



Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network News

February 2018 Edition



Left: Members of Dunns Creek Landcare at their working bee on Wallaces Road, Dromana.

Greetings Landcare members & associates,

I hope you've all enjoyed a lovely summer. Landcare and other community members have swung into action and there are a suite of events on at the moment. If you can spare an hour or two to help with the Landcare stall at the Red Hill Show, please let me know. I'm also looking for volunteers for the Briars "Enviro week" puppet show on 21st and 22nd March! Thanks again to Greg Holland for his excellent work on this newsletter.

Warm Regards,

Jacqui Salter, Landcare Facilitator for MPLN Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au
ph: 5950 1279. Please note I work Mon-Thurs 9-3pm.

1. Opportunities & News	2
Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network news.....	2
Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat (GB2AS) Biolink Project Update	2
Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape (LMPL) Project Update	2
2. State of Our Environment	4
Coalition Government Slashes Environmental Funding	4
Port Phillip and Westernport Landcare 2016-2017 Report Card	5
Control of Invasive Animals in Victoria	6
Mornington Peninsula Koala Populations Under Threat	7
Tootgarook Wetlands Expansion	8
3. Monthly Features	9
Book of the Month: Birds and People	9
Weed of the Month: Ragwort	11

4. Newsletter Feedback.....	12
5. Upcoming Events.....	12
6. Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network Grants Guide February 2018	14
7. Local Information	14
8. Contacts.....	15
9. Image at the End: Bird Furies	16

1. Opportunities & News

Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network news

In early February, the Member Representatives of the 11 Landcare groups on the peninsula (two representatives from each group) provided valuable feedback on geographic landscapes of biodiversity priority in our region. This information is being collated by Doug Evans from the PPWCMA in response to the Victorian Government’s Biodiversity Response Planning (co-design) process that was run in December 2017. The aim of the process was to encourage a collective contribution to DELWP’s strategic biodiversity decision making as part of their “Biodiversity 2037” plan. This plan seeks to halt the decline of native plants and animals and improve our natural environment. See here for more information: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-plan>

The MPLN response to the ongoing issue of management of weeds on roadsides was discussed. This led on to the Member Reps agreeing upon a possible new format for the “Catchment Action Round Table” workshops organised annually by the PPWCMA.

The specifications of the new MPLN trailer (to be generously provided by at \$10,000 ESSO grant) as well as accompanying tools were debated. At present, the trailer will be a 6 x8 trailer with galvanised finished, heavy gauge checkerplate floor and heavy suspension. Possible equipment includes backpacks, tool belts, tomahawks, chainsaws, Hamilton tree planters, secateurs, herbicide and dabbers. An auger for drilling holes for tubestock was also considered. If you have any suggestions, please contact: david.maddocks@bigpond.com

- Jacqui Salter, Landcare Facilitator

Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat (GB2AS) Biolink Project Update

With more than 12,000 tubestock to plant this year, Jacqui is in the process of recruiting schools, tafes and scout/cub groups to plant them. So far, we’ve got Rosebud Secondary, Dromana Secondary, Chisholm Rosebud, Homes Glen and Rosebud Sea Scouts (cubs). If you know of an organisation who is keen to do some planting, please contact Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au The second round of 1080 baiting is soon to take place in the Drum Drum Alloc valley – nearby residents will be receiving written notification in the next few days. I’ve also been busy working on the website – it’s still under construction but please feel free to check it out and provide suggestion: <https://mplandcare.org>

- Jacqui Salter, Project Coordinator for GB2AS.

Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape (LMPL) Project Update

The biolink plans for Red Hill South Landcare Group & Dunns Creek Landcare have now been finalised and distributed. Project Coordinator Michele Sabto and Bushland Rehabilitation Specialist, Virginia Carter are now looking forward to working with Merricks Coolart Catchment Landcare Group and Manton & Stony Creeks Landcare Groups this year to develop their biolink plans, following confirmation of funding from Natural Resources Conservation League. Please contact Michele Sabto for more information: email: linkingmlandscape@gmail.com

Red Hill Show (Sat 10 March) - Online entries are open

For the first time, you can enter the Red Hill Show online using the following link:
<https://showday.online/showday/show/ab1f3aee-510c-49a5-bc0d-99027dbf7f81>

Alpaca entries should go to: www.redhillshow.com.au/Forms

Any issues email info@redhillshow.com.au or call on 5989 2357.

If you are able to volunteer on the Landcare stall, please email: Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au



Call out for assistants for Landcare puppet show!

The popular “Habitat – What’s that?” puppet show will be held again at the Briars for Enviro Week on Wed 21st and Thurs 22nd March. If you would like to help Jacqui with the show as a puppeteer, please email:
Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au



2. State of Our Environment

Much has been happening of relevance to our environment, not all of it good news. This new section will examine the overall state of our environment from a national, state, and local Peninsula perspective.

Coalition Government Slashes Environmental Funding

World Wildlife Federation and Australian Conservation Foundation analysis shows that the Turnbull government has moved steadily along a planned reduction in environment spending to less than 60% of 2013-14 budget.

