

# Upper Hopkins Land Management Group Newsletter



## Summer 2019

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### Diary Dates

**Ararat Landcare Group**—end of year dinner and meeting. 7pm, Monday 9 Dec at the Court House Hotel.



**Lake Bolac Eel Festival**—tickets on sale now! 20-21 March. <http://www.eelfestival.org.au/>

**Nicole Masters soil workshop**—24-26 Mar 2020. book online: <https://www.trybooking.com/>

Welcome to the Summer 2019 edition of the UHLMG newsletter

Editor: Ayesha Burdett

### Quick updates

Several Upper Hopkins Land Management Group members were celebrated at the **FARMher Dinner**. The aim of the FARMher project is to increase awareness of gender roles and stereotypes in rural communities using storytelling and discussion. A wonderful night was had by all, with a great talk by key note speaker Cathy McGowan, former Federal Member for Indi. You can see some of the photos and highlights on [Facebook](#). Congratulations to all of the organisers, particularly Anna Greene from Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership. Watch out for more programs from FARMher coming in 2020!

Agriculture Victoria has recently rolled out **on-farm energy Tier 1 grants** to provide support to farmers to replace energy inefficient equipment, install more energy efficient systems and enable own-generation capacity. Find out more [online](#) or contact me.

**UHLMG.com.au** is changing! We are currently revising and updating some of the pages. Soon you will be able to pay your invoices and subscribe to the newsletter online.

**Weed solutions:** Don't forget! UHLMG currently has a small amount of 50:50 funding available for gorse projects—contact Celia Tucker on 5354 6277. The UHLMG spray unit is available for members to use—contact Bruce McKay on 0417 512 189.

**Resilience** was the theme for the NRM Regions Conference held in Wodonga in November. I was fortunate to attend and learn about programs and projects throughout Australia that promote agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.

It's been a busy few months with old projects finishing up and new projects launching. I have really enjoyed visiting project sites in the past couple of months and seeing so many trees putting down roots and growing so well. Congratulations to all of the landholders who have received funding recently and are just getting started with preparations for next year.

I am excited that our new website is about to launch. It has a fresh new look and we have tidied up some loose ends. Keep an eye on your email for updates!

Along with the new website, we'll be moving to a digital newsletter and reducing the number of printed newsletters that we send out. If you already receive your newsletter by email, you will continue receiving the newsletter and you don't have to do anything. If you currently receive a printed version, please call me and I'll continue mailing you a printed version, or switch to receiving newsletters by email (contact me so I can add your email address to the newsletter list).

Whichever way you choose to stay in touch, I look forward to sharing more Landcare news with you in the new year. Merry Christmas!

Ayesha



Harvest has begun! (Photo: George Burdett)

[www.uhlmg.com.au](http://www.uhlmg.com.au)

[www.facebook.com/UHLMG](http://www.facebook.com/UHLMG)



**Please help us to cut costs and reduce our impact on the environment.**

Nominate to receive your next newsletter **via email** (with color photos) rather than on paper (black & white). Simply send an email to: [ayesha.burdett@gmail.com](mailto:ayesha.burdett@gmail.com)



The Upper Hopkins Land Management Group is grateful to the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and the Victorian Government DELWP & DEDJTR for their support of group activities and the production of this newsletter.



# Summer photo board



At the 2019 gathering, most people braved the wintery conditions to visit the wind turbine. Una was delighted with her gift, and the well wishes from all. Billy buttons were on show during the GHCMA Victorian Volcanic Plains grasslands tour—another cold day! Plenty of wildlife has been spotted in the area recently, including White Winged Triller, Common Blue Tongue lizard and Plumed Whistling Ducks. (wildlife photos: Jack Tucker).

## President's report

As 2019 comes to an end I would like to thank Ayesha Burdett for all that she has done since starting in the Facilitator role back in June. She has continued the momentum that Una had created. Her wealth of knowledge and experience is invaluable to the Group and she has already supported many of our members with funded Landcare projects, developing potential projects as well as expanding her networks which will benefit all of us.

On this note, if you have a project in mind that you would like to source funding for please don't hesitate to contact Ayesha. It is easier for us to include your project in future funding applications if we know about it in advance.

