

NEWSLETTER

December 2010

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Phascogale tapoatafa (Tuan)

Conservation Management Networks



Australia is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world. Most of our native plants and animals only occur here. Many reside on private land. To foster their preservation, the concept of Conservation Management Networks (CMNs) has been developed with the support of the Victorian Government. The creation of a funded CMN in the Strathbogies is a fantastic opportunity to focus attention on biodiversity and conservation issues across the region.

What is a Conservation Management Network?

A CMN focuses on a **local ecological community** – or a group of plants and animals that coexist in nature – such as rainforest, native grassland or woodland.

Members work to **protect threatened species** like the endangered Bush Stone-curlew, Striped Legless Lizard, Malleefowl and the vulnerable Powerful Owl.

So, a CMN

- ✓ is a network of sites with native vegetation
- ✓ is a network of people who work together to protect and restore these sites, and also work to expand and link them across the landscape
- ✓ works closely with local Landcare, government agencies and nongovernment organizations
- ✓ works on both public and private land with site-based activities like revegetation, and addressing landscape-wide problems like tree die-back, weeds and foxes
- ✓ has a strong focus on community education

Members of a CMN include:

- interested private landholders
- managers of remnant vegetation on public land
- other interested community members

Creating Networks across the Landscape

The physical area of a CMN spans the landscape, linking protected areas for biodiversity. Remnant vegetation on private land is linked through revegetation to scattered parcels of public land and to larger reserves.

There are currently nine CMNs in Victoria, each with their own direction and links to local community, but all working broadly to a state-wide Strategic Plan. In its 2007 inquiry into River Red Gum Forests, the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) recommended that additional CMNs be established in the future.

The several Landcare groups in the region (Strathbogie Tableland, Highlands, Hughes Creek, Burnt Creek, Creighton's Creek, Gooram Valley etc) can all be important contributors to the CMN, but a CMN also invites participation from Government land managers (State & Local), private land owners, regional authorities and corporations, to get a 'whole-of-community' approach to conservation in the region. This is an opportunity for all the different groups interested in conservation of this special region to work together and have a stronger voice.

STLG Hosts CMN Wetland Tender Facilitator

Thanks to input from Peter Kelly and Lindsay Rose, the local CMN sponsored Wetland Tender will have a facilitator, Bertram Lobert, hosted by STLCG. Bertram can be contacted regarding putting bids in for protection and management of wetlands on the Strathbogie Tableland.

Acknowledgement and further information go to <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrence.nsf/>

Groundwater Monitoring

Bertram Lobert also facilitates groundwater monitoring and has decided to collate all the related information on a new website. The site still needs a bit of cleaning up, but hopefully it makes sense and is easy to navigate.



The recent data for the bores pictured indicates a significant groundwater recharge. To see the graphed details go to the URL below.

Other water matters coming up include Caring for Our Country March/April groundwater mapping and another water forum.

<http://strathbogiawatertables.wordpress.com/>

Caring For our Country (CFoC)

Seven Creeks Catchment Health Project

Submission Summary

The Seven Creeks, Victoria is approximately 120km long rising on the Strathbogie Tableland. Tableland rainfall averages 1000mm and in the last decade this has reduced by approximately 20% due perhaps to climate change combined with possible increased demand for water. Seven Creeks is in danger of becoming ephemeral. Strathbogie Tableland Landcare Group and its partners intend to help change current culture of water use by demonstration of best management practice in conserving stream flow and minimising stock and domestic extraction from ground water and surface flows. This will maintain a viable summer flow to protect endangered species including trout cod, Macquarie perch, preserving habitat for the iconic platypus population and passing on water downstream.



A project sign has been erected opposite Strathbogie Hall (Armstrong Street). However, the work on this project has been slowed due to constant high/flood levels in Seven Creeks. The first section upstream will need to be replanted. The lower section of work below Gall's Gap has been held over until after Christmas. The creek crossing & associated solar powered electric fencing is the next step on the upper site.

