping has become an integral part of weed control with comprehensive records of the location and extent of weed populations and control actions undertaken. Today Project Platypus operates two weed spray trailers. From 2008 -11 Colin Snooks developed the program from a two day a week project over six months to a 5 day a week all year war on weeds! Allistair Stevens now co-ordinates works with Graham Pearson and Dene Marshall and the two weed control teams which operate throughout the year. Project Platypus also provides weed and rabbit control for councils, VicRoads and other land managers. Rabbit control works are usually initiated by Landcare Groups and Project Platypus offers experienced facilitators to co-ordinate the works.



*Creek lines are an obvious site to revegetate, banks are protected, water filtered and corridors created*



*Large hill planting sites will create the substantial nodes of vegetation required for many birds and animals*



*Well equipped spray trailers make the work a little easier for spraying crews*

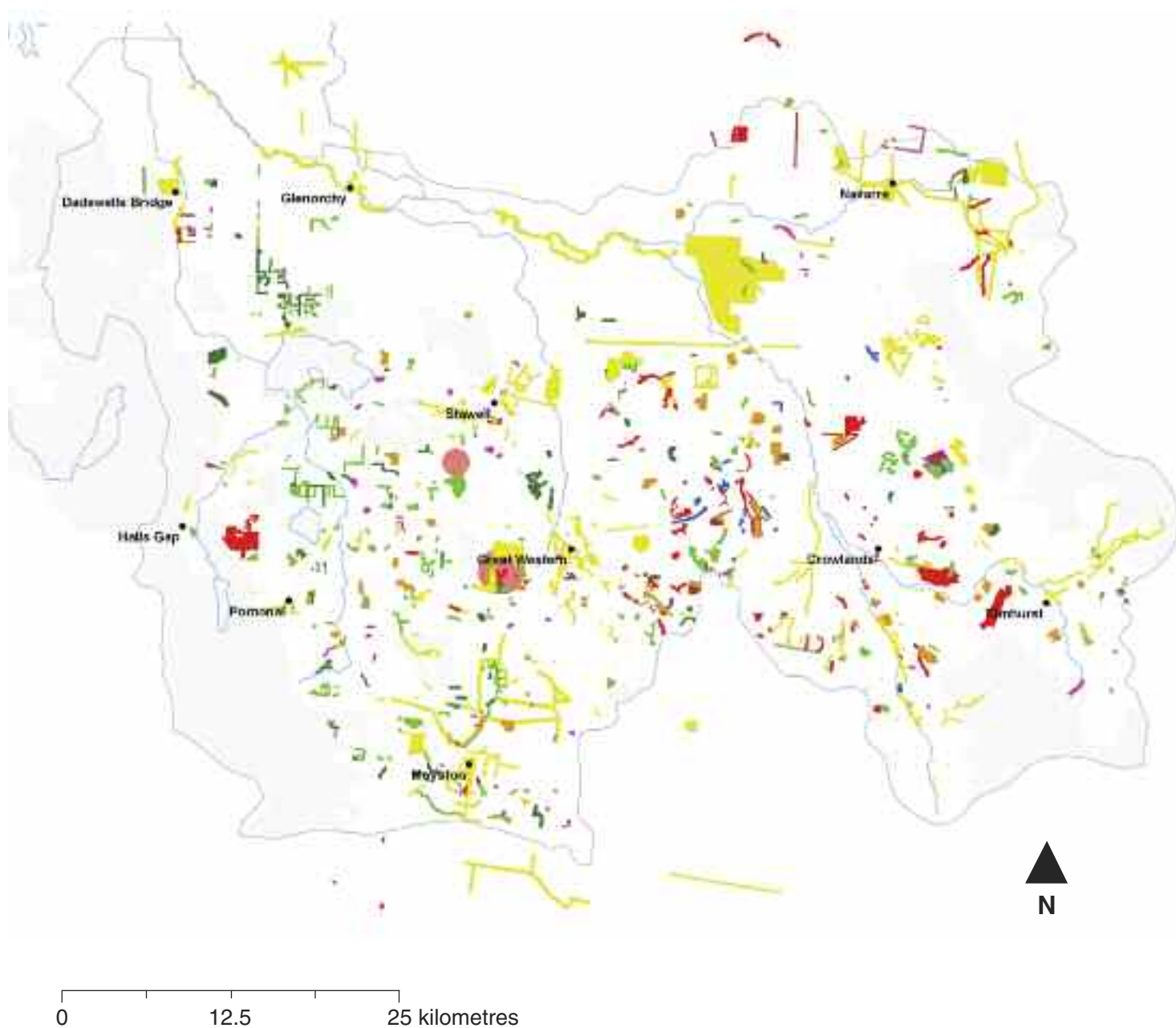


*Volunteer Col Povey and Project Platypus Weed Co-ordinator got stuck into the colourful Pattersons Curse*



*Gorse on roadsides and in degraded sites has been mapped and is sprayed annually*

## Map of Project Platypus Work Sites 1994 - 2012



### LEGEND

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| ● Locations        | Perennial Pasture   |
| Rabbit Control     | Revegetation        |
| Remnant Protection | Erosion Control     |
| Weed Control       | WCA Major Waterways |



## 1.7 Engaging the Community

Encouraging the Landcare community and the general public to be involved in both the practical and theoretical aspects of natural resource management is seen by Project Platypus as an important role. Besides regular informative articles in the media and in newsletters, Project Platypus engages speakers and presenters for workshops, conferences and field days and has mounted many displays to give the community an opportunity to receive up to date farming and landcare information.

These community events are a regular feature in the Project Platypus calendar and besides being opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding, they also provide social and networking opportunities for rural communities.

Some of the regular or memorable events are:

**Annual General Meetings** are a necessary component of any incorporated community group and to maximise the benefit of getting a group of people together to achieve an administrative outcome, Project Platypus uses the AGM as an opportunity to gather people together socially as well as providing motivational guest speakers. The number of people attending Project Platypus AGM's indicates that Landcare in our region is alive and well. Some of our best attended AGM's were presentations by

- Alex Gartman in 2011 spoke about the reasons for the success of the Birchip Cropping Group during her time as CEO which saw a dramatic growth in that organisation and which in some ways mirrors the Project Platypus journey. However there were significant differences in structure and operation such as their focus on research and their ability to maintain community drive which provided useful food for thought the Project Platypus organisation. Kate Auty, Sustainability Commissioner for Victoria also spoke at this meeting.

- Ben Keogh from Australian Carbon Traders presented to a packed room the background to Carbon Trading and Agriculture. In 2008 the time was right for

such a presentation and an extended question time demonstrated the interest in the topic.

- Peter Andrew has trialled a number of alternative approaches to managing soil erosion, poor water quality and loss of biodiversity. His book *Back from the Brink* and belief in natural sequence farming provoked some controversy and his presentation at the 2009 AGM resulted in 190 attendees.

- Julian Cribb's 2010 presentation on the future of food, how we will grow it, how much we will need to feed a growing world was a wake-up call that we will need to farm more sustainably if we are to feed an estimated population of 9 billion in 2050.

- One of our more controversial and memorable AGM speakers was a presentation by John Fenton from Lanark who was a champion for combining biodiversity and farming such as seen on the Potter Farms in the Western District. Dinner and drinks and the formalities of the meeting took rather a long time and by the time John began his presentation some of his ideas were couched in rather provocative tones which agitated much of his farming audience!!

- Local landholders provided the entertainment for the 2006 AGM with a debate on Is Landcare Dying? Michael McMurtrie in costume and Bruce Dalkin, Prue Pyke and George Holden made informative and interesting presentations.

**Free Tree Day** is a way Project Platypus seeks to introduce new landholders to Landcare and there are few better feel



*Kate Auty Sustainability Commissioner for Victoria spoke at the 2011 AGM*



*190 people listened to Peter Andrew talk on Keyline farming at the 2009 AGM*



*The 10th year celebration was attended by the who's who of Project Platypus*



*Michael McMurtrie in costume and Bruce Dalkin debated the future of Landcare*



*In 2010 walkers take in the magnificent views from the head of the 6 Mile catchment*



*Free tree day at Landsborough in 2007 led to rush hour outside the Landsborough Hall*



*Landcare facilitator Bob Wallace engages with students at Agrifest 2011 and gives them a tree to plant*



*An excursion to Colin and Carol Snooks property to see green feed production was part of Farming in the 21st Century*



*Jane Williams accepts the BP Catchment Award from Minister Marie Tehan*



*Hundreds of displays have been mounted by Project Platypus, including this one at Creswick Landcare Expo*

good activities than planting a tree. Each year a particular group of landholders are targeted to give tree planting a go. Encouraging landholders to plant paddock trees, engaging with landholders in the Landsborough area, distributing free native grasses and giving away plants suited to landholders in the Stawell Urban Landcare area are some of the successful initiatives to encourage landholders to plant trees.

**Open Landcare meetings or Landcare Linkups** were held quarterly or half yearly over several years in the mid 2000's to foster communications between the Landcare Groups in the Project Platypus "network" and allowed individuals and groups to showcase projects and engage in discussions about projects. A different Landcare group would host a field visit to local works or properties followed by a barbeque tea and get together. Groups getting together socialising and sharing their successes and failures provided positive and valuable interactions.

**Farming in the 21st Century** is a partnership between local governments, DPI and Project Platypus to provide forums for farmers on developments in sustainable farming. In 2009 Project Platypus held field visits to the Greens and Snooks farms to see how they were diversifying and making their enterprises more sustainable. In 2010 Victoria Leeke organised a very successful soils workshop at Pomonal.

As part of Farming in the 21st Century, **Agrifest 2011** was held with workshops to provide farmers from across the region with an opportunity to hear the latest innovations, predictions and initiatives. This was generously funded through a grant from the William Buckland Foundation. Having high calibre speakers, with an important message and an engaging delivery was the aim of the day and feedback from the over 120 participants suggested that presentations were engaging and useful. In 2012 Agrifest was once again held and featured speakers on marketing,

biodynamic, no till, carbon farming and women on farms.

**Awards** and presentations can provide public recognition for one's efforts and over the years Project Platypus has received a number of awards which usually necessitated a team "suing up" and heading to Melbourne to see which of the finalists won the award. One of the awards that Project Platypus has received was the BP Catchment Award in 1997.

Communicating and selling the Landcare message is one way to increase the awareness and membership of Landcare.

**Displays** at the Wimmera Mallee Field Day, Festivals, Stawell Agricultural shows, the Ararat and Melbourne Sustainability Expos and other events often lead to positive engagements with individuals and groups. Displays might focus on tree and plant species, encouraging volunteers, nest boxes, weed identification, biodiversity or revegetation. Free plants at a display have proven a most successful way to start a conversation and engage the broader community.

Visiting **demonstration sites and field visits** have been an essential part of the planning, developing, implementing and monitoring of projects. Visiting properties prior to or following works allows landholders to share their knowledge and experience and also to benefit from interactions with neighbours, visitors or experts in a particular field. These events are also social events where landholders from across the catchment can showcase the improvements they propose or have made.

In a catchment as large as the Upper Wimmera catchment there has been a great deal of arm waving to the head of the catchment or downstream to demonstrate a point. Fortunately today the arm waving can be followed up by detailed mapping to identify proposed work sites and projects.



**Bus Tours** taking sponsors such as GWMWater or Rio Tinto out to sites where funds have been invested has been a useful means of ensuring the continued interest and involvement of sponsors. Bus tours for Landcare Groups and members, the Management committee, staff and the general community have had a variety of destinations. Visits to other Landcare regions and groups, to sites with exemplary works or to particular events have helped to provide participants with skills, experiences and motivation.

Some of the most successful **workshops** were the 2001 Birds on Farms and 2007 Fauna on Farms which combined presentations by experts such as Alan Reid from the Gould League and zoologist Clive Crouch with farm visits to the Leeke's wildlife dam and George Holden's Ironbark remnant. Seed collecting and plant propagation workshops were also very popular.

**Walks** across the catchment to see the lay of the land, to follow a creek line from its source or to look at projects have become an annual event in the Project Platypus calendar.

One of the first walks was the joint Wimmera Landcare Mountains to Mallee 2007 project beginning on the slopes of Mt Cole where the Wimmera River begins and hiking 300km to where the Wimmera enters Lake Hindmarsh. The progress of walkers was widely reported and provided a valuable insight into the issues affecting the Wimmera River. Other walks have been Glendhu Galivanting in 2009 which traversed the steep hills of the Start's spectacular Crowlands property, the Mt William Creek walk with 60 inspired people travelling from the base of Mt William to near Dadswells Bridge where the creek enters the Wimmera River and the Six Mile Walk in which began at the Dunneworthy forest and finished near Joel.



*A successful plant propagation workshop was held in 2006 at Phil and Jane Williams Wildflower nursery*



*A seed collection workshop gave participants the skills to collect their own seed for projects*



*Field visits look at many aspects of farming crops, sheep management, erosion control etc*



*Landcare groups and organisations meet regularly to exchange ideas and developments*



*Walks across the catchment have become a regular feature after this Mountains to Mallee Walk*

## 1.8 Plantouts



2000 - All the partners with landowner Jack Start planning the revegetation project



2000 - On the big day with team leaders organising teams to head out planting



2001 - Thorough site preparation is required for successful plantings



2001 - A sunny day is a bonus and lunch catered by the Elmhurst Landcare Group revives planters



2002 - Planters assemble ready for their instructions, and to collect tools and plants

Plantouts have been the annual highlight of the Project Platypus calendar since their inception in 2000. Originally Project Platypus partnered with DPI to organise and host revegetation works on the steep, bare hills in the east of the catchment. As DPI salinity officer, Julie Andrew's role was to identify saline recharge sites on steep hills, control grazing with landclass fencing and revegetate the hills.

Project Platypus organised the planting component of the project and given the difficult steep terrain, large sites and thousands of plants a community planting event was chosen as the best way to get the 15,000 – 30,000 trees in the ground. Hayley Johnson (now Molloy) from DPI continued in the role of co-ordinating Plantouts. Subsequently Project Platypus organised annual Plantouts as part of their revegetation program as a way to assist landholders to complete large projects.

The planting weekend, dubbed Plantout, is promoted to Landcare groups across the region, local community members and volunteers from further afield. At Plantout the equipment, food, shelter, toilets, warm fires and entertainment on the Saturday night are all provided. The combination of social interactions, beautiful landscapes and hard work has proved to be a good recipe and each year a mix of newcomers and old timers enjoy the experience. At the 2009 celebration of 10 years of Plantout Harold and Edith Thomas, Doreen and Athol Mackay and Ken and Margaret Johnson received awards for their 10 years of planting at the annual Plantouts. Plantout weather has varied from sublime to downright freezing, but organisers look after planters with hot cuppas, good food and a fire and shelter to warm up.

Recently the organisation of Plantout has been modified with planting days timetabled over 5 weekends in July, each for one day only. This has reduced the huge catering requirements and site logistics and has given volunteers a greater window for participation. Landcare Groups help host the mini Plantouts which are also very successful in getting thousands of plants in the ground.