We officially farewelled Una back in October at a gathering kindly hosted by Don and Goldie Rowe at "Sidlaw". The evening was well attended and enjoyed by all which reflected the great appreciation people had for Una's contribution to the Landcare community over many years. Despite Arctic conditions those that attended were taken on a tour of the Maroona Wind Farm which is just up the hill from the Rowe's woolshed and saw the turbines at full capacity!

For those of you who live in the Maroona area you may be interested to note that the Maroona Wind Farm Community Fund Selection Panel will be assessing applications for the 2020 payment in March. Please start to think about projects that might benefit the Maroona community and send any applications to myself [jack@rhyniepastoral.com.au](mailto:jack@rhyniepastoral.com.au) or Ayesha [ayesha.burdett@gmail.com](mailto:ayesha.burdett@gmail.com) by the end of February. If you have any queries about submitting an application please don't hesitate to be in touch. Like other years it will need to provide a brief description of the project including how it will benefit the Maroona community and associated costings/quotations.

Finally, after such a fortunate growing season it appears a lot of the local indigenous trees and shrubs are flowering/budding up really well. For anybody intending to do direct seeding in the next few years this summer could be a great opportunity to stock up on local seed. If you have any questions about this process feel free to contact me or Don Rowe.

Happy Landcaring!

Jack Tucker

## Highlights of Retirement: News from Una

I was delighted to join members of Upper Hopkins Land Management Group, Ararat Landcare Group and the Maroona Mob for their end of year get together which also served as an opportunity to farewell myself and welcome Ayesha who has most capably taken on my role as Local Landcare Facilitator.

The gathering, at Don and Goldie Rowe's woolshed was also an opportunity to have a close up inspection of one of the Maroona wind towers. A large group braved the very cold

wind and intermittent rain to check out the tower and hear some of the details of its construction and operation from Jack Tucker. The view from the hill is stunning, and gives a good look at how much revegetation work the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group has achieved since its beginnings in 1991 when Peter Forster and a group of enthusiastic landholders got together to tackle dryland salinity.

Once back in the woolshed we all enjoyed a shared BBQ meal, a wine or two and much conversation. It was lovely to see the large number of Landcare members at the gathering, many whom have been members for many years, and also very encouraging to see the number of younger members taking an interest in Landcare and Regenerative Farming. The evening was a great opportunity for the urban and rural Landcarers to get to know each other.

I would like to thank everyone for their kind words and good wishes. Thank you to all the Upper Hopkins and Ararat Landcare members for Peter Wohlleben's beautiful book "The Hidden Life of Trees" complete with all your thoughtful inscriptions on the inside cover. I will certainly treasure this. Ararat Landcare members will be pleased to know your beautiful tree is growing happily near my back gate.

As a retirement gift to myself I drove with my partner from Darwin to Broome via the Gibb River Road with side trips to the Mitchell Plateau and the Dampier Peninsula, returning via Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kakadu. Among the many highlights was a visit to James Price Point, the site of the proposed Browse Basin gas processing plant which was successfully challenged by environmentalists in WA and elsewhere, and watching the sun rise over the Wolfe Creek crater. A notable feature was the mosaic burning being carried out by the traditional owners evident nearly everywhere we went.

The country was very dry with most waterways were completely empty and very little wildlife evident other than birds, gathered in numbers wherever there was water. This was most apparent at Fogg Dam, near Darwin, where huge numbers of Magpie Geese, Herons, Spoonbills, Stilts and other water birds and were concentrated in the small area of remaining wetland.



Upper: A male bowerbird at Wandjina Gorge, busy perfecting his bower. Lower: Magpie Geese and companions at Fogg Dam. (Photos: Una Allender)

## Why Wetlands are Important

By Tania Parker, Glenelg Hopkins CMA

*Did you know?* The Glenelg Hopkins region contains 44% of Victoria's wetlands, many of which are on private property and managed by private landholders.

Wetlands are areas where fresh or salt water gathers, either permanently or temporarily. They may be as small as a farm dam or as big as a lake, hold standing or very slow-moving water and can be wet or dry depending on seasonal conditions. They support a wide range of water-based plants and animals which change with slope and depth, and are protected under local, state and federal legislation.