A field day is scheduled for March 2011 – approximately 11th March (to be confirmed).

STLG has received funding from CFoC for Stage 2 of Seven Creeks Catchment Health: \$20,000.

Broken Goulburn Implementation Committee

Amalgamation

A lot of time and energy is being directed to the amalgamation of 3 northern Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs). A Workshop was convened at Shepparton to get BGIC members' ideas on important functions to carry forward. Catchment community concerns and a method of communicating this to the new Board emerged as a key concern. One method would be to facilitate this through community reference groups drawn from areas of common concern e.g. Strathbogie Ranges.

Murray Darling Basin Plan Submissions

The CMA, including BGIC, is developing a submission to go to the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) on the recently released guide to the proposed Basin Plan. Those wishing to have input can visit the MDBA website www.mdba.gov.au. Phone 18000 230 067 or email engagement@mdba.gov.au.

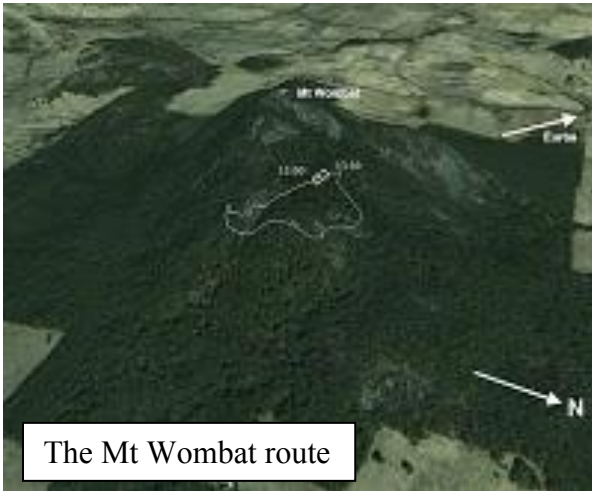
Changes to Shire Planning Role

Removal of the planning role from some shires affected by the Green Wedges Initiative of the State Government appears to be a move to encourage high density development of 250-400 square metre building blocks. The BGIC is concerned at the lack of opportunity to have an influence on the environmental impacts of this decision.



View the SNAP! blog

<http://strathbogierangesnaturalhistory.blogspot.com/>



The Mt Wombat route

SNAP walks The Strathbogie Nature Atlas Project (SNAP!) is a project of the Strathbogie Tableland Landcare Group. SNAP! continues to gather data on local flora and fauna through fascinating field expeditions. Some previous SNAP! and SNAP!-related events can be viewed at the URL above.

The recent Mt Wombat walks were a great



Sun Orchid

example. Mt Wombat is the largest block of intact native

vegetation remaining on the western



Mt Wombat wet gully

edge of the Strathbogie Tableland - it's a treasure that deserves more of our attention and appreciation.



Violet Kunzea

Perhaps regular walks there during the year could be planned by [SNAP!](#)

Shire Land Management Advisory Committee Replacement

Strathbogie Shire has decided to replace this committee with an 'Environmental Committee'. Members of the SLMAC were invited to attend a meeting with the Shire on 14th September. Council failed in its undertaking to supply attendees in advance with details of what they envisaged the roles of the new committee would be – as a result the meeting was abandoned. Council gave a new undertaking to call another meeting at a date to be decided, this time outlining their future intentions to attendees.

Rural Extension Program

Seize the opportunity while it lasts. Here is another reminder that this program for subsidized removal of blackberry finishes in March 2011.