Community groups are encouraged to engage members of their organisation to participate. Project Platypus Revegetation

Officer David Margetson explains *"Instead of each landholder struggling to plant their own 500 or 5000 trees, volunteers do the job and get to have fun as well. Plantout is an excellent way to get involved in Landcare, allowing for people from all walks of life to come together and make a meaningful contribution to our environment."*

### Plantout 2000 Glendhu

A tough site for the first ever Plantout, the 2400ha Glendhu Station property lies at the head of Glendhu catchment and is comprised of steep, rocky, cleared hills and valleys incised by eroded waterways. Jack and Lynne Start have been actively restoring their spectacular property for over 20 years. In 2000 14,000 trees and shrubs were destined for one of their (many) steep and rocky hill sites. To get the plants in the ground volunteers came from across the region to be part of the event. Julie Andrew from DPI and Project Platypus had ensured that the site had been fenced, sites ripped where possible, trees and tools were distributed on site, camping sites set up and good tucker organised. Julie recalls *"Picking holes on a steep rocky hill to create a friendly niche for a plant was a challenge."* However, good company, an amazing landscape and a massive effort in tough conditions all made for a successful weekend. Project Platypus Manager Peter Hilbig confirmed *"The welcome of the hosts Lynne and Jack Start and the sheer ruggedness of the site made a lasting impression on volunteers and confirmed Plantout as an annual event on the Project Platypus calendar."*

### Plantout 2001 Elmhurst

Elmhurst is surrounded by a series of steep bare hills on the edge of the Pyrenees and Mt Cole Ranges. The role of



Julie Andrew from DPI was to engage landholders in revegetating their steep hills. Several landholders from the Elmhurst Landcare Group including Doug and Pauline Boatman took up the challenge and prepared their steep hill planting sites with rip lines. On the July Plantout day volunteers were ferried in 4wd's up the very steep hills. Teams worked their way across and down the hill, planting trees and shrubs at the recommended spacings. Lunch was provided on site and after a day of backbreaking work, planters were transported back to Elmhurst Golf Club, where the local hospitality was enjoyed. Doug Boatman describes *"The Plantout site on my place was pretty rugged, rocky and steep but the volunteers got the job done and today we have a vegetated hill with trees up to 8m high. It encouraged me to do further planting projects"*

### Plantout 2002 Navarre Hill

In the late 1990's Ron Bibby had successfully revegetated a hill site at Navarre and this provided the impetus for planting on Navarre Hill, owned by Charlie Raeburn and Noel Supple. Plantout organiser Jane Marriott describes the site *"Because of its steep and rocky nature its value for grazing was low but in terms of biodiversity it was outstanding as the original grassy groundcover was largely intact and fallen logs and rocks provided habitat."*

Lines were ripped for planting trees and shrubs on slopes that were frighteningly steep in places. The weather was mainly kind for the 150 or so planters who were directed to try and find the "least rocky" spots for planting. Volunteers made their way around the hill following rip lines and sending people back (long distances) to get more trees, guards or stakes when they ran out. The weather was generally kind except for a short sharp soaking rain which caught far flung people out on the hill but things heated up a little when a camp fire spread and a DSE vehicle had to be moved in a hurry!

The logistics of getting tools, plants, food, shelter, people, first aid, toilets to such a

rugged area required substantial organisation by Project Platypus. It is this high level of planning and organisation that keeps volunteers coming back. Navarre Landcare Group did a wonderful job catering for lunch, the evening meal as well as breakfast for those camping at the Football Oval site.

### Plantout 2003 Joe Kilpatrick's Hill Great Western

Yet another steep hill planting provided the usual challenges and spectacular views for planters. In conjunction with DPI, Joe had fenced this extensive hill site from stock and ripped planting lines to revegetate a salinity recharge site and provide a significant remnant link with the nearby Dunneworthy Forest. Planters assembled in a sheltered valley and formed teams to plant and guard along their designated rip line at the designated spacings and with the recommended ratios of trees to shrubs.

From a distance planters looked like ants crawling across the ground. Volunteer planters Lisa Moore and Ray Davies recall *"We joined up with a group of young people and worked all day with them taking it in turns planting, guarding and replenishing supplies. It was great fun."* Lunch and a cuppa provided welcome breaks but by 4.30 on Saturday afternoon, tools were returned to the tool trailer and weary planters made their way back to Great Western for drinks at Seppelts and a meal at the Great Western Club Rooms. Live music entertained the planters whilst others chatted round the campfire outside. After a Sunday morning planting session, another successful Plantout was declared with 15,000 trees in the ground.

### Plantout 2004 Moyston Salt Creek

The Moyston Plantout stands out in many people's memory as the Plantout where the sun was least evident. Fog and low cloud were the order of the day but didn't dampen the spirits of the 200 or so planters as they "marched" along the Salt Creek corridor planting and guarding trees. Looking back along the planting lines with the hundreds of white carton guards



2002 - Teams of 3 "stake out" their rip line and head off into the distance



2003 - Landowner Joe Kilpatrick and site leaders meet before Plantout to plan Plantout activities



2003 - Lunch time at Plantout is a social occasion and gives the legs a break from traversing steep hills



2004 - Paddy and Nan Burke from Moyston Landcare Group with a friendly welcome for planters



2004 - Site leader Adam Merrick with the all important pre planting briefing



2005 - Sleet and rain led to the only cancellation of a planting session at a Plantout!



2005 - Steep hills, lovely views and lots of plants to be planted



2006 - Volunteers get last minute instructions and load up with plants and picks for planting tools



2006 - The warm fire, cuppa and toilets are a long way down



2007 - Sites have been well prepared over the last several months ready for planting

announcing their presence is particularly rewarding on flat sites such as along a creek line. Team leaders directed their teams and ensured that tools and plants were kept up to the volunteers, that tasks were rotated and that quality control was achieved.

Volunteers were rewarded with the sight of thousands of white guards flanking the Salt Creek as they drove home on Sunday afternoon along the Moyston to Great Western Rd. Project Platypus Works Co-ordinator Adam Merrick recalls *"Unlike some of the previous Plantout sites access at Moyston was easy and the hospitable soils and good season meant that after just one year the sites were looking amazing."* Today the very successful plantings make a visual and environmental impact on the local landscape.

### Plantout 2005 Holdens Hill Concongella & Delahunty's Jallukar

Although the air at 8.30 on a wintry Saturday morning at Concongella was very chilly, the rip lines on the Holden's hill awaited plants and so 4WD vehicles transported planters up the hill where tools, plants and guards were at the ready. Teams set off and made a good start, but by lunch time the chill air had turned into sleet driven by a freezing wind. Planters struggled the 1km back to the catering marquee and tried to warm up. Ken Redwin recalls *"If I hadn't tucked my dog under my raincoat I think he would have frozen to death."* As the weather showed no sign of improving many called it a day and headed home to warm up. Organisers were left with the task of locating planting tools abandoned in the hasty descent and deciding on Sunday's plans.

A reduced complement of volunteers enjoyed extra helpings of Saturday's roast dinner at Concongella Hall and hoped for better luck the next day. With over 2/3 of the plants still to be planted, it was fortunate the weather on Sunday was beautifully sunny and the Sunday planters worked at a feverish pace to get an amazing 8000 plants in the ground in just five hours. George Holden recalls *"We*

*were thrilled with the outcome and at the amazing growth of the plants that has taken place since"*

On the Sunday another group of planters planted out a low lying area of Delahunty's property near Lake Fyans where gumboots were very much the order of the day.

### Plantout 2006 Glendhu

Since the 2001 Plantout at Glendhu, Jack and Lynne Start had been busy undertaking more erosion works, rabbit and weed control and revegetation. A series of steep hills at the head of the Glendhu Creek was chosen as one of Project Platypus 2006 revegetation projects and as the site for the annual Plantout. The all too familiar preparations ensued, ripping planting lines, rabbit control, fencing from stock as well as the usual preparations for the Plantout weekend. The region had been in the grips of a long dry period and by early July the site, like the rest of the region was still pretty dry. The Plantout was dependent on the site being moist enough to ensure the survival of the seedlings and anyone who suggests that plants could be watered in has not experienced the ruggedness of these steep hill planting sites!

Works Co-ordinator Bernie Rudolph made the call *"By mid July there was just enough rain to go ahead with the event. It was heartening to see volunteer planters, many of them regulars, picking the tough ground to find enough soil to plant in places that were too steep to have been ripped."* As it turned out, the weekend was a great success with over 200 volunteers from across the state getting 12,500 plants in the ground. The weather was fantastic and everyone was in high spirits throughout the weekend. The Plantout was organised in partnership with Crowlands Landcare Group who excel in catering for the hungry masses.

### Plantout 2007 Jallukar

The very active Jallukar Landcare Group turned on good weather, a great Plantout venue based at Pomonal Hall and plenty of volunteers to helped to plant on several properties in the Pomonal, Black Range,



Bellellen, Moyston and Dadswells Bridge areas. The idea of planting multiple sites on the Plantout weekend was a result of smaller corridor plantings being the focus of Project Platypus revegetation works with larger sites being serviced by the WCMA Catchment Tender process.

Sites were very accessible and team leaders who by now knew the drill were able to ensure planting was even more efficient with teams assembling guards, distributing guards, filling buckets with a mix of plants, planting and guarding. A record 30,000 plants were planted over the weekend. Barry Curtis from Bellellen *was amazed* - *"Soon after arriving volunteers had assembled and distributed the guards, planters were armed with full buckets of plants and a Potti Putki and work continued at a steady pace all day. The plants today are more than 3m high."* Planters at Al Mackay's granite hill site near the Black Range were rewarded with stunning views as they planted.

## Plantout 2008 Stawell

Stawell Urban Landcare Group volunteered to host the 2008 Plantout and plenty of volunteers arrived bright and early at the Stawell Racing Track on the third Saturday morning in July for a cuppa and cake and to find which Plantout site they were headed for. Ten different properties had sites prepared with the largest site on the valley floor at Halls Gap. Many sites were quite wet which usually ensures the successful establishment of plants.

On Saturday evening over seventy people enjoyed a good feed, good company and good music at the Stawell Racecourse venue. On Sunday teams headed out again to new sites and worked until lunchtime. Volunteer planter Gordon Marriott says *"The small teams at each site provided a good opportunity to get to know your fellow planters."*

In fine weather, with the soil moist and warm about 120 volunteers planted and guarded over 18,000 plants.

## Plantout 2009 Elmhurst

A site with patches of remnant grasses beside the Rocky Creek tributary near

Elmhurst was chosen for Plantout from the 2009 revegetation sites. The site was to be revegetated to increase its biodiversity values and to provide a riparian corridor. The ratio of trees to shrubs and grasses planted was low to ensure an open woodland vegetation community would be created. Planters registered at the Elmhurst Hall and were bussed to the site where Revegetation Officer Bernie Rudolph gave volunteers their OH&S and planting instructions. Planting teams worked towards a central point and welcomed the hot drinks, soup and a warm fire at the central marquee. Bus tours to see the amazing growth at previous Plantout sites were part of the weekend activities.

Elmhurst Landcare Group again displayed their hospitality with wonderful meals, great local entertainers and lots of willing bus drivers, dishwashers and planters. Melbourne based landowner Dechlan Ellis remembers *"We were blown away by the efficiency, enthusiasm and end results of this community based event. We could never have achieved an outcome like this without the assistance of Project Platypus and the volunteers."* It is the combined efforts of 120 or so volunteers working as one big team to get 25,000 plants in the ground that makes Plantouts such a feel good and worthwhile event.

## Plantout 2010 Barton Station Moyston

Although Georges Creek is not a major waterway, it eventually makes its way into the Mt William Creek and then into the Wimmera River. On the extensive Barton Station the stately Red Gums and small herbs and grasses which would once have graced the Georges Creek were largely absent, so the Plantout plantings were to help put back the diversity and create a creek corridor. A 70m wide corridor along a 4.5 km stretch was fenced off from the surrounding grazing and cropping country and the site prepared well by Barton Manager Norm Hunt.

Volunteers registered at the Moyston Recreation Reserve, grabbed a cuppa to warm up and were bussed to the site to start work planting and guarding plants



2007 - Back at the hall for the evening meal and entertainment - yay!



2008 - Why are all these people sitting on the job - folding and assembling thousands of guards



2008 - An extensive planting along the Halls Gap valley floor has been very successful



2009 - A summer Plantout planning meeting with Elmhurst Landcare members



2009 - The assembling of guards is the first activity, followed by placing out guards



2010 - Well rugged up Plantout volunteers of all ages join in the fun



2010 - Warmth, music, good food and good company are the rewards for weary planters



2011 - The Kilpatrick family are thrilled at the sight of carton guards extending into the distance



2011 - The planting site on Banfield's Redman Rd property provided planters with a lovely backdrop



2011 - Excellent site preparation, moist soils, skilled planting make for successful revegetation

along prepared rip lines. With the advent of the revolutionary Potti Putki planting tool, it is the guarding of plants which is the slowest part of the process. Typically half of the volunteers assemble the bamboo stakes in the guards and distribute these at the required distance along the planting lines. The planter "pops" the plant into the rip line - without the need to bend! -and another person follows behind installing the guard over the plant. Watering is not necessary as plants go into moist soils and follow up rain is assured when trees are planted in July and August.

Lunch at the amazing bluestone wool shed was welcomed by volunteers as was the roast dinner and a warm fire back at the recreation reserve in the evening. On Sunday some planters completed the Barton planting and others planted at Simon Brady's Jallukar farm. Secretary of Moyston Landcare Group Madelene Townsend was impressed with her first Plantout *"Everyone pitches in, whether it is with catering, driving the shuttle bus or planting. It is a great community event."*

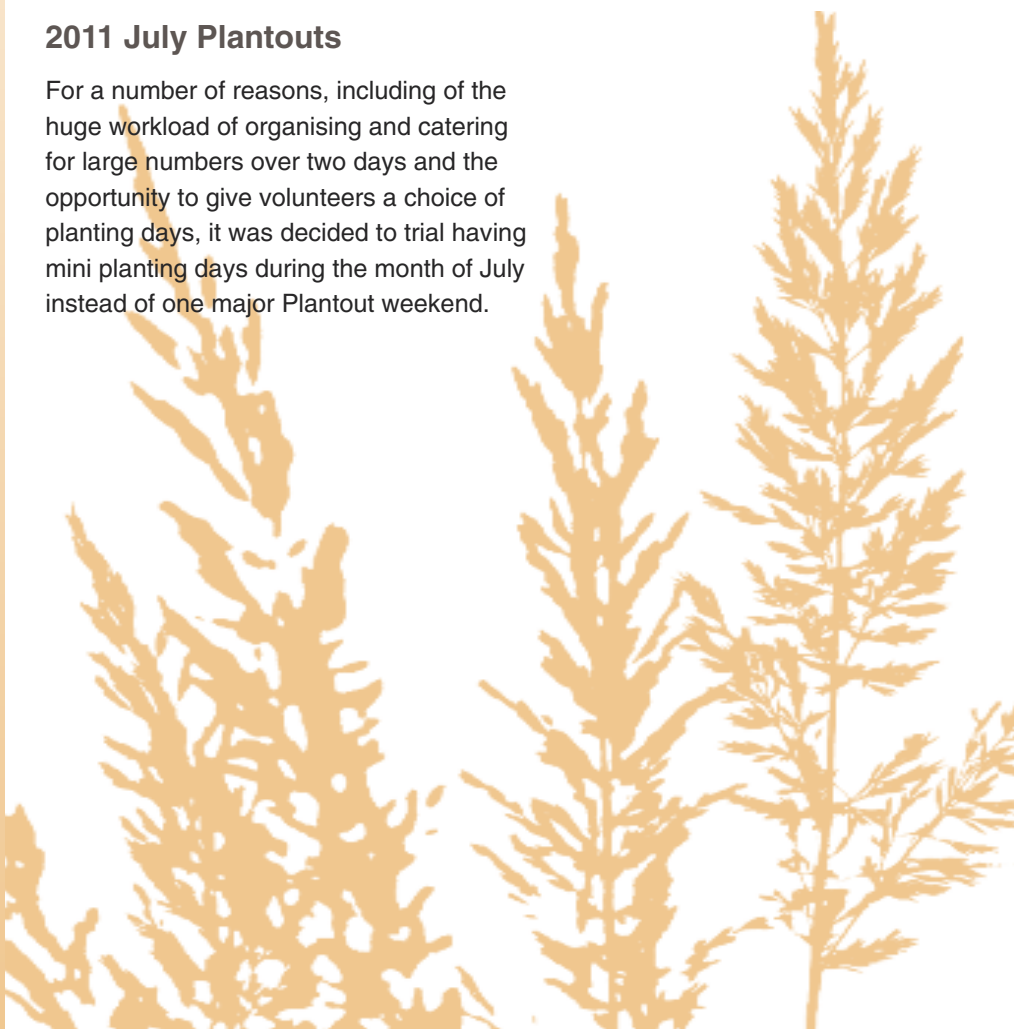
## 2011 July Plantouts

For a number of reasons, including of the huge workload of organising and catering for large numbers over two days and the opportunity to give volunteers a choice of planting days, it was decided to trial having mini planting days during the month of July instead of one major Plantout weekend.