Wetlands have an essential role in the natural environment, but they can also have productive value when managed effectively. They can be protected and incorporated into today's farm management with careful planning and still retain their integrity as a wetland.



Sweet Grass Wetland. Photo: Tania Parker.

Some of the benefits of wetlands:

- Provide habitat for native plants and animals
- Filter nutrients and trap sediment
- Improve water quality
- Reduce the impact of flooding
- Can be fenced as part of farm management
- Provide a range of recreational activities
- Can store carbon and reduce the impact of climate change

Some of our wetland systems are no longer working naturally because human activity has changed the way water flows in or out of them. They are often threatened by a lack of water, physical change from development, pollution, and poor or uninformed land management decisions.

Some of the threats to wetlands include:

- Runoff and drift of fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides
- Fertilising and nutrient enrichment
- Draining and/or extracting water
- Pest plants and animals
- Over-grazing by stock
- Cropping

As part of Glenelg Hopkins CMA's Hopkins Wetland Restoration Project to raise awareness of the value of wetlands in the landscape, 5 sites for wetland protection have been developed in the upper Hopkins catchment. This includes working with landholders to establish fencing of their wetlands so they can be better managed and grazed when dry, rather than open to continual grazing by stock.

For more information about the Hopkins Wetland Restoration Project or to enquire about project funding, contact Tania Parker on 5571 2526 or [t.parker@ghcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:t.parker@ghcma.vic.gov.au)

## Upper Hopkins LMG Committee News

By Celia Tucker, Upper Hopkins Land Management Group

In October our AGM was held at the Ararat RSL. Prior to the meeting we enjoyed a meal and were fortunate enough to have Ayesha and her partner Howard Brandenburg do a presentation that focused on their experiences as Freshwater and Fish Ecologist's in both Australia and the US. This highlighted the skills and expertise that they have brought to this region as a result of recently moving back to Ayesha's family farm at Wickliffe.

At the AGM the following people were elected as office bearers: Jack Tucker (President), Stephen Reid (Vice President), Celia Tucker (Secretary) and Kelly Gellie (Treasurer). Other committees members are Penny Hartwich, Don Rowe, Bruce McKay, Jayne Drum, Andi Armytage and Carole Mules.

Elyjah McLeod, Dominique Sparks and Peta Watson have decided to step down as committee members and were thanked for their contribution to the Group. A special thank you should be made to Dom for her tireless support for the Group over many years, particularly in relation to marketing and

promotion. Carole Mules will remain a committee member but stepped down as Secretary and I would like to also thank her for her input. I'm thrilled that Kelly Gellie has accepted the role as Treasurer as she brings to the role strong financial skills which will benefit the Group greatly.

The Group has engaged Tom Parkes from Stawell to upgrade our existing website with a focus on showcasing farm Landcare projects that have been completed across our region in recent times. We will also be incorporating our membership database so that members have the option to renew their membership fees online which will streamline the process.

We will look forward to sharing the new look website with you all in the very near future.

While on the topic of Group membership, if applicable, please make sure you've paid your 2019/20 fees. Invoices were emailed/mailed out at the beginning of the financial year to those members whose membership was due for renewal.

Wishing you all a safe and happy festive season.

Cheers,

Celia Tucker

## Birds on the Move

**David Nichols, Glenelg Hopkins CMA**

Every spring sees the arrival to our region of many beautiful and interesting bird species from inland and northern Australia. Several species of cuckoos, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, Rufous Songlarks, Rainbow Bee-eaters, several honeyeaters and Sacred Kingfishers are largely spring/summer visitors to our region. In years where the season is good locally and dry in the north, the call of Rufous Whistlers, Sacred Kingfishers and Pallid Cuckoos can seem to be everywhere. This has been the case in the last couple of years.

Sometimes some species move into areas where they are not normally seen. Last summer saw Black-shouldered Kites, Barn Owls and Black kites turn up in more coastal locations, which is unusual. This spring, with the worsening inland drought, this north-south migration, and movement to more coastal location has gone to a new level.