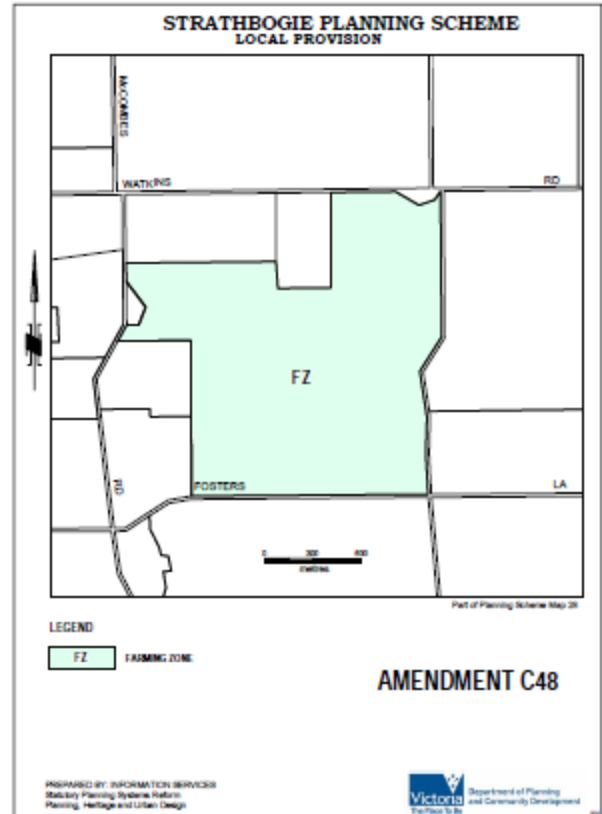
Hancock's Purchase of Public Land via Planning Amendment

Many of us became aware of this planning scheme amendment via the November Tableland Talk. Hancocks have purchased further holdings of what was previously public land via an in process planning amendment which alters the zoning from Public Conservation and Resource Zone to Farming Zone. One can only assume that they will expand their pine "agro-forestry" activities (maybe that should be Aggro! forestry). Unfortunately submissions were to be in by 30 November, before this newsletter's publication. Nonetheless, for those whom missed it here is some further discussion. The URL for the amendment is included below.

Strathbogrie Shire Council submitted a planning amendment (C48) notice on 26th October to rezone an area bounded by Watkins Road, Macomb's Road and Forster's Lane from Public conservation and Resource Zone to Farming Zone. The amendment has been submitted at the request of Hancock Victorian Plantations Pty Ltd, a company which has pine plantations to the north/east of the area in question.

It is understood that this parcel of land has already been purchased by Hancocks from the State Government although we have been unable to ascertain whether the land was ever put up for auction or public tender. A neighbouring resident advises that no notices have been placed on the property drawing the public's attention to the proposed amendment and that adjacent owners have not been notified in writing of the proposed amendment.

In 1989 the community waged a strong campaign to ensure that farms were not purchased and planted to pines. In 2006 the issue arose again when an independent Planning Panel recommended that the



Council review the Strathbogrie Planning Scheme to identify areas which may be suitable for plantation timber production and the Strathbogrie Plateau was specifically mentioned.

The community (with approx 90 residents putting their name to a petition) again protested strongly to Council who advised that, while they did not support an increase in pine plantations on the plateau, they may be bound by State legislation to review the situation, but that this review was not high on their list of priorities.

A number of residents have expressed concern that this issue has reappeared. Areas of concern include:

- aesthetically – the Tableland is a unique and beautiful part of Victoria which would ultimately be ruined by further large

plantations of pine trees which would finish up looking like the arid bomb sites which can be viewed along the Hume Highway

- water from the Tableland is the source of the town water supply for Euroa and Violet Town; this supply would be severely threatened if more plantations were established as they suck up far more water than general farming activities and residential consumption. The Age (2006) stated that '*CSIRO research has found that in an 800 millimetre annual rainfall zone, conversion from annual pastures to trees resulted in water loss of 1.5 million litres a year for each hectare planted.*'

- the Tableland has already been identified as an extremely high risk area for bushfires and additional plantations would only add to the fuel load. Many fires on the Tableland are started by lightning strikes and these could become well established in plantations which are not permanently attended.