Project Platypus Manager Leigh Blackmore says *"Volunteers responded well to the idea and teams at each site planted the 6000 or so plants allocated for the site and over the five days in July got 20,000 plants planted. The greater involvement of Landcare Groups was very positive."*

Jallukar, Crowlands, Concongella, Northern Grampians and Great Western Landcare Groups each hosted a planting day and reported it was a great group activity supplemented by volunteer planters from near and far and supported by Project Platypus. Groups supplied a BBQ lunch and cuppas and Project Platypus supplied the toilets, marquee, tools, delivered plants to each site and ensured team leaders were briefed on their role.

The model for future July planting days was endorsed and in 2012 July very successful July Plantouts were held at Great Western, Navarre, Lake Lonsdale, Moyston, Elmhurst and Dadswells Bridge.





## 1.9 Reflections

Beginning as an idea by a group of Landcarers with a part time manager with a desk in the Stawell DNRE offices to the Project Platypus we see 18 years later has been a significant achievement, particularly considering the largely volunteer nature of the organisation. There have been periods when funding was hard to secure but the strength of the idea and the determination and vision of the community has been remarkable. Many of the individuals involved at the start still play a significant role in the organisation.

The fundamental goals and the organisational model developed in the first year are still relevant today. The administrative operations of the organisation have been refined and expanded considerably to adequately and efficiently administer the extensive projects undertaken.

Since 1994, Project Platypus has achieved impressive results in attracting over \$4.5 million for projects to address loss of habitat, fragmentation of remnant vegetation, threatened species, erosion, salinity, pest plant and animal control and sustainable farming practices which recognise the importance of soils, carbon accounting, perennial pastures and the impacts of climate change.

While the major portion of Project Platypus funding is from state and federal governments Project Platypus enjoys the relative flexibility of supplementary funding from philanthropic trusts and sponsors. The organisation relies on successive governments to recognise the important role of Landcare in natural resource management and to fund organisations such as Project Platypus who work with and for their communities.

The 2012 to 2014 Project Platypus Strategic Plan describes some of the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and communities as

- Designing on-ground works to factor in potential impacts from climate change
- Addressing possible decreases in landholder involvement and Landcare funding and changing models of funding.

- Increased funding for projects addressing Climate Change

- Pressures on rural communities from poor seasons and the impacts on farm productivity and profitability

The success of Project Platypus can be attributed to its community support, its grass-roots approach to problem solving and its ability to relate to land managers and investors. Project Platypus has been an adaptable and flexible organisation which has enabled it to maintain its strength and vitality over the years. In 2012, Project Platypus's capacity to support Landcare groups and the community to achieve on-ground results is better than ever.

The organisation has established good relationships with its stakeholders including landholders, Landcare Groups, agencies, investors and all levels of Government. The committed Management Committee team made up of representatives of most of its member groups has an excellent understanding of natural resource management and their governance role.

Project Platypus has an excellent track record with highly skilled and experienced staff who have helped build the good reputation that Project Platypus has earned within the region and beyond.

The Project Platypus Management Committee and the broader community have been successful in encouraging, supporting and developing Landcare activities and are well equipped to take the organisation through the challenges of the next 20 years.



*Landscape scale changes are changing the environment for the better*



*The Upper Wimmera Catchment has some stunning environments*



*The platypus and other fauna will be continue to be indicators of catchment health*



*Landholders and Project Platypus is committed to improving the environment*



*Looking back at past achievements provides motivation for future protects*

## 2.1 Moyston Landcare Group



Members working on a wire netted planting site at Mt Ararat 1990



Mt Ararat planting site in 2012



Moorfoot's hill site in 1994



Moorfoot's 1994 planting site in 2012



Members enjoy morning tea at Brady's creek planting site on Ararat Rd

### Beginnings

In 1987 a group of individual landholders concerned about salinity and water table levels got together and planted 1000 trees on a very steep hillside at Mt. Ararat. The next year the group planted 1500 trees on rocky rises and saline areas, this time with guards to protect trees from rabbits. A Field Day was held in conjunction with the Dept. of Conservation, Forests and Lands in 1989, and sites with salinity and high water table levels were visited. The group was also taken to an area on the Ararat hills to see the encouraging results of a 2 year old tree planting. Afterwards an informal meeting was held and a decision was made by those present to form a Landcare Group. David Cole and Bob Sanders were elected spokespersons and in 1989 a public meeting was held and 32 landholders signed up to be members of the Moyston Landcare Group.

The original objectives of the group were to assist landowners of the Ararat Hills to re-establish the hill areas with trees to help halt the rising water table and associated salinity problems. The Whole Farm Plan concept was to be encouraged, with the total water catchment to be tackled by group efforts rather than as individuals struggling to do what they could. By increasing community awareness of the problem, more landholders would get involved and become eligible for assistance through the Landcare program.

Members of Moyston Landcare participated in the discussions in 1994 to form an Upper Wimmera Landcare umbrella organisation - Project Platypus - which would help to co-ordinate works across the catchment and access funding for larger projects.

### Achievements

- After the first plantings on a steep hill at Mt Ararat, others followed along the western slopes of the Ararat Hills, including another very steep site on Moorfoots Hill. A bulldozer was used to

rip the site and it was decided the best way of protecting the young trees from rabbits was to wire net the whole area. For the first few years the trees struggled on the harsh, windswept sites but now they are thriving and can be seen from afar. Many smaller plantings were also undertaken by the group, with members helping each other. The planting days were well attended and ended socially with a bite to eat and a few drinks.

- In 1989 the group gained funds to erect a hot house and a shade house at the Moyston Primary School. The aim was to foster an understanding of Landcare with the students through Junior Landcare. Students collected local native seeds and propagated them for planting around the school with surplus plants sold to locals.

- An early project on Ian and Kevin Brady's site on one side of the Moyston Ararat Rd and Peter and Judy Bigmore's on the other involved fencing off creeks and planting trees. Projects such as these in prominent positions helped to promote the group and their work to the wider community.

- In the early days rabbits were a major threat to the survival of the young plants and tree guards of some description were vital. Today, the curiosity of cockatoos and kangaroos seem to be the biggest threat to the young plant's survival. Even the white cardboard guards can't guarantee the safety of the seedling within.

- By 2000 the Moyston Landcare Group seemed to be losing momentum, mainly as grants for works no longer needed to come through the Landcare Groups, but could be accessed directly from WCMA, DPI, Project Platypus etc. The group plantings which contributed to group cohesiveness no longer happened. Project Platypus began an annual Plantout Weekend in 2000 hosted by a different Landcare Group each year. This weekend was open to all and endeavoured to attract city folk to be a



part of Landcare working alongside locals. Moyston Landcare Group hosted Plantout sites in 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2010.

- The group's direction changed in 2004 when small landholder, Ken Readwin took over the role as President of the Moyston Landcare Group. His focus was more historical – the creating of a walking track around the old mining area to the west of the township.

This project was known as the Moyston Mine Walk, and a small band of Work for the Dole participants spent a few weeks clearing a track and installing numbered markers at interesting points along the way. In the last few years the Moyston Landcare Group, with Community Engagement funds through Project Platypus, has endeavoured to finish this off with signage and a picnic table. A small planting with children from the Moyston Primary School in 2010 helped to restore some understorey plants.

- The main focus in the last two years has been to secure funds through the

CMA, to assist landholders to control new and emerging weeds such as Chilean Needlegrass, Patersons Curse and Bathurst Burr, as well as a host of old favourites! Small pockets of rabbits have also been targeted.

## People

Presidents of the Moyston Landcare Group who have served the group and their community well have been David Cole, Bob Sanders, Peter Bigmore, Jan Ibs von Seht, Ferg Anderson, James Brady, Ken Readwin, and currently Adam Merrick. The hard working past secretaries of the Landcare Group are Bob Sanders, Peter Bigmore, Paddy Bourke, Anne Marshall, Carol Jackson, Sue Horvath, Madelene Townsend and currently Rosie Nater.

## Reflections

Moyston Landcare Group hopes that their community remains strong and vibrant, and continues to work together to care for and improve their environment for the generations to come.



*Moyston Common Mine Walk working bee 2010*



*Site of the 2004 Moyston Salt Creek Rd Plantout in 2012*



*Planters at the 2004 Moyston Plantout, boots and knees not yet dirty*



*Regular meetings can be social as well as functional*



*Adam Merrick and Moyston students at the 25 year Landcare commemorative planting 2012*

## 2.2 Black Range Land Management Group



*To counter rabbit and kangaroos eating vegetation, plots were fenced and revegetated*



*Trials confirmed that rabbits were the primary cause of poor ground cover vegetation*



*A youth labour program (LEAP) established a direct seeded corridor between the Black Range and Sugarloaf*



*15 years on, the 150m wide and 4km long corridor provides excellent habitat*



*A workshop at the Grange Golf Club with Clive Crouch talking on Bandicoots*

### Beginnings

The Black Range is a granite range south east of the Stawell township which has remained well vegetated with open grassy woodland, heathland, and rocky scrub despite a long history of grazing and timber removal. A number of residents owned bush blocks around the perimeter and enjoyed the beautiful landscape and views but did not enjoy the rabbits which populated the range in their thousands and were destroying the diverse flora of the extensive bushland. Erosion was also an issue on the fragile granite soils and past poor land management practices had impacted the health of the Black Range environment.

Anne Davis and Elwyn Dennis who live on the Bunjils Cave Rd believed that the formation of a Landcare Group might ensure that rabbits and weeds could be addressed as a group and that remnant protection and revegetation could take place to protect soils and provide habitat for a range of threatened fauna. In 1987 a meeting was called at the Grange Golf Club and over 20 people joined the Black Range Land Management Group, the first Landcare Group in the Wimmera.

### Achievements

The group agreed on their priorities and over subsequent years was involved in a number of projects

- In the 1980's exclusion plots were created on Crown land on the top of the range to determine the impact of rabbit and kangaroo grazing on the diversity of the understorey. These were subsequently monitored to record the impact these animals were having on native vegetation. Numerous exclusion plots were also put in on members' properties throughout the ranges. These were planted with many of the rare or localised shrubs and herbs that had been contract grown for the group through grants. The aim was for that the exclosures would act as seed banks for the eventual migration of the protected plants out into the surrounding land once rabbits were brought under control. On

many of the sites this proved to be a resounding success.

- Rabbit control was the most time consuming and frustrating task for landholders prior to the Calici virus decimating numbers for some years. Rabbit proof netting of properties, 1080 baiting, implosion and ripping of warrens and shooting are all employed to keep the rabbits under control. Given the difficult terrain in the range, rabbit control is going to be impossible until a new control method is found.

- Weed Control was less time consuming than rabbit control, but regular spraying or removal of Bridal Creeper, St Johns Wort, Great Mullein and in more recent times the South African Weed Orchid has been undertaken. Project Platypus has assisted landholders with weed control using their spray trailer and works crew.

- Restoring understorey species on properties around the fringe of the Black Range has been a common theme for planting projects with many of the tasty herbs and lilies being destroyed by rabbits or previous grazing. Increasing the diversity of vegetation has been the goal of many landholders.

- The development of a Management Plan for the Black Range was undertaken by Elwyn Dennis in 2003 with funds from Wimmera Catchment Management Authority. The feature of the publication was a series of photos to assist the identification of the wonderful wildflowers of the Black Range.

- Establishing a direct seeding corridor between the Black Range and Sugarloaf was the goal of the LEAP Scheme - a youth employment project facilitated by Phil Williams. For 6 months the team worked on rabbit proof fencing of the 3.5km long corridor, followed by 50km of spraying and direct seeding. The results were amazing and today the corridor resembles a forest and provides habitat for wildlife

- In the past the Black Range was famous for its Southern Brown Bandicoot



populations which by the late 1980's appeared to be dwindling. By the mid 1990's sightings were few and the group received an Envirofund grant to undertake surveys and establish dense plantings to protect remaining bandicoots. The 2006 bushfires however burnt across the range, destroying most of the Bandicoots former refuge areas, so efforts were focussed on fox control, providing artificial bandicoot refuges and community education. Landholder concerns were reflected in the large attendance at a workshop on bandicoots. Bandicoot projects continue with Project Platypus undertaking revegetation, local recovery plans and large scale fox control plans.

## People

The contribution of Anne Davis and Elwyn Dennis in initiating the group and undertaking secretarial work, grant applications and project facilitation was substantial. Because of the small member base, all members have taken on roles or responsibilities at various times – Peter and Carole Brazier, Neil and Wendy Marriott, Mark and Jenny Farrer, Barb and Graham Walker, Patrick Monaghan, Jane Marriott, Grant Stewart, Helen Rosenbaum, Cathy Donehue, Graeme and Marilyn Cox, Ian and Jill Mitchell, Rod Tonkin, Lachlan Campbell, Jim Redford, Keith Lofthouse. Peter Graveson from Parks Vic provided good support in his role as manager of the public land in the range and Speedway members were involved in early plantings.

## Reflections

The Black Range Land Management group was unique amongst Landcare groups in that most landholders owned bushland with little or no agricultural activities and enjoyed a common love of the natural environment. What was shared but not enjoyed was the constant battle with rabbits which are difficult to eradicate in rocky bushland. After 19 years of operation the group was finding it difficult to maintain members and went into recession for a few years. In April 2008 at a meeting to gauge interest in reviving the group 20 landholders attended and decided to reactivate the group. Although the group continued to meet on an as needs basis, the need for a group to tackle issues was less as to a large extent weeds, rabbits and revegetation have largely been addressed by individual members. The group rallied in 2010 to undertake a walking track project on Pleasant Creek.

The social networks established through the group have ensured neighbours are available to help each other or come together for a particular project or cause as was experienced in 2011 when a motor bike track was closed due to its impacts on neighbours and the environment. In May 2012 the group decided to unincorporate and act more as a social network and undertake projects facilitated by Project Platypus.