Across the state, White-winged Trillers have been commonly seen, and in large numbers. Normally this triller is an occasional visitor and seldom south of the range. An even more significant sighting has been the arrival of Crimson Chats. The last Crimson Chat I saw was 3 months ago in its normal desert habitat west of Tibooburra. To see 10 of them recently in a wheat crop to the west of Maroona was exciting on one hand, and very much a concern on the other. This chat is normally an occasional summer sighting to the Wimmera/Mallee, and this year it has been sighted in places it has 'never' been seen before, including Hamilton and Streatham.

Rufous Songlark is another occasional visitor south of the range, but has been very commonly seen and heard this year. Also recently a small flock of Budgerigar was sighted in the Victoria Valley near Mirranatwa.

While these sightings can be exciting for local bird watchers and photographers, it is a serious concern the ongoing health of these bird populations. Often these birds forced out of their normal habitats due to a lack of food and habitat resources, do not breed in their new areas. Australian Birdlife Editor, Sean Dooley recently stated in that, "missing consecutive breeding seasons could be disastrous" for some bird populations.

Birds forced into new habitats may also suffer other stress factors and fall prey to other species. It appears unlikely that all birds return to their normal winter habitats, while others would have missed breeding.

Wetland bird species may also be more prevalent this summer in our region due to the inland drought. However this is not such a concern for their breeding, as most of these species are well adapted to turning up at the best available wetlands for their normal breeding cycle and this may constantly vary. Keep an eye out when passing well populated wetlands.

Any new or interesting bird sighting can be recorded with Birdlife Australia via the Birdata app. Help with tricky identifications can be found on the Australian Bird Identification Facebook page. Or one of the keen birdwatchers in the UHLMG will always be willing to help with identification or recording of bird species. This is always easier with a good sound recording of the call, and/or a good photo.

Don't forget that with summer coming on, a well positioned bird bath can be a great way to look after birds and enticing them into a good viewing area. As long as we are keeping them away from the ever present threat of the domestic cat.



*Juvenile (top) and adult (bottom) male Crimson Chat. Photos: Dave Nichols*



**PHOTO COMPETITION**  
**CELEBRATING WETLANDS**

Wetlands, swamps and bogs come to life in spring with amazing wildflowers, plants and animals. To celebrate Glenelg Hopkins CMA wants your wetland photos. Everyone is welcome to enter in one or all three categories.

- In my paddock
- The wetland as home
- Scenic wetlands

Prizes valued at \$250 for each category.

All photos will be exhibited at the Lake Bolac Eel Festival, 20th - 22nd March 2020.

Entries close 11.30pm Sunday 1st March 2020

For more information contact Jan Barton on 5571 2526 or [www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/wetlandphotocomp](http://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/wetlandphotocomp)

Glenelg Hopkins CMA logo, Our Catchments Our Communities logo, and VICTORIA State Government logo.

The Victorian Government has committed funding of \$222 million over four years to ensure Victoria's waterways and catchments support environmental, social, cultural and economic needs and the values of our communities.

# Perennial Pasture Systems: 11th Annual Study Tour

By Rob Shea, Project Manager, Perennial Pasture Systems

The Perennial Pasture Systems (PPS) group conducts an annual study tour to leading agricultural enterprises in other regions. This year, the Study Tour saw 28 members visit South Australia, October 4 - 6th. The tour started in Victoria with a visit to the large family enterprise “Booroopki” near Minimay. With over 13,000 Ha, 85,000 sheep shorn, 170 km of boundary fencing, 55 centre pivots and fresh scones, the visit to “Booroopki” was a great start to the tour.

After lunch at the Apsley pub, the tour group headed to the cross border property “Lochmaria” where much of the property has been set up with Techno Grazing for their lamb production system. A high pressure water system is reticulated through 100 water points that can each provide water for 4,000 sheep. Trade cattle and wine grapes are part of the farming system on “Lochmaria”.

A drive to Robe for the overnight stay, dinner at the Caledonian Inn and an insightful talk on local farming conditions by respected S.A. Consultant and PPS member, Tim Prance, completed the day.