- In the Explanatory Report to the Amendment it states that '*The Vision-Strategic Frame-work of the Strathbogie Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) expressed the Vision for the municipality as requiring strengthening of the Shire's economic base. The amendment supports this Vision through the rezoning of land for productive agricultural purposes.*' The only

obvious economic benefit to the Shire would seem to be that, by passing from State to private ownership it becomes rateable. Hancocks is an overseas company which we believe uses contractors and employs few (if any) local people. The plantations are tying up land which could be used for general farming and would encourage more permanent residents to the area. It would seem likely that the cost of maintaining roads damaged by logging trucks would negate any increased rate revenue. (Council has recently increased rates by 15% on revalued properties with further increases over the next two years claiming that one of its major unfunded expenses is road maintenance.)

Plantations are required for the timber industry to protect native forests, but the type of land needs to be carefully considered.

Go to

[http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/Shared/ats.nsf/WebViewUniqueID/f254cb2fa74f4607ca2577b90018faad?OpenDocument&S&Strathbogie&South%20Gippsland%2CSouthern%20Gampians%2CStonnington%2CStrathbogie%2CSurf%20Coast%2CSwan%20Hill&Click=CA256DC800080C18.476caac79d318ee2ca256dee001434f7/\\$Body/0.2924](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/Shared/ats.nsf/WebViewUniqueID/f254cb2fa74f4607ca2577b90018faad?OpenDocument&S&Strathbogie&South%20Gippsland%2CSouthern%20Gampians%2CStonnington%2CStrathbogie%2CSurf%20Coast%2CSwan%20Hill&Click=CA256DC800080C18.476caac79d318ee2ca256dee001434f7/$Body/0.2924)

With thanks to Pete Kelly and Helen Peters



Gecko Clan

(Mid Goulburn Landcare Network) – Charlie Sexton, Landcare Facilitator with the Group, has moved on to take up a facilitator role with CMA. The group is currently advertising for a replacement.

Unfortunately the Clan was not successful in the CFoC open round for further pasture cropping funding. This will continue on limited funding from other sources. A closer relationship is being pursued with Winton Wetland Committee. This project has great potential for increased community education and engagement.

Alternate Fertiliser Trials

Funded by STLG & Gecko CLaN

Fencing has been completed. Trial coordinators were waiting on contributions from four companies last quarter, but still expected to complete fertiliser applications by the end of October.



Granite Creeks

Main issues

A balance of money remains available for rabbit ripping.

Granite Creeks are looking for member Landcare groups to put forward suggested projects for which they might consider funding all or part from their war chest. Projects should not be ones that can easily obtain funding from elsewhere.

STLG Funding Update

GBCMA – Community Education Grant 2010/11

The good news is that our group was successful in getting an offer of \$4000 to establish an information station at Bridge to Bridge Reserve. If this is accepted by the Committee, work can start early in New Year.

The concept is to provide panels under cover illustrating various facets and programs of environmental care and sustainable land use, for visitors and the local community to view.

Funding bids still alive

1. EPA Inspiring Environment Solutions (mid to long term)
2. GBCMA Scoping of Seven Creeks Bio link 2011
3. CFoC Stage 2 Seven Creeks Catchment Health 2011 - OKed

New STLG Service – GAS GUN FOR HIRE



Ben Brook has spent a lot of time getting the STLG gas gun back into shape. This is a very effective way of eradicating rabbits in small warrens or isolated burrows. He is happy to handle any enquiries from members who wish to try it.

A nominal deposit is required to ensure the appliance is returned promptly for others to use.

Coming Events Notification

Unfortunately, there has not been much that could be done to alert the membership of the many events coming up via Landcare and related networks. An initiative with

The Euroa Gazette may change things for the better.

Landcare Support Officer, Kerri Robson, approached Paul Rieusset from the Euroa Gazette to ask if we could have a monthly Landcare news section, the aim is to allow all groups to promote upcoming meetings, field days and projects. He has agreed and will not charge for the articles, but he would hope that we would pay for advertising of project/ field days that have funding allocated for advertising.