*The 2006 bushfires affected most of the range with impacts on properties and wildlife*



*Group members take a break from the walking track project work*



*Rabbit control is a constant activity in the rocky hills of the Black Range*



*Pleasant Crk arises in the Black Range and is the site for a recent Walking Track project*



*Bandicoot Recovery works are ongoing*

## 2.3 Concongella Landcare Group



*The planting of Col Halls Hill at Joel in 1979 was a landmark project*



*Concongella group is heavily involved planning and monitoring works in the Six Mile*



*Aerial photo of Holdens' showing fenced off and replanted creeklines*



*Concongella group helped drive erosion works in the Astons Scour*



*Grassed batters and a trickle pipe repair erosion sites*

### Beginnings

The Concongella Landcare Group was formed in October 1993 to serve the area between Stawell and Landsborough and from Campbells Bridge to Bulgana. It is a very large area for a Landcare group with 122 listed landholders and challenging country with steep bare hills and issues with erosion, rabbits and weeds. By June 1995 the group had 50 paid up members with George Holden as the inaugural Chairman and Val Membrey as Secretary.

There was a flurry of meetings and administrative activity in the first few years with bi-monthly group meetings and committee meetings on the alternate month. John Read, then Principal of Concongella School, had a strong influence on the group's formation and hosted those early meetings at the school and Terry May continued this help when he became Principal. In the first year the group had two combined meetings with the Navarre Landcare Group at the Landsborough Hotel and Navarre football ground.

### Achievements

- The group was successful in obtaining a \$16,000 grant for detailed surveys and planning work in the landcare area including the Astons Scour catchment. This work paved the way for Project Platypus to follow up with major works in Astons Scour.
- Green Swamp at Greens Creek was experiencing increasing salinity and bad weed problems so tree planting and weed control at the site were early group projects.
- A spray trailer with self-retracting hoses with a 150 metres reach was purchased with grant monies and has proven to be a valuable asset for the group with good use by Concongella Group members and by surrounding Landcare groups. Infestations of weeds including Spiny Rush, Cape Tulip, Horehound, Bathurst Burr, Bridal Creeper and Patersons Curse have been mapped on the Project

Platypus weed data base and although the constant war is ongoing, the obvious successes are very heartening.

- A rabbit action group based at the Cocks' Farm Subdivision was slowly developed into a cohesive force with great success. Individual rabbit control works and group campaigns have been effective in keeping rabbit numbers down.
  - By June 1999 the group had raised and spent nearly \$75,000 in grants, mostly matched by in kind works by the landholder recipients.
  - The group has strongly supported the development of Project Platypus with Phil Hall and George Holden representing the group on the Erosion & Salinity Sub-Committee and Barry Hall and Larry McLean on the Pasture Establishment Sub-Committee.
  - Since the group's inception the group has been very fortunate to have the support of Stawell Gold Mines. They took out financial membership and were represented at meetings by then Environmental Officer Brian Myles. Their mapping and drafting department provided the group with a splendid map of the group's area, as well as a detailed map of the Aston Scour catchment.
- ### People
- In March 2006 long serving and hard working executives George Holden and Cheryl Hall were replaced by John Kindred as Chairman and Dianne Hodder as Secretary. In 2009 Mal Nicholson took over the chair and Phil Hall became Secretary/Treasurer. Other long term active members who have passed on or left the area are Bill Watson, Brian Monaghan, Ken and Maree McQualter, Ian Morrow, Clem Palmer, John Tiddy and Laurie Cossar. Current active members include Ken Hall, Barry Hall, Howard Frampton, Mandi Nicol and Tim Swindels, Barry Bibby, Steven West, Tige Mannington, Larry McLean, Kevin Thomas, David Monaghan, John Vance, Sue Holden, George Holden, Ian Gibson, and Col Hall



Over the years our group has benefitted greatly by input from people like Dave Munday, Julie Andrew, Pat Monaghan (Water Watch), John McIntyre (Ag. Department), Mary Bignall (Six Mile Creek), Mark Farrer (DNRE), Stuart Lardner, Mel Gammon and Ron Sanders (Auditing), Felicity Brown (DPI), Emma Bayley-Stark, Bernie Rudolph, Hayley Johnson and successive Project Platypus Managers Sherrie, Kerry, Peter, Emily, Luke and Leigh and from employing Bill Pyke – soil erosion design, and weed and rabbit facilitators Sean Malloy, Linton Argall, Alistair Johnson, David Margetson and Colin Snooks.

## Reflections

Like other Landcare groups, there is a strong focus on pest animals and plants, but because the group area is recognised as having some of the worst of Victoria's soil erosion problems, control and reclamation of erosion had to be the main focus. The Landcare members are committed to continue their on-going weed, rabbit and erosion control and to manage their properties in a sustainable way.

As an example of the one of the many positive aspects of the Landcare movement was when George was

experiencing some difficulty in getting 3,000 trees planted in a project on 'Overdale.' George offered to employ Mandy and Tim to help the job along. They quickly organised the Cocks' Farm rabbit buster group to a surprise working bee over one weekend which saw almost all of the trees in the ground. George recalls "What a wonderful weekend and how grateful we were for the help."

The 2005 Plantout weekend on Concongella Hill was a Landcare experience that was truly memorable! So many people on difficult terrain and some very average weather and a brilliant landcare spirit with 13,000 trees planted.



*Steep bare hills make perfect planting sites with multiple environmental benefits*



*George Holden at the 2005 Plantout on his "Overdale" property*



*A much needed break from scaling hills and planting at Plantout 2005*



*Sharing knowledge and experiences is facilitated by site visits*



*The moment of truth for erosion works... heavy rain!*

## 2.4 Northern Grampians Landcare Group



*Rabbit control in sandy country is an on-going task for Landcare*



*The group is involved in the major erosion control project at Mt Drummond*



*Planting a revegetation corridor between the Wimmera River and Lake Lonsdale*



*A Stawell Church group helped the Landcare plant Daves Ave*



*A comprehensive pest mapping and control project along Mt William Creek*

### Beginnings

The Northern Grampians Landcare Group, based around the Dadswells Bridge community, is recorded as beginning in 1990. After a quiet start the group was reactivated in 1994 at a meeting in the Dadswells Bridge Hall initiated by locals Peter Davie and Ian McDonald, with the support of Julie Andrew from DCNR.

In communications landholders were encouraged to include all the family and to be involved in determining the future direction. Over 40 farming families were on the mailing list in 1994 and many of those are still involved. Some of the issues the group looked at addressing were corella damage, fox and rabbit control, weed control, erosion works and revegetation.

### Achievements

- A plantation in 1990 on Arch McLeod's property along Sandy Lane was the first project completed by NGLG and is marked with a plaque.
- A bus trip of local landholder sites was held in 1995 to look at issues across their Northern Grampians area and help determine the direction of projects. Problems identified included erosion and pest plants and animals.
- At meetings there has been a steady cavalcade of guest speakers, primarily from government departments, who have attended meetings to keep landholders informed about current projects and funding sources. A strategic planning session facilitated by Nigel McGuckian, attracted a wide audience of the local community. The group has appreciated the input of these agencies and individuals who have ably serviced the group's needs.
- Joe Facey took on the leadership of the Fox Control portfolio for the group and also managed the borrowing of the rabbit fumigator. With the sandy soils and proximity to bushland fox and rabbit control have been and remain major issues.

- Regular field trips enabled group members to observe how other groups and individuals were doing Landcare and to see innovations in land management. Several members of the group did farm management courses which helped those landholders with an understanding of planning, conservation works, mapping and tree coverage.

- In 1996 the NLP funded 5km of fencing on Grahams and Howards and Coopers property marking the start of extensive works in conjunction with Project Platypus at Mt Drummond. Bill Pyke designed works and Wimmera Mallee Water funded work to address the massive challenge of over 3kms of serious gully erosion (up to 5m in depth) over four active gully heads.

Works continued over a number of years and the Landcare group undertook planting, monitoring and minor repair works. The Mt Drummond activities have been the group's largest project.

- A large trickle pipe was installed on Ian McDonald's Warra property where waters from the Mt Drummond runoff were backing up at an alarming rate. Designed by Bill Pyke, it stabilised the system near the Wimmera River.

- Trials to control onion grass were undertaken and the group actively pursued improved methods for managing pastures. Corella control was undertaken as part of protecting pastures. Thousands of corellas were trapped over a number of properties. This initiative was not ultimately successful but was a reflection of landcare initiatives to improve profitability of farming communities.

- Weed control of Bridal Creeper was regularly undertaken with Project Platypus assistance. In 2008 Lisa Moore and Linton Argall facilitated comprehensive weed and rabbit mapping and control along the Wimmera River. Other troublesome weeds include Cape Tulip, Blackberry and Briar Rose..



- A wet weather flight was undertaken in 1997 and video produced with UWFTG assistance to locate problem areas and give an overview of drainage issues. This initiative embraced the wider farming community as a showcase and publicity for the landcare group.

- Daves Avenue project to connect the Wimmera River corridor commenced in 2000 with Landmate undertaking fencing of sites assisted by the Landcare group and in 2001, 8000 trees were planted. Further fencing and planting and an extension of the site to connect to Lake Lonsdale continued with fencing and tree planting in 2006 and 2007. Now complete the bio-link is 17kms long and incorporates new plantations, enhanced remnants and un-used road reserves.

- The group assisted the Jackmans with their wetland project, establishing a wild life corridor linking a swamp with the Mt William Creek. 7,000 trees have been planted on the property and the group continues to be involved in ongoing plantings.

- In 2009 the Mt William Creek Walk was enthusiastically embraced by the group who helped organise the walk and host the final leg of the walk. Some 35 people of all ages and persuasions completed the final leg of this adventure, held during drought when the creek and river were both dry. It was a cultural and educative journey, which embraced the wider community. A book was published and a time capsule buried. Undoubtedly it was a highlight for this group.

- In 2010 the Project Platypus Small Landholders Project was undertaken at Dadswells Bridge to develop a walking trail, in conjunction with the group, Dadswells Bridge Progress Association and Rural City of Horsham. A committee was formed with Shirley Ashfield as the co-ordinator and community working bees constructed the route of the walk with bollards and signage planted trees along the trail and two picnic areas were established beside Mount William Creek. Sights were identified along the track and marked for walkers to appreciate the

flora and fauna of the area. A brochure has been produced with nature notes.

- Ross and Judi Dunkley in conjunction with Project Platypus have undertaken an annual conservation program since 2007 on their property at Ledcourt to improve their land and the environment. The program has included the development of extensive tree corridors, planting of paddock plots and the fencing of a Buloke remnant with a total of 15,000 trees and understorey planted. This was achieved with the dedicated assistance of Project Platypus, Northern Grampians Landcare Group, Greenfingers Nursery, Greening Australia, Landmate, Horsham Woolshed and many enthusiastic volunteers.

- Annual plantings continue in conjunction with Project Platypus Plantout.

## The People

The Landcare Group has been well served by the various DSE, DPI, Parks Vic, Project Platypus, the WCMA and Landcare facilitators who have helped keep the group motivated and informed. Office bearers for the group who have taken on the extra workload and served the group well are Peter Davie, Ian McDonald, Frank Barnes, Peter Jackman, Ewan Letts, Leanne Jackman and currently by Ray Graham and Judi Dunkley. Executive meetings reduce the need for members to attend unnecessary meetings and efforts are focussed on on-ground activities. The group is fortunate to have a long list of members who have been active and supportive and contributed to the positive outcomes across the area.

## Reflections

The Northern Grampians Landcare Group is now 22 years old, and is proud of their achievements. A small community, the group embraces new members as they move to the area. The group looks forward to continuing to care for the land and the community it supports.



*Ross Dunkley and Bernie discuss a paddock tree project and revegetation*



*The Landcare Group busy folding guards for a Plantout*



*The group created a walking track beside the Mt William Creek*



*This section of the Mt William Creek at Dadswells Bridge provides good platypus habitat*



*Group members enjoy a talk on Waterwatch by Joel Boyd from the WCMA*

## 2.5 Great Western Landcare Group



*Greens sedimentary hill country, good for planting trees*



*Extensive planting site with planting lines being ripped at the Hurnalls*



*Planning works in the Six Mile involve Concongella and Great Western Landcare*



*Local members conduct a pasture workshop*



*Before and after photos kept by the landholder show dramatic changes*

### Beginnings

The group was founded in 1994 to address local land management issues and build on the soil conservation and pasture works of the 1950's. At the first meeting DNRE supplied a large aerial map so landholders could identify their properties and observe the extent of any issues. Soil conservation, particularly on properties with steep bare hills, and salinity were two major issues affecting landholders. Creating biodiversity corridors for flora and fauna and getting community involvement in planting was another goal.

### Achievements

The Great Western Landcare area has a diverse range soils from granite sands to sedimentary clays and land uses often reflect these soil types. Cropping, vineyards, industries and grazing are the predominant rural activities.

- In 1997 Ballarat University undertook a land degradation study which identified recharge sites and areas for salinity control, pasture improvement, weed and pest control and creek bed erosion. Sites best suited for tree planting and areas with rabbits were also identified. This led to targeted works in the steep hills and along waterways as funding became available.

- The Six Mile sub catchment was identified as a priority for works and landholders contributed to detailed plans and priorities. Whenever federal and state government funding or sponsorship from GWMWater was received the next stage of works was undertaken. Extensive work including landclass fencing, rabbit and weed control, gully battering, establishment of perennial pastures, massive revegetation and the installation of water retention dams have transformed the health and productivity of this sub catchment.

- With several blocks of remnant vegetation on public land, plantations and corridors of vegetation were planted particularly in the Dunneworthy area to

provide links to forest areas as well as to shelter stock and crops.

- Plantings on the steep hills in the Bulgana area provided challenges for the operators of the bulldozers ripping the planting lines and the many planters who had to scale the steep slopes which included scouts, Landmate crews, Greencorps and other volunteers. Several Project Platypus Plantouts have been hosted by Great Western with the group providing catering and assisting with on site logistics on the Plantout sites and at the Great Western Football Club.

- Members of the Great Western Landcare group have been involved in the formation and operation of Project Platypus since its inception.

- The group values the social gatherings that have been held such as plantings on members' properties and bus trips and excursions which help to maintain the sense of community and co-operation.

- The local school has been involved in the Landcare group and undertook a salinity monitoring project and kept weather records.

- Rabbit control is an on-going issue and group control is encouraged by employing a facilitator to oversee works.

### People

The Presidents of the groups have been Alan Green, Bill Kilpatrick, Jim Kilpatrick, Bruce Dalkin, Mark Kindred and Ross McGregor. Secretaries include David Leeke, Don Hurnall and Paul Dakis.

Although the number of members is not large there is a core of committed and active landholders. Because many of the holdings are large the number of potential landholders is low. The group is fortunate that a number of members have a strong environmental and agricultural background.

### Reflections

The group has appreciated the support from Ballarat University and industry and



the funding and support from state and federal governments which enabled the group to plan and undertake projects. Project Platypus and DPI staff have been supportive and have secured funding for projects and provided facilitators to ensure projects are well prepared and executed.

Many of the present members have been involved since its inception and the challenge is to involve the next

generation of landholders. To keep up to date with project funding opportunities and link the group with current initiatives a Landcare facilitator is essential. A facilitator can also help with some of the administrative tasks. The group is confident that the positive results across the region that can be attributed to Landcare will be continued by group members who are committed to caring for the land and will be taken up by the next generations who share the vision.