On Saturday morning, PPS members visited “Barooka” and were reacquainted with Henry Goode, a presenter at the 2018 PPS Annual Conference. An inspection of the impressive sheep handling complex was undertaken before the group had a look at the rest of the farm system which has an 8,000 ewe operation focusing on sheepmeat but wool is also a priority. “Barooka” also has a 350 breeding cow herd.

The next farm, “Konetta”, is part of the A.J. & P.A McBride group of properties. “Konetta” has a 20,000 ewes flock and a 300 cow breeding herd; trade cattle also make up part of the livestock mix. At “Konetta” the PPS group got a good insight into the management of alkaline soils and the large drainage systems that allow farming to be conducted in the region.

The day’s final farm was “Kirklands” a mixed enterprise of 9,000 ewes for lamb production and 800 Ha of wheat, canola and beans. Trade cattle are also on the property but they are soon to go as conditions get a bit wet for them. The property has several mineral deficiency issues which are overcome with both paddock and animal additives. “Kirklands” has large areas of “heritage” scrub which provides great shelter and attractive views throughout the property.

A visit to the Woakwine cutting was made on the way to Mt Gambier where a massive private drainage project was undertaken in the 1950’s. A pleasant social evening followed the day’s activities at the South Eastern Hotel in Mt Gambier.

A cold and wet Sunday morning greeted the group as they made their way to the historic “Coola” station. The 120 year old woolshed was inspected before a farm tour which started at the bull beef operation which is conducted within a Techno Grazing system. A 1,100 Angus breeding herd and a large trade cattle system is also part of the beef system on “Coola” with long-term planning ensuring that cattle numbers match pasture availability. The 15,000 composite ewe flock graze on a mix of cocksfoot/phalaris/chicory and clover pastures which help make up the 80,000 DSE carried on the property. 80 Ha of vineyards are also part of the enterprise mix. Lunch was taken in the woolshed before heading for the final farm visit.

The group travelled back to Victoria for the final farm visit at “Withnell Dairy” near Casterton; it was one of only two farms without irrigation (“Kirklands” was the other) on the study



Ned admiring the PPS banner in the group photo at Barooka. Photo supplied by Rob Shea.

tour. 660 Friesian cows are milked in the dairy operation and a cattle fattening enterprise is conducted on a nearby property. The pasture base for the dairy cows consist of phalaris, cocksfoot and ryegrass with large amounts of silage produced annually. A targeted program of N and GA use helps meet pasture needs throughout the winter. Cows are also fed a wheat/canola mix in the bail which has a mineral mix added to it. PPS members were interested in the use of Currie Cocksfoot in the pasture system which caused a few to reconsider how it may add value on farm.

The group’s car pools dispersed after the dairy visit and there was plenty of discussion on the way home after an enlightening and inspirational study tour. The full study tour report is available on the PPS website.

*The 11th Annual PPS Study Tour was been supported by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program and Allflex.*



## National Landcare Program: Smart Farms Small Grants Round 3

Applications are currently open for projects to deliver services under the National Landcare Program – [Smart Farms Small Grants Round 3](#).

The program aims to protect, conserve and provide for the productive use of Australia’s water, soil, plants and animals and the ecosystems in which they live and interact, in partnership with industry, communities and other governments.

This is an open, competitive, grant opportunity to support projects to increase farming, forestry and fishing communities’ awareness, knowledge, skills and capacity to adopt best practice sustainable agriculture.

For further information about Smart Farms Small Grants, go to the website: <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/national-landcare-program-smart-farms-small-grants-round-3>.

Please contact your Landcare Facilitator (Ayesha Burdett) if you have a great idea and are interested in applying for a grant!

## Cropping & Swamps: A Social Research Project

Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group in partnership with Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, have engaged Behaviour Works Australia from Monash University to undertake a research project to understand farmer management decisions and practices in relation to swamps across South West Victoria.

The aim of the project is to

- Explore different understandings and current farm practices in relation to cropping and swamps in the South West region of Victoria
- Identify influential drivers and barriers that impact on farmer's adoption of specific practices to protect swamps
- Recommend potential engagement strategies to GHCMA & BBCAG based on a more in-depth understanding of the opinions of farmers when it comes to protecting swamps.