The general guidelines are:

- The first article (December 2010) will list all Landcare groups : Violet town, Balmattum/Sheans Creek, Creighton's Creek, Burnt Creek, Gooram Valley, Strathbogie, Nagambie, Longwood East, Graytown-Costerfield, Cornella.
- It would also promote Gecko Clan events e.g. Pasture Cropping, Farm Ready lectures and other departments

The next month's article will list upcoming events and meeting dates.

All information needs to be forward to Kerri and she will send it on to the Gazette.

Kerri Robson | Landcare Support Officer

T: (03) 5763 2465 | M: 0418 140 710 | F: (03) 5761 1547

208 James Rd, Warrenbayne 3670

landcare2@iinet.net.au



From Blackberries to Bobucks

was Angus Martin's recent ambulatory contribution to 'Coming Events'. Seen here is his effective use of natural materials to prevent creek bank erosion and create pondage habitat between his property and the road. Angus and his family also shared their very challenging and satisfying experience of clearing extensive blackberry infestation to reestablish an environment to which bobucks and other indigenous species have returned.

COMING EVENTS

Organisation	Event	Who & Where	When
STLG/FOBB	Working Bee, Xmas BYO Feast	Sean Mathews, Smith's Bridge	Dec 5 @ 1000
STLG	Field Day & BBQ, Seven Creeks Catchment Health Project	Bill Wells, Seven Creeks, Strathbogie	Mar 11, 2011
CMA	Water Management Forum	Bill Wells, Arboretum	April, 2011

Friends of Bridge to Bridge

Of droughts and flooding rains

I seem to have jumped the gun with my comments about flood damage in the last issue. After spending a week in water starved Perth recently the contrast of recent events at Bridge to Bridge couldn't have been starker. The top right hand pic I took of the Spring Creek corner in September, the pic next to it I took in October. I thought the track damage was serious in the first one! By November there was no track (or fence). So, we relocated the fence to provide safe passage and look what happened in November (bottom left and then it happened again. Could there be there more to come?



Consequently there has been a significant amount of activity around cleaning up and repairing down at Bridge to Bridge (see below).



Next Working Bee, followed by BYO Xmas Feast Dec 5, 2010 @ 1000 hrs

Working Bees

Minor – FOBB will continue to gather every fourth Sunday 0900 to 1100, meeting at Smith's Bridge for basic maintenance tasks.

Major – FOBB and Landcare will combine twice during the year for works requiring larger numbers of people and more equipment, once in autumn and once in spring, as advised by snail and email flyer.

Work suggestions/performed to date

- Make metal guards to protect trees being browsed by wallabies
- Remove dangerous dead trees overhanging track
- Gather and burn timber debris
- Smooth out grassland to facilitate access & maintenance
- Erect a new illustrated sign outlining the vision for Bridge to Bridge
- Maintain weed spraying and removal
- ✓ Mow part of Smith's Bridge central area to create grassland/meandering track through the developing woodland
- ✓ Repair the washed out area of the new access path from Haley Street
- ✓ Maintain the track at an adequate width to encourage visitors
- ✓ Provide a hand rail at the steepest part of the track (behind Caltex fuel depot)
- ✓ Replace and repair nature trail signage
- ✓ Remove tree guards from advanced trees (ongoing)
- ✓ Maintain mowed area at the rear of properties along Bridge to Bridge
- ✓ Remove cotoneasters and replace with indigenous species at Smith's Bridge entrance

FOBB Working Bee Calendar

Date	Tasks
Dec 5 2010	Spot spraying Track repair Brush cutting and weeding
23/1/11 and the following 4th Sunday of every month	Making wallaby proof metal tree guards

For those who feel they are unable to contribute to some of the more demanding physical tasks, tree guard removal, weeding and track maintenance are welcome undertakings at all working bees.

New Membership Payment Option

Details for EFT payment and new membership forms are now available on the STLG page of www.strathbogie.org

Reminder – membership subscriptions are due.

P.S. Your email address could save us a heap in postage. If you don't mind receiving your Landcare correspondence by email, please send your email address to Sean Mathews:

mathfam@optusnet.com.au