*An aerial photo of the Six Mile catchment shows some of the issues*



*Because of the extent of the catchment waving of hands to the distance has to suffice*



*A previous Plantout site in the distance and a new one in the foreground*



*Revegetation site in granite country near Sugarloaf*



*Getting the next generation involved in Landcare*

## 2.6 Navarre Landcare Group



*Ron Bibby's hill was crying out for works*



*Sponsors and Project Platypus visit revegetation and erosion works on Ron Bibbys hill*



*Ron Bibby's hill today is a local landmark*



*Peter Hannet and Ron Bibby both had erosion issues to address*



*Gully battering, contour banks and pasture establishment repairs*

### Beginnings

Navarre is situated 39kms northeast of Stawell on the edge of the Wimmera. The Navarre and District Landcare Group catchment incorporated the Wattle Creek-Heifer Station Creek catchment, extending from Barkly and Frenchmans to Greens Creek and from Tulkara/MorrilMorri to north of Malakoff and Landsborough Hill. The Heifer Station Creek flows into the Wimmera River at its' western extremity.

The Wattle Creek-Heifer Station Creek catchment comprises three predominant "land management units:"

1. Upland alluvial plain – comprising gravel, sand and clay with saline groundwater discharges into some drainage lines, streams and depressions.
2. Sedimentary rises – undulating rises and low hills on sediments of sandstone, shale and slate.

3. Sedimentary hills – rolling to steep hills and rocky ridges of sandstone, shale and slate.

The 85% of the catchment that has been cleared of native vegetation is predominantly used for grazing with around 15% used for cropping. Sheep and cattle are run on a variety of pastures including improved perennial and annual pastures and unimproved and remnant native pastures.

A preliminary meeting was held in August 1993 which determined the need for a Landcare Group, and the inaugural meeting of the Navarre and District Landcare group was held on 8th September 1993. The priorities established by the group at that time were sustainable agriculture, salinity, erosion control, vermin and weed control, and rising water tables.

### Achievements

The group achieved early success with Community Salinity Grant applications, and received funding for producing a colour aerial photo of the Wattle Creek - Heifer Station Creek Catchment area to identify and map areas of land

degradation, works that had already been completed and to plan future work. A second grant provided funding for library resources, a community noticeboard and membership of Landcare Net. Other projects included fertiliser testing and education of farmers in sustainable agriculture, safe use of chemical sprays, property management planning and promoting opportunities for farmers such as Farm\$mart. Key projects include

- \$14,000 was received from Wimmera Mallee Water in 1995 for the first corporate-sponsored planting through Project Platypus. The Little Hill Project, otherwise known as "Ron Bibby's Hill" saw 6000 trees planted out by inmates from Ararat Prison.

- Funding was received for construction of a greenhouse located at Navarre Primary school to propagate locally-occurring species for planting out.

- \$70,000 was received for rabbit control, and in May 1996, Ken Stewart took on the role of Rabbit Control Coordinator. The Rabbit Busters program led by Ken had some extremely active periods particularly when rabbit numbers were high.

- Various earthwork projects were undertaken to address gully erosion, such as rock groynes around Batcocks Scour and in the Tulkara area near Ware's property. Many local landowners have implemented land class fencing to protect fragile areas and waterways.

- The publication of the group's Catchment Management Plan in 1997-98 provided a template for farmers to plan ground works, and was the underpinning document for future grant applications in the area. The Catchment Plan Steering Committee comprised Karen Ware, Lyle Driscoll, Barry Bibby, Rob Tehan, Ron Bibby and Mary Bignell (DSE).

- The group purchased a "weed trailer" with mounted spraying equipment, knapsacks and chemicals to support control of St John's Wort in the hills around Barkly and along the roadsides. The



farmers around Greens Creek developed an initiative to control Paterson's Curse in that area. Management of weeds, in particular St John's Wort, Paterson's Curse and Spiny Rush, and rabbit control have been ongoing projects since the commencement of the group. Barry Bibby became the local contact person for the management of Spiny Rush in 1996.

- The Project Platypus Plantout on Navarre Hill in 2002 was the group's largest and most ambitious project. Landowners Lawrence (Charlie) Raeburn and Noel Supple with President Rupert Bibby collaborated with Rio Tinto Project Platypus, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Greening Australia and the Navarre community to ensure a successful outcome for the community. Prior to the Plantout, Navarre Hill was a barren environment that required extensive preparation in terms of rabbit control, erosion control works, grass seeding, fauna surveys and seed collection and propagation. Jane Marriott of Project Platypus provided significant direction in the planning of the project and provided critically important knowledge, skill and time in harvesting seeds. The Williams family in Pomonal grew the seedlings for the Plantout. 200 volunteers from other Landcare Groups, locals and the Landmate Crew planted 15,000 plants on the large hill to the north-west of Navarre, known variously as Navarre Hill, Melville's Lookout (after the bushranger who used to hide in the thick scrub on the hill) and Blake's Hill. It was a memorable event, with older community members and toddlers in attendance.

## People

Founding committee members were President Lyle Driscoll, Secretary Stephen Ware and the six committee members Ken Stewart, Clive Hardwick, Ron Bibby, Gerald Parry, Rob Tehan and Kieran Devery. Subsequent office bearers include Doreen Bibby, Joan Austerberry, Ken Stewart, Stephen and Karen Ware, Colleen Parry and Ron Bibby who were Secretaries, Vern Hutton and Joan

Austerberry as treasurers, and Lyle Driscoll, Rupert Bibby, and Colin Snooks as presidents. Vice presidents were Gerald Parry and Shane Bibby. Current office bearers are Shane Bibby as President, Richard Kelleher as Treasurer and Liz Kelleher and Richard Kelleher as Secretaries.

## Reflections

Landcare is now a permanent part of the rural landscape in the region thanks to those who pioneered the movement in the early 90's. From time to time interest in Landcare ebbs and flows within the community but the need for the Landcare group will remain. Weeds and rabbits will not go away and the long term problems such as salinity and soil erosion will continue to affect land management even though much has been done since those early days.

The success in dealing with challenges that lie ahead will depend upon the energies of the leadership and the community within the Navarre and District Landcare group and the acceptance that we all have a duty of care to leave our land in good condition for future generations.



*Navarre Primary School planted a site on Wares property*



*The 2002 Navarre Hill Plantout has transformed the local landscape*



*Navarre Landcare hosted the 2002 Plantout and catered for dinner at the footy club*



*Weeds and in particular Pattersons Curse are an ongoing problem*



*Colin Snooks revegetation site at Navarre*

## 2.7 Jallukar Landcare Group



Saline site in Jallukar Forest being planted by Landcare



The same site today... Landcare does work!



Millers Creek walking track weed control work in progress



Millers Creek track today – a community asset



Jallukar Landcare Group planters celebrating their efforts

### Beginnings

In May 1991, Michael McMurtrie called a meeting of interested people at the Pomonal hall to hear DCE officers outline the local land degradation issues and options to combat them. Jallukar Landcare Group was subsequently formed to cover the Mt William catchment area, extending from Jallukar on the south, Mt Drummond and Lake Lonsdale on the north, Pomonal and surrounds on the west to the edge of Black Range on the east. This amounts to 600km<sup>2</sup> with over 40km of waterways. Michael was elected Chairperson / President, Jane Williams Vice-president and Ken Reid Secretary / Treasurer. The committee included Anne Hardy, David Peel, Peter Brady and Norman Reid. The group became incorporated on 8 November 1991.

### Achievements

The group has always been very proactive with a supportive and enthusiastic band of workers. An initial bus trip invited members to assess their property needs and identify degraded areas. This was followed by Whole Farm Planning workshops. Over nearly 20 years, scores of projects have been completed involving the properties of most members. Many projects have also been undertaken on public land and involved members of the wider community.

- Educational bus trips have been a highlight and included Lanark and the Dunkeld area, Lake Hindmarsh and Rainbow, Chalicum Hills Windfarm and a tour of Gason's at Ararat.
- Rabbits and noxious weeds were targeted for control and the purchase of warren fumigators by the group in 1992 was a highlight. A consistent campaign and the introduction of Calicivirus have seen a huge decline but not complete eradication of rabbits. Weed control has also been an ongoing project with successful 2nd Generation Grants from the CMA targeting Patterson's Curse, Cape Tulip and Bathurst Burr.
- Many planting projects have brought the community closer together and also

resulted in more sustainable local landscapes. These have included Jallukar Group projects as well as those organised through Project Platypus, when Jallukar Group was responsible for the catering on several occasions. Shelter belts and creekline revegetation have been established on Mt View (Peel), Grampians Paradise (Banfield), Jallukar Park (Brady), Teran Park (May), Green Hills (McMurtrie's), and on the properties of Delahunty, Pat and Norm Reid, Ken and Eleanor Reid, Bill and Leigh Lax, Geoff and Ann Hardy, Elizabeth and Ian Jackson, Scott Douglas and many more.

- Fencing was completed along saline areas, for tree planting and to define land classes. In 1995 the Peel family and Pomonal PS children planted 1300 trees in 3 hours.

- Pasture renovation was successful at Mt Dryden where the steep degraded hills were sprayed and seeded by air. Rabbit warrens were ripped with a bulldozer by David West - dangerous work on the very steep and rocky slopes.

- Several properties in the catchment were affected by increasing saline discharge and unproductive problem areas. A creekline from Jallukar Park to the Jallukar State Forest showed salt scarring and erosion. The Brady and Reid families together with the Jallukar Landcare Group addressed the problem with successful results evident today. To ensure the survival of Redgum trees members carted soil from Brady's dam bank with 10 tip trucks to create mounds for planting in the forest. Tall Wheat Grass and Phalaris were also used on properties including Mt View to reduce a salty water table.

- The Millers Creek Project at Pomonal aimed to involve community members with the development and appreciation of this pleasant public space. Weed eradication was carried out along the creek, indigenous species were planted and seating installed.

- Jallukar Landcare Group was involved with the planning and implementation of the Mt William Creek Walk, following the



main watercourse through the Jallukar area to the Wimmera River. Day 2 included a catered night at Peel's with poet Colin Driscoll entertaining the weary walkers.

## People

Presidents have been Michael McMurtrie (twice), David Peel, Peter Brady, Jane Williams, Ken Reid, Wayne Burton, Bernie Rudolph and Terry May. Secretaries have included Ken Reid, Ken McPhee, Eleanor Reid (twice), David Peel, Peter Brady, Phil Williams, Jill Miller, Annette May, Peggy Pechenuik, Jane Williams and Fred Rich. Scott Douglas was treasurer from 1995 to 2003, followed by Terry May, Barry Curtis, Leon Sachse and Leigh Blackmore. The more recent position of Project Officer has been undertaken in turn by Ken McPhee, Terry May and Joe Price to organise and oversee the numerous activities undertaken by the group from pest eradication to bus trips and excursions.

The group has been fortunate to have a number of passionate and active members. Michael McMurtrie began growing trees on the hill at Greenhills before the beginning of the landcare group, much to the questioning of the local landholders. Salt tolerant Red Gums from Albacutya were sourced from Wail Nursery.

This interest developed into his initiation of the Jallukar Landcare Group. Michael is also involved with Project Platypus and broader Landcare organisations. Jane Williams had a passion for the natural environment, including a strong desire to reintroduce the original indigenous species and discourage the use of invasive introduced plants. She was a driving force in collecting seed of the correct species and their propagation. Plants were initially grown for the local group and expanded to other groups. Phil retired from teaching in 1992 and assisted Jane in the nursery. The group remains indebted to Jane who worked tirelessly until her recent passing. The late Norm Reid became very prominent with rabbit control as he approached and educated landholders and spent many hours destroying warrens

at a time when rabbits were a serious pest in the area. A number of members have been heavily involved in the formation and development of Project Platypus.

## Reflections

Jallukar Landcare Group has been a vibrant and effective force for 20 years with many successful projects in addressing land degradation. Much of the group's success has been due to regular social gatherings and the passionate members with diverse backgrounds with all opinions respected. They include large landholders, weekend residents and small block holders in Pomonal and surrounds. Many interesting guest speakers have also informed the group. Meetings are social occasions at members' homes and properties and often involve a tour or sharing of a project.

January 2006 saw many members and the community affected by the Grampians bushfire followed by flooding along the Mt William Creek in February 2011. A positive and supportive relationship exists with Project Platypus and other groups and agencies.

As part of a strategic planning session led by Nigel McGuckian, the Jallukar Landcare Group determined to continue to engage people in a social atmosphere, catering for and respecting everyone's diverse interests and practices and contribute to a sustainable environment.



*2011 Plantout on Banfields with Pomonal's stunning Grampians backdrop*



*Plantout 2005 saw thousands of plants planted at Delahunty's*



*Aileen and a band of helpers catering for planters*



*Members meeting at May's shed for a meeting and a meal*



*Visiting the other end of the catchment at Lake Hindmarsh 2008*

## 2.8 Elmhurst Landcare Group



*In 1998 Elmhurst Primary School students help plant on Darbyshire's farm*



*Weed and erosion issues along Salt Creek were addressed*



*A 1996 tree planting along the Iles creek line*



*Erosion from run-off from steep hills is a big issue*



*The section of the Wimmera River at Elmhurst is home to platypus*

### Beginnings

The Elmhurst Landcare group covers a picturesque 22,000 ha area located in the headwater catchment of the Wimmera River between the Pyrenees Ranges to the north of the township and Mt. Cole State Forest to the south. The area has several major creeks whose source is in these forested ranges with the main enterprise being grazing both on steep hill country and down to the river flats.

A group of landholders with a common concern for environmental issues formed in 1988 and the Elmhurst Landcare Group was formally launched in 1991 with their aims controlling rabbits and weeds, improving pastures, and addressing erosion, salinity, declining vegetation, and other land management issues. The group's members comprise farmers, life style landholders, retired and semi retired people, anglers and other interested towns people, who are all motivated by their desire to address environmental issues.

### Achievements

After agreeing on their priorities, the group set about developing a number of projects

- Group based rabbit and weed action work resulted in 480 acres across three properties being fenced out and treated to reduce high numbers of rabbits. This was supplemented by wide scale 1080 campaigns coupled to a rabbit buster program.

- Weed control plans for St Johns Wort, Pattersons Curse and others pest plants saw the implementation of aerial spraying, spraying and biological control techniques. Weeds remain a serious concern.

- Tree planting, natural regeneration, direct seeding and revegetation have been part of an integrated approach in many sub catchment rehabilitation projects involving several landholders with a great example in the Glenlofty area. In 1990 approximately 10,000 trees and shrubs were planted in the Elmhurst area.

- At the Project Platypus Plantout at Elmhurst in July 2001 14,000 indigenous

plants were planted over 117 hectares of steep hill country by 200 volunteers.

Planting steep hills reduces recharge of rainfall water into the hill and the discharge of saline water further down the slope.

Another Plantout hosted by the group was held on in 2009.

- The Wimmera Enhancement & Rehabilitation Elmhurst (WERE) project exemplified a coordinated approach to rehabilitating a problem area. It was funded by the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and was supported by voluntary efforts of the Landcare group. Redefining the stream flow with a chain of ponds, rock chutes, fencing, weed control, and tree planting has seen the former waste land now a valued community rest area.

- Land class fencing in hill country and Whole Farm Planning courses have increased farmers understanding and management of the land according to its capacity. Pasture establishment programs were established to respond to farmers needs. Workshops also helped to develop the skills of landholders in natural resource and business management, chemical use and productivity trials.

- An active Junior Landcare initiative in Elmhurst Primary School led to bore monitoring, grass and weed identification, assessing animal and fish habitat and water quality.

- Platypus research in the Wimmera River and Nowhere Creek by the Platypus Conservancy was coordinated by Project Platypus and has been of huge interest in the local area and beyond. The Platypus has become icon in the area and is a measure of sustainable land management.