The project has three stages, the first stage involved a workshop with key stakeholders to identify and prioritise farm practices. This workshop was held in Willaura in October, and a summary report of what was discussed has been produced and inform stage two.

Stage two will involve interviews with a cross-section of farmers in the district to explore the different influences that

impact adoption of these practices, and the third stage will involve another workshop to discuss results of the interviews and literature review and provide options for future engagement strategies. Stage two and three will be delivered early next year.

If you are a cropping farmer who has swamps on your land and you would like to be involved with this project, please contact Jan Barton, GHCMA, on 5571 2526 or email [j.barton@ghcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:j.barton@ghcma.vic.gov.au).



*Canola cropping around a swamp. Photo: Jileena Cole, BBCAG*

## Southwest Biodiversity Forum: A focus on a changing landscape

By. W. H. Brandenburg

The [2019 Southwest Biodiversity Forum](#) was held at Deakin University Warrnambool Campus on 14 November 2019. This was the second year the forum was held, with the first forum held in 2016. The forum was organized by the Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DEWLP) and showcased projects conducted around Southwest Victoria to promote and restore biodiversity, to protect threatened species and sensitive habitats, and to serve as a means to network and connect with researchers, government officials, citizen scientists, and community members.

The forum was opened by John Clarke the General Manager of Cultural Landscapes for the Eastern Maar. Mr. Clarke poignantly outlined how indigenous language is linked to land management and provides insight into the ecosystems of the diverse landscapes of Australia. Thus framing the concept that “all the data one needs is found in the land”. He also verbalized the commitment of indigenous peoples to protect their native home and the willingness to share that deep knowledge of Country with those willing to fight for ecosystem protection.

There were many diverse presentations and a wealth of knowledge disseminated during the 2019 forum. Presentations included on-ground activities to restore and preserve native flora within the Victoria Volcanic Plains and the Otways, including native grasslands, Button Wrinklewort habitats, and numerous species of orchids. There were also a number of presentations focused on vertebrate species including; monitoring and conservation of small marsupials in the Otways, uncovering the needs of the Orange-bellied Parrot, and monitoring populations of Southern Right Whales (to

name a few). The on-going research to promote restorative outcomes for the environment included; maintaining genetic diversity, understanding complex reproductive strategies, database and model generation, eradication of invasive species, and on-ground restoration of habitat, both large and small.

Presentations also included conservation work conducted by the community, including investigations into the sources of plastics found along beaches of southern Australia (as well as clean-up efforts) and an abandoned plantation reclaimed by community members in Ballarat, planting the way for a new forest park.

There were three sessions of ‘lightning talks’ which provided the audience with very brief overviews of conservation projects occurring throughout Southwestern Victoria. These were enticing enough to promote expanded conversations and new acquaintances during the breaks and over lunch.

The session was closed with some words from the Executive Director of DEWLP, James Todd, who spoke of the commitments of his organization to protect Victoria’s environment into the future. Those commitments included working towards the 2037 Biodiversity Goals. These goals, established by the Victorian Government in 2017, were developed to protect Victoria’s biodiversity for the whole of society, and the world.

In a landscape that has undergone so much transformation over the last 180 years regarding population, land use, and a different set of cultural values, the biodiversity forum was a stunning example of the tremendous efforts of Australian inhabitants to restore and balance a fragile and ancient landscape.

# 2019 NRM Knowledge Conference



Landcarers who are working together to manage the landscape and support social resilience by investing in capacity-building for individuals and groups (e.g. programs like FARMher and Soil CRC training).

My attendance at the NRM Knowledge Conference was supported by Glenelg Hopkins CMA through Our Catchments, Our Communities funding.

## By Ayesha Burdett, UHLMG Facilitator

In November, I headed north to Wodonga for the NRM Regions Conference. [NRM Regions Australia](#) is comprised of 56 regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations that aim to deliver on-ground action for national priorities in NRM. In Victoria, NRM organisations are divided into catchment management authorities (CMAs), and several Glenelg Hopkins CMA staff and Board members represented our region at the conference.

The theme of the conference was *Creating Resilience through Natural Resource Management – how do we do it?* Throughout the conference, the audience was invited to participate in the conversation by asking questions and adding comments towards the development of a call to action. I listened to lots of interesting speakers from a diversity of backgrounds, discussing everything from groundwater recovery to soil management to social science to conserving biodiversity.

Many of the speakers encouraged us to collaborate with “strange bedfellows” and find alliances in unexpected places for improved outcomes in sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. Partnerships were viewed as a key ingredient to success (along with actions informed by science), but can only be useful if they are well-informed and a clear target is mutually agreed upon. Vicky-Jo Russell (Birdlife Australia) emphasised that listening was just as important as talking when it came to building relationships with partners; as she said, if you’re not prepared to change, you can’t be a change agent. Flexibility is essential for a collaboration to be productive.

Sue Middleton (Rural Woman of the Year for Australia in 2010) discussed resilience as an outcome from simple, practical answers to complex issues. She observed that, “Common sense may actually be a form of disruption.”

I took a break from talks and discussions and spent an afternoon on a field trip to the Wonga Wetlands. This wetland complex is just a few minutes from central Albury and is a hotspot for birdwatchers. The wetlands were constructed in the late 1990s to treat wastewater, but has valuable aesthetic and ecological benefits for the region as well. We also visited the Yindymarra Sculpture Walk with two local Indigenous elders. As we walked among the sculptures, we learned about the artwork and about the significance of certain vegetation and trees. My favourite piece was the giant fish trap sculpture overlooking the river.

Throughout the conference, I had some time to reflect on the theme of creating resilience. Initially, I had considered “resilience” from an ecological perspective: the ability for an ecosystem to bounce back from a disturbance. Several speakers discussed that ecosystems cannot be expected to bounce back from catastrophic climate change and instead we need to consider a new state that includes adaptation and active management.

As I listened to the talks, I gradually realised that “resilience” also referred to the resilience of individuals and communities to respond to changing conditions, and to find ways to adapt and manage. We are fortunate to have a strong community of



*I was in Canberra last week for some water bug training: the skies were hazy with smoke and the landscape was extremely dry. One sample stream had no water, something that the instructors had never seen before.*

## Grampians Regional Climate Adaptation Strategy

### By Daryl Scherger, Grampians Region Climate Adaptation Group

The Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP) is seeking input into a Grampians Region Climate Adaptation Strategy to help regional communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Regional Climate Adaptation Group (RCAG) has been set up to help develop this strategy and facilitate community input. My role on the RCAG is to seek comments and suggestions from various interest groups like UHLMG.

The goals of the strategy will include:

- Preparing for more extreme heat, fire and storm events
- Having water supplies resilient to drought
- Changing agricultural practices
- Protecting biodiversity
- Assessing business risk and insurability
- Minimising health impacts on vulnerable people

The RCAG needs suggestions on how these goal can be met locally or across the region to include in the regional strategy. The UHLMG or individual members can provide input by calling 136 186 or by visiting: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/grampians-region-climate-adaptation-strategy>

Time lines for the project are tight and we need feedback before the end of January, 2020 (preferably before Christmas). I’m happy to attend a UHLMG meeting or answer questions, receive suggestions directly. Members can call me on 0497 609 944 or email: [daryl.scherger@bigpond.com](mailto:daryl.scherger@bigpond.com)

There is limited funding up to \$40,000 available for a local climate related project and if the group has some ideas please let me know ASAP.

## Meanderings and reflections

I headed out for water quality surveys at the end of November. It's interesting to see how much some of the sites have changed in the past few months. It's the time of year when water levels are starting to drop and some sampling points are just a slow trickle, or have dried up completely. If you take a close look at the EC numbers in the table below, you might notice that several sites have high readings, above recommended levels for livestock water supplies.



*Fiery Creek on Yalla-Y-Poora Road. Photo: Ayesha Burdett*

### Water results : Upper Hopkins River, Upper Fiery Creek and Upper Mt Emu Creek catchments

**EC levels for livestock water supplies.** Value given in brackets for each type of livestock is the EC level at which production decline begins: Beef cattle (6,200 EC  $\mu$ S/cm), lactating ewes and weaners (6,000 EC  $\mu$ S/cm), dry sheep (9,300 EC  $\mu$ S/cm), horses (6,200 EC  $\mu$ S/cm), Pigs (3,100 EC  $\mu$ S/cm), poultry 3,100 EC  $\mu$ S/cm).