- Erosion control works in various streams and creeks, installing silt traps, trickle pipes, gully battering, grass chutes, diversion banks, and complete gully reclamation work has ensured cleaner and better quality water entering the Wimmera River.

- The group has undertaken many other activities such as social gatherings, site



visits, producing newsletters, the Land mate program, accessing aerial flights and the community notice board which have contributed to the success of the group.

## People

Many Landcare members have contributed to the group's success and they continue to support and maintain the Landcare group by taking on various committee roles, developing various projects and carrying out ongoing programs. President Bill Langcake, Secretary Geoff Penna, Treasurer Tony Roberts were preceded as office bearers by Peter Laidlaw, Lil Iles, Garry Iles, Ben Greene, Michael Greene, Stephanie Stephens, Julian Kaye, Tony Roberts. Doug Boatman. They have been supported by group members who have had a significant input into the group's activities, projects, and social occasions. Special recognition is made of Lil Iles and Ross McPhie who were given Life Membership for their tireless work and efforts in the group's early development - coordinating applications for funding, rabbits, trees, catchment planning, producing newsletters and notices. Lil was also a recipient of the Centenary Federation Medal in 2001 for services to Landcare.

## Reflections

The Landcare Group has built on the works of the previous generations of landholders and agencies such as the Soil Conservation Authority and the Department of Agriculture. The benefits of perennial pastures, the use of fertiliser, the role of molybdenum and early gully reclamation work was encouraged by inspirational individuals such as the late Tom Morgan.

The Elmhurst Landcare Group continues to carry the banner for sustainable land management. The group plans to maintain their spirit of co-operation and the understanding in the community of the need to preserve our greatest asset - the land for our use and that of successive generations.

The Elmhurst Landcare Group has reflected and celebrated its achievements at various times along its journey but is realistic about the fact that there are many more years of work to be done. A ten year celebration and bus trip was one of the highlights in the journey, reflecting on the group's achievements and their involvement in the wider landcare movement. Associations and partnerships with Greening Australia, DNRE, Project Platypus, GWMWater, Granite Creeks Landcare Group, Advisers & Technical Services, the Platypus Conservancy and Victorian Landcare Council have contributed to the success of the group.



*Group rabbit control campaigns are the most effective*



*Landcare meetings and workshops help keep the group informed*



*Emily, Lil and Doug entertain Victorian Governor John Landy*



*Elmhurst catered and hosted 2001 Plantout at the Golf Club*



*Signage promotes Landcare river projects and platypus facts*

## 2.9 Stawell Urban Landcare Group



*Attendees at the 2004 meeting at Stawell Town Hall form a Stawell Urban Landcare Group*



*The first project was to create a walking track along Pleasant Creek*



*Regular working bees were held to weed, build bridges, plant and socialise*



*Free trees were distributed in the main street to raise community awareness*



*Regular displays were mounted at the Stawell Show to engage local residents*

### Beginnings

Weed infestations around the Stawell township prompted an enthusiastic group of individuals to hold weed removal working bees. They believed that a Stawell Urban Landcare group would make a valuable contribution to the local environment and in 2004 a meeting was called at the Stawell Town Hall with Barry Clugston addressing the meeting and John Pye's students giving a report on their Grampians Rail Trail project. The 25 attendees agreed to establish the Stawell Urban Landcare Group with weed removal and management of public places as its key goals using community engagement to achieve this.

### Achievements

- Developing the Pleasant Creek Walking Track was the group's first big project which called for many hands to wrestle with and remove dense thickets of Broom from the banks of Pleasant Creek, prepare and lay the track, install culverts and bridges, replant bare areas and produce signs and brochures. Regular working bees were organised by Leigh Blackmore with John Pye leading bridge work and many willing workers including Gerard's dog turning up to work hard for a few hours and enjoy a cuppa. The completed walking track is now complemented by Federation Park on the Western Highway and is a valuable asset for Stawell.
- Revegetation over several years at Moonlight Sands was undertaken in conjunction with Peter Graveson from Parks Victoria. Combined with a walking track and seating this area has been transformed from a wasteland to a park.
- Broom is one of the most extensive of Stawell's weeds and many hours have been spent mapping, spraying and removing it by hand. The Landcare group also coordinated Ararat Prison Landmate crew in control works. This work is ongoing as the seed will continue to germinate for a number of years. In 2011 the group was successful in

gaining a Victorian Landcare grant for weed control works on Big Hill. Coordinated by Julie Andrew this project has a long term plan including all land managers and the Stawell community in ongoing weed control of Broom, Boneseed, Cotoneaster, Gazanias, Bridal Creeper, Cootamundra wattle and Pittosporum. Community and Landmate working bees have made inroads on weed infestations.

- The group hosted the 2008 Plantout which involved welcoming and registering volunteers at the Stawell Racing Club dining room and catering for meals throughout the weekend. In July 2012 the group catered for the planting day near Lake Lonsdale.
- In 2011 the Landcare group took on the coordination of the annual Ironbarks Walks with primary students. This activity to increase awareness of the local box-ironbark forests has been running for over 10 years with local schools seeing positive outcomes in students learning.
- The development of a tool trailer by John Pye has enabled the group to store and transport tools and equipment and catering gear. The trailer is used at working bees and events and is loaned to Project Platypus and other Landcare Groups.
- Members participated in the Waterwatch program monitoring local waterways and provided valuable information collated by the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.
- For a number of years the Landcare Group co-ordinated other groups and individuals to clean roadsides on the Western Highway and along London Rd as part of Clean up Australia program. In 2011 the group assisted Grampians Regional Waste Management to clean up the Pomonal Roadside between Stawell and the tip.
- In 2011 the group supported Project Platypus by locating and flagging rabbit



warrens at Old Lake Oval near the Stawell Cycling Track.

- The group has also arranged capability building opportunities for members and others by running chainsaw accreditation training in 2011 and a media writing workshop in 2012. Members have also improved their weed identification skills through involvement in on-ground control.

## People

Past presidents of the group are Simon Marston, Leigh Blackmore, Gerard McAloon and Ian Nicholson who has served since 2007. Founding members of SULC are Elizabeth Jackson, Roslyn Byass, Gerard McAloon, John Pye and were supported by the Landcare Coordinator at that time Felicity Christian nee Brown and Parks Victoria officer Peter Graveson. The group has established relationships with key partners including Parks Victoria, Project Platypus, Department of Primary Industries, Wimmera Catchment Authority, Northern Grampians Shire, Stawell Goldmine, GWMWater, Department of Sustainability and Environment and local primary schools.

## Reflections

The group has built networks with other community groups, council and businesses that have improved the capability and resilience of the Stawell community. Workshops, displays, articles in the Stawell Times News have raised community awareness of natural resource issues such as

environmental weeds and biodiversity management.

The beautification and maintenance of natural areas such as Pleasant Creek and Moonlight Sands has provided a recreation resource all the community can utilise. The big picture plan is to develop a walking track linking all the signature attractions around town, including – Pleasant Creek, Big Hill, The Arboretum and Moonlight Sands.

The group continues to be active and plans to focus on on-ground work, educating and engaging the local community and promoting Landcare.



*SULC hosted a visit from other Landcare Groups and showcased Pleasant Creek walk*



*The neglected Moonlight Sands area has been transformed*



*Weeding Big Hill is a big task and will need many hands for many years!*



*SULC hosted the 2008 Plantout at the Racecourse and planters received a friendly welcome*



*The group set up video cameras to monitor rabbit activity*

## 2.10 Crowlands Landcare Group



*Crowlands Landcare holds regular workshops, planning sessions and social events*



*Landcare legends Athol and Doreen Mackay know a thing or two about revegetation*



*Trials of pasture grasses are important for local graziers*



*Platypus surveys along the Wimmera River yielded good numbers prior to the drought*



*Landcare stalwarts Harold and Edith Thomas dancing after planting all day*

### Beginnings

In August 1994 David Munday from DNRE called a meeting of local residents in and around Crowlands to see who would be interested in commencing a Landcare Group in the area. The 20 people who attended were keen and a further meeting of 28 landholders was held in September to form a committee to draw up plans for establishing a Landcare Group. At the first meeting of the Crowlands Landcare Group in November 1994 Graeme Price was elected President, Emile Wilkinson Vice President, Jean Boatman Secretary and Doreen McKay as treasurer. The main aims of the group were to promote new landcare and conservation practices and techniques, control rabbits, undertake soil erosion works, trial pasture plots and Spiny Rush eradication.

### Achievements

The group has a large environment to operate, with weeds and erosion being significant problems. The group gratefully acknowledges the vital assistance of the many staff from DPI, DSE and Project Platypus in achieving significant on-ground results.

- A group tour of Woody Yallock area was held in February 1995 to view their efforts to combat Spiny Rush. Subsequent trips taken as a group include a tour of Gason's and A.M.E. in Ararat, a tour of Australian Wool Testing Authority in Melbourne and Hifert in Geelong. The group visited the Wallop Top Croppers Group and hosted a return visit.
- Aerial flights over the Crowlands Group area were held in 1995 to enable members to gain an overview and receive photos identifying the extent of soil erosion in the district. Extensive works on erosion control - gully battering levy banks, trickle pipes and rock chutes in creeks - together with tree planting has help address erosion measures.
- Extensive rabbit warren ripping has been carried out on the Glendhu and Dunneworthy hills areas as well as group 1080 rabbit poisoning programs. Athol McKay has organized the group's Fox-off campaign since the Group was formed.
- Trial plots for different pasture grasses were set up on Paul Harrington's property and are still ongoing. The results have been valuable

in making decisions which pasture grasses will do best in local conditions.

- Crowlands Landcare Group has been represented on the Project Platypus Management Committee since 1995 and currently has 2 members.
- The group has had a variety of workshops and guest speakers on different subjects including Occupation Health and Safety, chain saw safety, bio fuels, laws relating to farms, a C.P.R First Aid Course, Chemical Users Course and a Whole Farm Planning Course which were all well attended.
- The group hosted the first Project Platypus Plantout on Jack Start's property at Glendhu in 2000. Large numbers of trees have been planted since on several members properties for agro forestry, revegetation and erosion control. The group has hosted two more Plantouts, the last one being in 2011. With regular Landcare events, often held at the Crowlands Hall the catering efforts of Crowland's women are well practiced and renowned.

### People

The inaugural President Graeme Price was followed by Bernard Boatman, Jeff McGuinness, Paul Harrington, Mark McKew, Steven Start, Shane Molloy and currently Dennis Harrington. Secretaries following Jean Boatman include Jackie Grimmer, Edith Thomas, Graeme and Bree Price, Wendy Harrington and Harold Thomas. Doreen McKay has been the treasurer from the group's inception! At the 2011 Annual General Meeting President Shane Molloy presented Life Memberships to Jean and Bernard Boatman, Doreen and Athol McKay, Vic Start and Edith and Harold Thomas for their long service to the Crowlands Landcare Group.

### Reflections

The group has a very active and engaged membership and is an excellent model of a healthy Landcare Group. The group plans to continue to control pest plants and animals including those weeds that are appearing in numbers that have not been seen in the area previously. Kangaroo numbers are steadily increasing and may become a problem in the near future. Soil conservation and pasture improvement works are also identified as a priority.



## 2.11 Landsborough Landcare Group

### Beginnings

In June 1995 a meeting was held to form the Landsborough Landcare Group to “pursue productivity and improve land management for its members.” At its second meeting in August staff from DNRE helped the group to develop objectives to determine future activities. It was fairly clear that weeds and rabbits were to be major concerns as was erosion and the sedimentation of creeks. The group had a slow start but from 1997 to 2002 were undertaking a range of weed and rabbit control projects as well applying for Natural Heritage Trust funds to undertake erosion control works in the Malakoff/Howards Creek catchments.

### Achievements

- The group was active for a number of years in undertaking “RabbitBuster” work ripping warrens and employed facilitators including Ron Marriott to co-ordinate works. Calici virus substantially reduced rabbit numbers in the early 2000’s but rabbit numbers were building up again by 2010.
- In 1997 a spray unit was purchased to allow landholders to control Pattersons Curse, Spiny Broom, St Johns Wort and Box Thorn. Trent Leslie facilitated some of these weed control works. The group was fortunate to have the assistance of Landmate crews to undertake weed control, particularly on roadsides.
- In 1997 the Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group sponsored an aerial flight over the Landsborough catchment to capture some dramatic images showing the extent of the erosion in the region.

- For several years the repair of a deep scour in Wattle Creek was planned and costed. After 3 or so years of efforts by the Wattle Creek Project Steering Committee a partnership between Project Platypus, the WCMA, the Landcare Group and the Pyrenees Shire finally saw works begin with drop structures installed, gullies battered and the area revegetated. In 2002 the project was completed and when it rained quite some years later Darryl Leslie reported that the structures had done their job. The Wimmera Catchment Management Authority completed rock structure maintenance in 2012.

- Landholders in the Astons Scour Catchment were part of Project Platypus works over a number of years to address erosion by installing gully plug dams, establishing perennial pastures, installing rock groins and battering banks.

- In 2010 the group met again to apply for a Second Generation Landcare grant to undertake ongoing weed and rabbit control. These works were facilitated by David Margetson through Project Platypus and involved works on several properties and public reserves.

- In 2011 the group applied for and was successful in gaining a further grant for weeds control under the ‘Communities for Nature’ program. Targeted weeds include Pattersons Curse, Gorse, St. Johns Wort, Spiny Broom and Horehound. Project Platypus and the Landmate crews will again provide important support.

### People

Office bearers for the group have been Darryl Leslie, Greg Dean and Narelle Thomason. Active members have included broadacre farmers, smaller landowners, some absentee landowners as well as town dwellers. The group has appreciated the assistance of state government agency staff such as DNRE, DPI, and WCMA. Much of the facilitation of group activities would not have been possible, without the invaluable resource and support from past and present staff of Project Platypus.

### Reflections

The fact that the group is still undertaking works is due to the tenacity and dedication of two long term members and office bearers Darryl Leslie and Greg Dean. It has been difficult to keep the momentum of the group going and there are a limited number of “large scale” farmers in the area and many smaller blocks and absentee landholders. The environment has benefited from the works undertaken by the group and they plan to continue overseeing weed and rabbit control activities. It is possible that a core of landholders interested in controlling weeds and rabbits or undertaking revegetation projects may prompt a revival of the group.



*Spiny Broom and Gorse are common weeds controlled by the group*



*Rabbit numbers are lower than in times past but still need vigilance*



*Establishing crops and pasture and managing water are important land management principles*



*Works to address massive erosion in the Wattle Creek was achieved with a number of partners*



*A dam on the Wattle Creek catchment allows for overflows to be diverted*

## 2.12 Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group



*Aerial photos give landholders an excellent perspective of problems*



*Widespread mapping and control of Spiny Rush in low lying areas was undertaken*



*Site visits were an important learning experience*



*Planting trees was a major priority of the group*



*A French forestry group toured McKay's extensive plantings*

### Beginnings

In 1985, a year before the Landcare movement in Victoria was launched, a meeting was called by Ararat Soil Conservation Authority Officer, Clem Sturmfells, for farmers interested in addressing the severe erosion and salinity problems caused through the over clearing of hills. There was a good attendance at the Joel Hall meeting where Barry Clugston was elected as Chair and Clem Sturmfells as Secretary of the Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group (UWFTG). It was agreed that the group's focus was to assist landholder tree planting projects by sourcing funding for trees and tree guards and offering advice on tree species, site preparation and the most effective location of sites.

### Achievements

Over its 20 years of operation the group had some outstandingly successful projects and events. Funding for UWFTG projects was from a variety of sources including state and federal Government grants through CF&L, DPI and Tree Victoria, Greening Australia and NLP grants.

- An early project was a bus trip to the Potter Farms in Hamilton with 45 people seeing evidence of the positive contribution trees can make on farms. Numerous bus trips were organised for landholders to visit a variety of projects including tree aspiration research at Logan, Lucerne plantings at Bridgewater, Wail Nursery and other Farm Tree Groups.

- Aerial flights were offered to Landcare Groups to gain a unique perspective of the land degradation issues faced in the various sub catchments of the Wimmera. Aerial photos of extensively eroded creek lines and barren hills and pastures were made available to Landcare groups and were a stark reminder of the urgency and extent of the issues. Groups who benefited from the aerial photos were Astons Scour landholders, Elmhurst and other Landcare Groups and local government.

- Tree guards and stakes were hard to come by in the 1980's and the UWFTG bought these in bulk and made them available to landholders and Landcare Group.

- When direct seeding was a novel practice, the UWFTG purchased a direct seeding machine as a way to get trees in the ground cheaply and effectively. The direct seeder has been used across the catchment. The group also trialled aerial seeding of steep bare hills to stabilise soils.

- The group purchased other equipment such as a spray unit and Potti Putkis to loan to landholders undertaking plantings. Some of the plantings funded through the group were for Break of Slope planting to address salinity, agroforestry plots and streamside and roadside plantings.

- Communicating the value of trees was the driving force for the group and a video and catchment booklet promoted this message. Regular newsletters kept landholders up to date with projects and events. Field days and seminars on the Wimmera River catchment, salinity, Red Gum regeneration and Whole Farm planning sessions brought information on best practice land management to local audiences. Stalls at local shows promoted the planting of trees.

- Weed control was and still is a major issue in the catchment and the UWFTG focussed on mapping and treating Spiny Rush infestations. A Ballarat Uni student completed a comprehensive report of the various treatment methods to eradicate Spiny Rush

### People

Membership of the UWFTG was from across the Upper Wimmera region with a concentration of works in the steep hill country in the east and north of the region where the salinity and erosion issues were the most severe. Office bearers and a very active sub-committee helped maintain the direction and impetus of the group. These include Jon and Kris McMillan, Barry & Cheryl Hall, Jim Kilpatrick, Alan Green, George Holden,



Lillian Iles, John Greene, Councillor Alan Kingston, Vic & Elizabeth Start, Bernard & Jean Boatman, Phil Hall, Barry Clugston, Lisa Moore, Clem Sturfels and Michael Greene.

The role of DPI and DSE officers in the support, development and maintenance of the group was pivotal as they were able to contribute their resources, knowledge and passion to projects to ensure their success.

## Reflections

The Farm Tree Group responded to the urgent need to revegetate the extensively cleared farming land in the Upper Wimmera – to reduce erosion, salinity, enhance biodiversity and provide stock shade and shelter. The group was very successful in highlighting the need for revegetation and instigating planting projects across the catchment and

making tree planting a positive and acceptable farming practice. The group was also instrumental in fostering the formation the development of other Landcare Groups in the Upper Wimmera.

The subsequent development of Project Platypus and Landcare Groups across the Upper Wimmera decreased the need for a catchment wide body such as the Farm Tree Group and the group disbanded in 2006 after having made a substantial contribution to the environmental health of the catchment and its communities. Lisa Moore and Barry Clugston oversaw the disbanding of the group and its assets in 2006 with the 'Hamilton' direct seeding unit, a spray unit, various tree planters, guards and stakes donated to Project Platypus. Many group members have maintained an interest in all things environmental within the Upper Catchment and beyond.



*Mackay's forestry plots with 2001 Plantout site in the foreground*



*Revegetation along creeklines protects waterways and water quality*



*The control of Spiny Rush includes burning, spraying and physical removal*



*Restoring trees across the landscape has multiple environmental benefits*



*Understanding soils is an important element of land management*



## 2.13 Perennial Pasture Systems



*PPS is an active group of graziers working together to improve productivity*



*A good cover of perennial grasses is the key to healthy pastures and stock*



*The group plans projects, site visits and shares information*



*Trials allow comparisons of pasture species and treatments*



*PPS members visit plant breeders in Tasmania*

### Beginnings

The Perennial Pasture Systems (PPS) group was formed in mid 2007 after a workshop convened by Julie Andrew and Ewan Letts of DPI. The aim of workshop, conducted at Hall's Gap, was to bring together graziers in the upper Wimmera catchment interested in progressing and integrating perennial pastures in their farming systems and to consider forming a grower group and enjoy the benefits that might come from that. An executive committee was convened at the workshop which initiated the PPS group and Simon Brady from Jallukar became the group's first President. The aim of the group is to push the boundaries of perennial pasture research in our region and to provide information on productive pasture management to members. In 2011 PPS became an affiliated member of Project Platypus in recognition of the role that productive perennial pastures play in sustainable farming systems.

### Achievements

- PPS commenced three paddock scale projects to trial new pasture varieties which had become available. Planning of the project and development of a business plan as well as paddock walks were the main activities throughout 2008.
- Funding to progress the group was gained through Project Platypus and in March 2009 Rob Shea hired a part time project manager Rob Shea to oversee the establishment of the three PPS trial sites along with the EverGraze phalaris and lucerne trial site at Mooneys Gap.
- During 2009 the group's newsletter was commenced and PPS held their first annual conference and dinner.

- PPS continued their extension work in 2010 with the newsletter, field days and the annual conference. A second EverGraze trial site at Tottington also commenced.

- Funding from Meat & Livestock Australia assisted with building the trial pastures project. The group continued to gain new farmer members as well as attracting several members from industry such as agronomists and seed suppliers who are regular attendees at PPS events.

- In 2011 a soil amelioration project was commenced with funding from the A W Howard Trust. At the Annual conference dinner Ben Greene from Elmhurst was elected as the group's second president.

- Another major project was commenced in 2012 with the establishment of four replicated plant variety trials set up to test pasture species under the different soil and climatic conditions in the region.

### People

PPS currently has a membership of 68 farm businesses from across Central Victoria and the Southern Wimmera. Members are heavily involved in prime lamb, mutton, wool and beef production. The group also has 30 members involved in agribusiness and agronomic services and an associate group member, the Yarram Landcare Pasture Group.

The total area farmed by group members is 64,473 ha varying from 20 to 5000 ha holdings. PPS members manage approx 450,827 DSE, made up of 258,740 sheep, 7,558 cattle and 903 goats. Cropping and export hay operations are also conducted on many of the farms.

### Reflections

The large membership of the group and their active program reflects the keen interest of farmers to farm sustainably and profitably. The group relies on motivated farmers sharing their knowledge and experience and all members learning from the numerous trial sites across the region. As the results of trials are known, these will be shared with PPS members and the broader farming community to progress sustainable land management.



## 2.14 Project Platypus and Landcare Milestones

Many of the people involved in setting up Project Platypus in 1994 are still involved in Project Platypus today. Looking back at Project Platypus and Landcare achievements and events in this publication will trigger memories and serve as a reminder of the many successes (and the few failures!) of the organisation. The steady growth in the organisation and the huge contribution made by the thousands who have been involved in some way with Project Platypus is reflected in the following annual milestones. These milestones, some small and some substantial, provide an important record of the growth and development of a community based rural environmental movement.

- 1979** - Garden State Victoria - Project Tree Cover established a 36 ha revegetation site on Col Halls Joel hill with fencing, 16,400 plants at a cost of \$11,600

---

- 1983** - A dramatic dust cloud rolls into Melbourne and heightens community interest in land degradation issues

---

- 1984** - The Potter Farmland Project is launched in Western Victoria

---

- 1985** - The Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group formed to promote tree planting to address land degradations problems

---

- 1986** - The Landcare movement was launched by CF&L Minister Joan Kirner and VFF President Heather Mitchell in Winjallock near St Arnaud
  - The Farm Tree and Landcare Association is established

---

- 1988** - Wimmera River – A Weeping Sore conference at Longerenong identifies whole of catchment issues

---

- 1994** - A meeting was convened to discuss the possibility of forming an umbrella group to seek Landcare funding and assist Landcare groups
  - Meetings continued with a committee formed and members from Landcare groups attending and contributing ideas
  - The umbrella group was initially known as the Upper Wimmera Sponsorship Group and Landcare groups contributed \$50 towards administration and foundation
  - The umbrella group initially functioned as a sub-committee of the Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group
  - Possible names for the group were Clean Water Revival – Platypus Survival and Platypus Project – Wimmera Solution 2000

---

- 1995** - The first meeting under the name of Project Platypus was held in June
  - Office bearers elected to lead the organisation were President Michael McMurtrie, Secretary Jane Williams, Treasurer Scott Douglas.
  - Many different organisations and businesses were approached for sponsorship or funding and positive responses were received from Wimmera Mallee Water and CRA.

---

- 1996** - Wimmera Landcare EcoTour conducted by Dave Munday from DNRE
  - The Australian Platypus Conservancy visits the Upper Wimmera to determine possible platypus monitoring sites
  - Site visit by Wimmera Mallee Water and Project Platypus to look at Ron Bibby's revegetation and erosion control works
  - Incorporation taken out under the Project Platypus name, rather than VFF umbrella
  - Report on Dominic Browne's Aston Scour project plan
  - Sherree Christian appointed as first Project Officer/Manager
  - Sherree Christian had a guided tour of Jallukar and Moyston Landcare areas
  - "Peter Jackson and Nigel Binney were enthusiastic and would do what they could to raise \$13,816 for the \* project at their next Wimmera Mallee Water meeting."
  - Kevin Brady received \$5000 from GWMWater funds to undertake a saline rehabilitation project at Moyston
  - Lengthy discussions were held to develop the CRA partnership agreement
  - A regional Landcare Forum was held at Longerenong on the next decade of Landcare
  - An all day bus tour of landcare sites across the Upper Wimmera was followed by a dinner at the Diamond House
  - Dave Munday spoke to Halls Gap residents about the possibility of forming a Landcare Group
  - Landcare Groups were requested to submit potential projects that fulfilled the CRA sponsorship requirements to Project Platypus
  - Kerryn Shrank replaced Sherree as Project Manager, working from Wail Natural Resource Conservation League offices
  - Bill Pyke was employed by CRA to supervise Astons Scour mapping
  - Launch of the CRA Project Platypus partnership was held at Seppelts.
  - Astons Scour and Ironpot Creek chosen as sites for Pilot Projects with CRA mentoring
  - Funding for Kerryn Shrank's position was received through LPIS (Land Protection Incentive 2000 Scheme) and Kerryn worked 1 day a week out of the Stawell DNRE office in Patrick St

---

- 1997** - Funding from the William Buckland, Mazda and Potter Foundations and State Landcare allowed Kerryn Shrank to work full time

- The Project Platypus Scientific Advisory Committee was established to ensure the integrity and sustainability of projects
- Landcare members attended a tour of Whiteheads Creek and Granite Creek Landcare Group works
- Australian Platypus Conservancy submitted their research proposal to Earthwatch and platypus surveys began
- The Management Committee discussed the need for a Project Platypus Website
- Julie Andrew from DNRE held workshops on tree selection and planting on steep hill sites in the Upper Wimmera
- Discussion on the fee for use of DNRE office - \$1500 year 1, \$3000 thereafter
- The Management Committee was restructured
- 277 Project Platypus leaflets were distributed at the Wimmera Field Days
- The organisation's name was changed to Rio Tinto Project Platypus – a Landcare Partnership
- A 2 day workshop of Landcare representatives and stakeholders was held at Halls Gap to gain input into the structure and organisation of Project Platypus
- Discussions about needing to communicate with groups led to the purchase of a fax machine for the Secretary
- GIS data was purchased, especially for sub catchment planning in Moyston and Great Western
- Mary Bignall, DNRE was farewelled and thanked for her valuable contribution to the Project Platypus Action Plan
- Water quality measuring stations were set up at Astons Scour to monitor the success of works
- Twenty five Management Committee and Landcare members attended the AGM with 9 apologies
- Kevin Balm of Integra assisted with the planning of how the 6 activity groups would function under the Management Committee
- Over 20 platypus were trapped and released in the upper Wimmera
- Kerry Shrank resigned as Project Manager
- A 2007 article in the Weekly Times announced that "CRA would help reduce salt loads and improve water quality in the Upper Wimmera which presently dumps 85,000t annually... \$200,000 is the biggest private donation for on-ground Landcare works in the nation's history."

- 
- 1998**
- The first Project Platypus Newsletter to communicate with the Landcare Groups and partners was published by editor Phil Williams
  - Advertisers in the first newsletter included Howdens, Alan Green Mulesing, Start Bros Earthworks, D & F Boatman Vineyard contractors
  - Dr Sarah Ewing from Melbourne Uni conducted research on the adoption and success of the scientific approach to Landcare and its social impacts
  - Peter Hilbig was appointed as Manager of Project Platypus in July to undertake project co-ordination and executive responsibilities
  - The Corporate Plan for 1998 -2003 was produced based on the results of the 1997 Halls Gap Workshop
  - The partnership agreement with Rio Tinto was reviewed with a view to a further partnership period
  - Sponsors and supporters for the year were GWMWater, Rio Tinto, William Buckland Foundation, Mazda Foundation, National Heritage Trust and Dept of Natural Resources and Environment
  - Six sub-committee or activity groups began meeting – Projects Portfolio, Funding, Communication, Performance Monitoring, Group Development and Integration.
  - The conservation of platypus was listed as one of the objectives of the Action Plan
  - Stage 1 of the Astons Scour works with 3 flood retention dams and associated works were completed
  - 40 different individual platypus were recorded up stream of Crowlands
- 
- 1999**
- Discussions were held on how a local consortium could purchase the large Kaldor property with environmental and cultural values in the Black Range
  - Andrew Scanlon appointed to DNRE as Landcare Support officer for the Upper Wimmera
  - A new 3 year partnership agreement was entered into with Rio Tinto
  - Project Platypus sponsored the 2nd annual Biodiversity Conference in Halls Gap "Woodlands, Wildflowers and Witchetties
  - 20,000 plastic tree guards with the new Rio Tinto logo are purchased for revegetation
  - Pyrenees Shire, Project Platypus and the WCMA to share the cost of proposed Wattle Creek remediation works at Landsborough
  - A representative from the WCMA was invited to be an ex-officio member of the Management Committee
  - Platypus surveys in the Upper Wimmera River catchment continue. A tagged platypus captured on Mt Cole Crk was 45km from his previous sighting near Elmhurst
  - The WCMA committed over \$150,000 over 3 years to revegetation in the upper Wimmera
  - Flights over the catchment are sponsored by the Upper Wimmera Farm Tree group to look at past and potential projects
- 
- 2000**
- The Project Platypus Bulletin was published to supplement the Project Platypus Newsletter
  - Major works in the Six Mile Creek Catchment began, addressing multiple land degradation issues based on a





community driven plan

- Projects also took place in Heifer Station Creek, Mt Drummond, Astons Scour
- A job advertisement for Bridal Creep Control Facilitator was filled by Sean Malloy
- Management Committee discussed revitalising the relationship between Project Platypus and its member Landcare Groups
- A field visit to the Northern Grampians Landcare project at Mt Drummond was held and a BBQ followed
- The International Landcare Conference in Melbourne was attended by Michael Greene, Michael McMurtrie and Peter Hilbig
- Project Platypus registered an ABN to comply with GST requirements
- Case study results of the partnership between Rio Tinto and Project Platypus made 7 recommendations to improve the operation and integrity of the organisation and of projects.
- Michael McMurtrie was presented with a bronze platypus in recognition of his 5 years as Chair.
- A call was made for volunteers to help with platypus surveys at Elmhurst
- Volunteers were sought to help plant 20,000 trees on the steep hills at Glendhu – the first Plantout hosted by Crowlands
- GWMWater funded the setting up of the Project Platypus seed bank to supply seed for revegetation projects
- Stawell Secondary College and Stawell church members planted at Daves Avenue
- More platypus surveys took place in the Wimmera River and Mt Cole Creek
- A digital camera was purchased!
- Wimmera Mallee Water Board members had a bus tour of project sites at Navarre and Nthn Grampians
- Annual income was \$260,000