Stream	Road where site accessed	EC ( $\mu$ S/cm) Nov 2019	EC ( $\mu$ S/cm) Sep 2019	highest	lowest	average
Good Morning Bill Creek	Buninjon West Road	15960	5000	39000	300	11204.1
Hopkins River	Bridge on Labrador Road	7030	337	11200	337	6019.1
Hopkins River	Robertsons Bridge (Langi Logan Rd)	5970	327	13000	327	4731.4
Hopkins River	Tatyoan Road (sth Kangaroo Pt Rd)	4370	3670	13800	780	4631.6
Hopkins River	Burrumbeep Boundary Road	6660	3950	11700	330	5337.3
Hopkins River	Jacksons Creek Road	9890	4020	12100	340	6230.6
Hopkins River	Warrak Road (Hopkins River Road)	11330	6500	23280	490	8998.6
Hopkins River	Wickliffe - Glenelg Highway	8670	2630	19000	1590	10543.8
Hopkins River	Back Bolac Road	9860	2760	29600	1620	11686.9
Hopkins River	Delacombe Way (Edgarley Bridge)	10290	2800	17400	1790	9647.1
Hopkins River	Rossbridge (bridge)	8780	3750	13700	820	8177.2
Hopkins River	Old Geelong Road	13600	2620	16300	500	8348.2
Hopkins River	Dobie Road	7530	3520	15900	160	5786.7
Hopkins River	Bald Hill Road ford	10940	2890	31800	1980	10682.9
Hopkins River	Helendoite Road	8150	299	10800	299	5756.1
Challicum Creek	Porters Bridge Road	13050	1666	26680	145	11114.8
Fiery Creek	Porters Bridge Road	4010	1235	11930	550	5365.3
Fiery Creek	Mt William Rd (east Travellers Rest Rd)	2220	1107	5950	500	2325.4
Fiery Creek	Gordons Bridge Road	3130	1229	17560	530	4910.7
Fiery Creek	Runway Swamp Road	5950	2450	14520	860	5065.4
Fiery Creek	Streatham Reserve	5280	2230	11600	770	4407.9
Fiery Creek	McCrows Rd/Nerrin Nerrin Estate Rd	7230	2730	13770	780	7505.8
Fiery Creek	Lake Bolac	8760	3540	51600	3450	10941.0
Lake Bolac	Fishermens Pontoon	8640	3710	53000	1410	10497.7
Middle Creek	Willowtree Road	509	368	3700	100	447.4
Trawalla Creek	Back Waterloo Rd, bridge	2130	2300	15300	400	2637.4

Stream	Road where site accessed	EC (µS/cm) Nov 2019	EC (µS/cm) Sep 2019	highest	lowest	average
Lake Buninjon	Maroona - Glenthompson Road	13520	9090	104000	880	16092.8
Green Hill Lake	Western Highway entrance	2240	1917	28800	340	6280.1
Captains Creek	Tatyoan North Road	332	235	3500	100	496.9
Jacksons Creek	Coopers Road	10410	244	15900	244	8546.2
Tatyoan drainage line	Rockies Hill Road	16660	3460	28200	360	14499.7
Three Mile Creek	Warrayatkin Road	puddle only	17420	22400	600	7855.0
Three Mile Creek	Warrak Road	3900	2520	13600	390	2513.4
Cemetery Creek	Warrak Road	puddle only	905	9620	130	1015.0
Billy Billy Creek	Buangor	332	261	8060	200	1006.4
Mt Emu Creek	Trawalla Bridge	1210	1260	6400	440	1819.7
Mt Emu Creek	Streatham-Carngham Road	2700	3040	12200	130	2706.5
Mt Emu Creek	Mt Emu Settlement Road Bridge	3380	3120	11490	390	5249.5
Mt Emu Creek	Skipton pedestrian bridge	2920	3140	7900	440	4572.3

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#### Change of Address?

Please contact Ayesha Burdett to update your address or provide an email address

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*Up close look at local grasslands  
(Photo: Ayesha Burdett)*