- 
- 2001**
- Plantout 2001 was held on the steep hills at Elmhurst in partnership with DNRE and 17,000 trees were planted
  - The seed bank supplied seed from 40 different localities for revegetation sites
  - The Redman Bluff wetland creation and biodiversity project began
  - A strategic review of the organisation was undertaken with Mary Bignell and Emily Jenke facilitating discussions
  - The Ironpot Creek data report is presented at Crowlands by John Smart, Mark Hocking and Julie Andrew
  - 10 green Corps trainees began work in the Upper Catchment under the leadership of Joel Hastings and Adam Blake
  - Management Chair Michael Greene reported “this has been a year of great activity and real consolidation”
  - Project Platypus was again represented on the WCMA sub committees by Peter Hilbig, Neil Marriott and Michael McMurtrie
  - In partnership with Greening Australia, training on seed collection was held in the Project Platypus seed shed in the old Tech School auto classroom.
  - Projects were undertaken in Daves Avenue, Astons, Six Mile, Wattle Creek, Pentland Creek.
  - Rabbit Buster work was undertaken by most Landcare Groups
  - Launch of Rio Tinto-Project Platypus – Using Science to Plan booklet with the results of the Australian Platypus Conservancy and University of Melbourne research
- 
- 2002**
- Works on Wattle Gully erosion sites are completed with Project Platypus trialling spray seeding batters with native grass
  - A sub catchment plan for Pentland and Sugarloaf Creek is produced
  - Works at Aston Scour include Army trucks carting rock donated by Stawell Gold Mines over a 14 hour period
  - Plantout 2002 was at Navarre Hill with 15,000 trees planted
  - The Newsletter advertised for a 2nd hand 6x4 trailer to cart plants to planting sites and a sturdy golf buggy to cart bamboo stakes
  - Project Platypus was a finalist in the Banksia Awards
  - A Green Corps team is placed in the Upper Wimmera
  - Seed orchard plots are set up to provide seed of uncommon or rare species
  - No platypus surveys take place because of the very dry conditions
  - Leif Simonsen, a Norwegian NRM, mapped sites with GPS and predicted “Electronic maps will be the way of the future”
  - Jane Marriott was appointed as Works Co-ordinator to help get on-ground works completed
  - The Australian Platypus Society launched a book in conjunction with Earthwatch in Canberra followed by a field trip to near Crowlands
  - The Project Platypus Newsletter was distributed to 300 Landcare Group members
  - Over 80 people attended a Birds on Farms Workshop held at the Grange Golf Club with a field visit to Leeke’s Great Western farm.
  - Project Platypus and Wimmera Landcare displays as part of the Wimmera Machinery Field Days
  - Conclusion of the two 3 year partnerships with Rio Tinto

- Project Platypus income reached the \$500,000 mark
- 50,000 trees were planted across the catchment

---

**2003** - Joe Kilpatrick's Vetches Hill at Great Western was the site for the 2003 Plantout

- Conclusion of the 7th year of transition partnership with Rio Tinto 1996 - 2003
- Project Platypus installs accounting systems to allow the organisation to manage the employment of rabbit and weed facilitators for individual Landcare Groups
- Mini Plantout at Ware's Navarre property with Vern Hutton and Navarre Primary School students
- The Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group membership was rekindled with direct seeding projects
- A new Corporate Plan was adopted in July
- The Six Mile Creek Catchment was the site of major works
- Peter Hilbig and Michael McMurtrie attended the National Landcare Conference in Darwin
- No platypus surveys were undertaken because of low water flows
- Training in Quicken took place to help manage the accounts
- SPI Powernet supplied funds to purchase a plant transport trailer and a seed spreader
- Great Western Landcare Group formally launched with a large aerial map available to identify properties and problems

---

**2004** - Emily Tyson appointed as Project Platypus Manager

- Adam Merrick is appointed as works co-ordinator and Bernie Rudolph as weeds facilitator.
- Plantout is at Moyston along Salt Creek to create a riparian corridor
- Spiny Rush – A Management Plan developed by Graham Lee for Project Platypus is released
- A Photo Competition is held to celebrate 10 years of Project Platypus
- The Catchman GIS mapping system is rolled out to Landcare Groups
- A juvenile platypus is trapped at Elmhurst among several adults and confirms their survival despite dry years
- Stawell Urban Landcare Group is formed after several years in the planning
- Bernie Rudolph appointed as full time Works Co-ordinator
- A 10th Anniversary Celebration Dinner was held with Landcare speakers Rob Youll and Sue Marriott
- Stream gauging data continued from two sites at Astons Scour and one in Ironpot Catchment
- Project Platypus participated in the Annual Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar – True Treasures of the Goldfields
- Open Meetings were held in the Black Range and at Navarre
- Project Platypus hosted a function in Melbourne to thank sponsors who were presented with certificates for their support and contributions

---

**2005** - A community tour of the Six Mile Creek Catchment and planning workshop was held


- Seed Collecting Workshops were held and attracted 48 participants
- An Envirofund grant was received to continue the platypus monitoring program
- At Plantout 2005, 13,000 trees were planted on Holden's challenging hill and 7000 at Delahunty's Lake Fyans
- A fencing field day with Nev Prince took place at Deep Lead
- Alan and Shelley Green won the Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer award
- A lease was entered into for the corner building on Main St and renovations begun on the new Landcare Centre
- Linton Argall, Joe Facey, Tristan Kennedy, Jacqueline Young undertook casual employment roles from fencing to weed mapping
- Open meetings were held at Crowlands and Dadswells Bridge
- A Chilean Needle Grass outbreak in Moyston was added to the annual weed spraying program
- DPI and Project Platypus undertook works in the Hyde Park saline areas near Great Western with the assistance from a Coles Grant
- 36,000 plants were planted, 13 km of fencing and 14 km of direct seeding were undertaken for the year
- A plant propagation workshop was held at Phil and Jane Williams Pomonal Wildflower Nursery
- 9 platypus were trapped at 8 sites between Eversley and Crowlands

---

**2006** - Two separate bushfires destroy fences, farms, plantings and houses in the Grampians, Pomonal, Deep Lead, Black Range

- Project Platypus takes the lead in responding to the fires with fencing reconstruction assistance, a tool drive, 12,000 free trees for 30 landholders.
- An RACV grant provides materials for hundreds of nest boxes made by volunteers to provide habitat for wildlife
- Seawinds Nursery in Mt Martha donates plants for fire affected properties
- The Upper Wimmera Farm Tree Group is dissolved and cash and assets donated to Project Platypus
- The new Main St Project Platypus Landcare Centre was launched showcasing display area, meeting room and extensive





office space

- Stawell Urban Landcare Group hosts other groups at a Landcare Linkup
- Scouts plant 7000 plants at Dadswells Bridge
- A Vegetation Forum was hosted by Project Platypus with Paul Gibson Roy talking on plant provenance and Jane Williams on plant identification
- The Seed Bank closes and a new model for supplying seed across the Wimmera Catchment mooted
- A helicopter was employed by Elmhurst Landcare Group to spray Pattersons Curse on steep inaccessible sites
- 20 years of Landcare was celebrated with a Landcare breakfast with Aaron Wood, previous Young Australian of the Year
- 100,000 trees were planted in the Upper Wimmera
- Stawell West and Stawell PS students planted 3000 trees

- 
- 2007**
- Luke Scott begins as Manager of Project Platypus
  - Highlights of an open meeting at Glenorchy are a novel platypus presentation by Luke Scott and a bird walk by Neil Macumber
  - The Mountains to Mallee Wimmera Landcare walk begins in the upper catchment and finishes at Lake Hindmarsh
  - Drought Assistance is made available to farmers for fencing and establishing feeding stations
  - At Jallukar Plantout 30,000 plants are planted by volunteers in one weekend
  - A Paddock Tree Project to protect and replace senescent trees was funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
  - The Project Platypus website was set up
  - The 10th Biodiversity Seminar featured Bulokes
  - The Perennial Pasture System group was set up in the Ararat Stawell area
  - 1200 free trees were distributed at Landsborough to test the interest in Landcare
  - Dadswells Bridge Landcare Group hosted a walk along the Wimmera River
  - Carbon Smart was introduced to the region from Landcare Australia's Rob Youll
  - For the second time income exceeded \$500,000, with 77% of funds spent on on-ground works
  - Drought funding was received from the \* Govt for environmental fencing
  - A grant was received from the Northern Grampians Shire to finalise the fit out of the Stawell Urban Landcare catering and tool trailer
  - The Mountains to Mallee Landcare 300km walk was an icon Landcare event involving walkers and communities across the Wimmera
  - An article in the local paper appealed for a shed to house Project Platypus equipment as Skene St School works involved demolishing the old Tech School mechanics room used by Project Platypus.

- 
- 2008**
- Project Platypus purchase a ripper mounder to better prepare planting sites
  - Free trees and fencing material distributed for the Free Tree project
  - Plantout is held in and around Stawell
  - Inaugural Farming in the 21st Century workshops and field visits were held in partnership with surrounding councils and DPI
  - In conjunction with the Farming in the 21st Century Louisa Kielly spoke to a full venue on their soil carbon trading success
  - Project Platypus equipment to help farmers prepare sites, spray weeds is available for hire to landholders
  - Leigh Blackmore takes up the position of Manager
  - 48 landholders undertake projects this year
  - A new Project Platypus website is launched
  - Phil and Jane Williams scale back their nursery propagation of hiko plants for revegetation projects and new providers sought
  - Funding from the Myer Foundation enables platypus trapping and 2 platypus are sighted in a pool at Dadswells Bridge
  - Total cash income for the year of \$850,000 was largely from government sources
  - Project Platypus is appointed to oversee the new Landcare co-ordinator Victoria Leeke
  - A bus tour with the WCMA looks at Project Platypus and WCMA erosion control sites
  - The Perennial Pasture Systems group begins a partnership with Project Platypus
  - Grampians Regional Waste Management Group offset their vehicle emissions by engaging Project Platypus to plant trees
  - A ripper/moulder was purchased to prepare sites for revegetation

- 
- 2009**
- Greenhouse audits of farms by Carly Green are offered as part of Federal Funding for Carbon Accounting
  - Incentives for improving perennial pastures are offered
  - Project Platypus and Stawell Urban Landcare Group are involved in Ironbarks nature walks for Primary School students
  - Farming in the 21 C continues with Project Platypus hosting

- Planning sessions are undertaken by several Landcare Groups to plan for the future
- 20,000 trees are planted in the 10th annual Plantout at Elmhurst and awards presented to 10 year planters. Bus tours to previous Plantout sites
- Nest boxes are constructed by the Mens Shed in Stawell and distributed to landholders as part of a Stawell Gold Mines grant
- Project Platypus moves to its Western Highway location with offices, works shed and storage are located on the one site and opening 29th May.
- Great Western Landcare Group visits Jigsaw Farms near Hamilton
- Peter Andrews, author of Beyond the Brink, guest speaker at AGM attracts 190 people
- Gallivanting Round Glendhu hike round the steep hills Start property
- Bob Wallace leads a Green Corps crew shared by Project Platypus and Parks Vic
- Victoria Leeke focuses on supporting and assisting Landcare groups
- Stawell DPI office closes
- 3230 paddock trees are distributed to redress the loss of old trees and the lack of regeneration
- Integrated works continue in the Six Mile and Glendhu catchments
- 233 ha is revegetated , 184 ha of remnant vegetation protected and 100,000 plants planted this year
- Mt William Creek Walk a joint initiative of 3 Landcare Groups and Project Platypus was enjoyed by many participants

---

**2010** - Farming in the 21C continues with Project Platypus hosting a Soil Savvy workshop at Pomonal

- The Six Mile Creek Landcare Walk led by Bernie Rudolph covered 40 km over 3 days from the creeks origin at Dunneworthy Forest to where it joins the Wimmera River
- The engaging Small Landholders Project saw Black Range, Moyston and Northern Grampians Landcare Groups construct walking trails in their region
- Julian Cribb spoke on global food production and food security at the AGM
- The Victorian Landcare Forum co-hosted by Project Platypus was held at Halls Gap
- A major Perennial Pastures and Evergraze Seminar was held in Ararat
- Over 1800ha of weed control of 12 targeted weeds was completed
- Plantout was held at Barton Station near Moyston along a 4.5km section of Georges Creek
- Stawell West students planted on Wayne Burtons Lake Lonsdale property as part of Schools Tree Day

---

**2011** - The launch of publication celebrating the 15 year partnership with GWMWater was followed by a bus tour to view works

- Inaugural Agrifest Forum at Concongella, Project Platypus event in the Farming in the 21C series
- Bob Wallace is appointed Landcare Facilitator
- A Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Plan was completed with funds from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation
- Landmate celebrated 20 years working of environmental works
- Plantouts were held on multiple sites on weekends in July with good participation from host Landcare Groups and volunteer planters
- A wet winter with record August rainfall tests erosion control works
- Stawell Urban Landcare Group is very active with work at Moonlight Sands, Pleasant Creek and Big Hill
- Jallukar Landcare Group receives a grant to undertake work on a walking track on Millers Creek Pomonal
- Staff and the Management Committee participated in a replication trial of Landcare Stewardship facilitated by Moragh Mackay from Bass Coast Landcare Network. The course concluded with a local food feast prepared by Steve Gliese.
- Project Platypus takes on the management of the Landmate crew timetable
- 320ha of revegetation is established and 465ha of remnant protected
- Most Landcare groups take up the 2nd Generation Landcare Grants administered by the WCMA to undertake weed and rabbit control
- A memorandum of understanding to guide the relationship between the WCMA and Project Platypus was signed
- Alexandra Gartmann and Professor Kate Auty spoke at the Project Platypus AGM

---

**2012** - A new Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2014 is developed with the assistance of GWMWater's Nigel Binney

- Agrifest 2012 is held at Concongella
- Doing it for the Bandicoots project targets fox control to protect native fauna
- The Heifer Station Creek Walk follows the creek between Frenchmans and Glynwylln
- New sub-committees aim to engage more members in planning and developing projects and determining Project Platypus directions
- Plantouts are held each weekend in July across the catchment
- Project Platypus received funding as part of the 25 years of Landcare celebrations to collate this history publication, tree plantings by each group and Landcare gate signs
- "The Journey – Project Platypus and Landcare in the Upper Wimmera Catchment" is launched at the September AGM



RioTinto



*The*  
**WILLIAM HUCKLAND  
FOUNDATION**  
*est.*

**RACV Community  
Foundation**