Spending on environment department programs, monitoring and staff has been slashed by nearly a third since the Coalition won the election in 2013. Although the federal budget has expanded by \$36bn since Tony Abbott took office, funding for the environment has been cut by nearly half a billion dollars so far.

Government allocation of \$1.4bn to environmental funding in the 2013-14 budget dropped 30.2% drop 2016/ to \$980m. It fell again in the 2017/18 budget to \$945m and by 2020-2 the Turnbull government plans to \$825m. Among the programs hardest hit are those designed to maintain biodiversity by protecting shrinking animal and plant populations and ecosystems. Their funding is to be cut in half across the eight years.

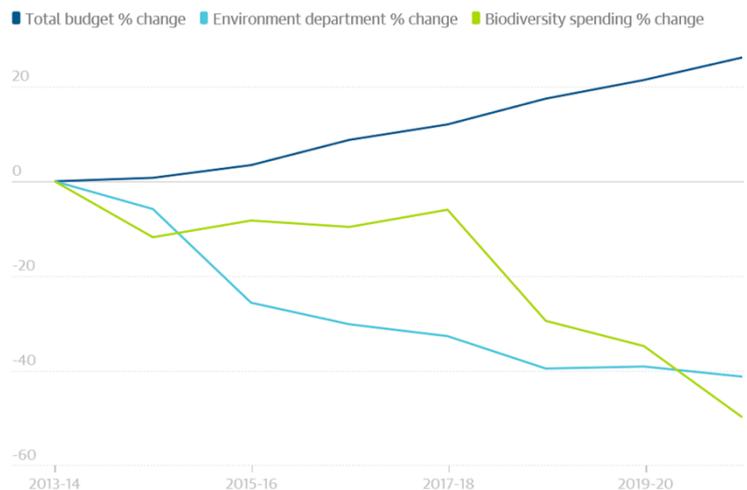


Image from The Guardian (reference below)

It is notable that the total 2017-18 environmental budget is less than 40% of the amount paid to mining interests in tax credits –the coal industry alone gets more funding than is allocated for the environment.

These funding cuts have occurred despite the Commonwealth's State of the Environment Report that found parts of our environment to be in poor or deteriorating condition and noted that there was insufficient funding for management and restoration programs.

- Summary by Jacqui Salter and Greg Holland. Further reading: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jan/30/the-franklin-would-be-dammed-today-australias-shrinking-environmental-protections>

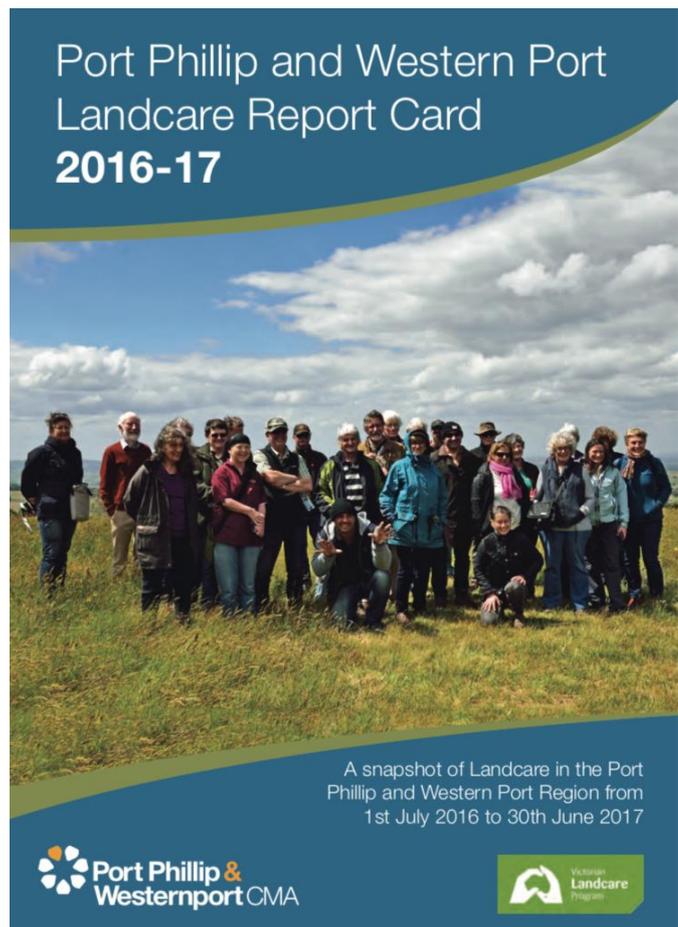
State of the Environment Report: <https://soe.environment.gov.au/>

Port Phillip and Westernport Landcare 2016-2017 Report Card

The Landcare report card for our area is out and clearly indicates an active community that is achieving much with the limited resources available.

The full report is at <http://www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Landcare-Report-Card-2016-17.pdf>. Following are a few snapshots.

- 84 Landcare groups with 79 in 13 networks and with over 2,857 members covered 706,740 ha (75.7% of all private land in the region)
- Grants received totalled \$1,484,949, of which 30% came from Victorian and National Landcare Programs - this represents a \$4.14 return on every VLP dollar invested
- 6,454 volunteers contributed \$2,002,200 value in volunteer work with delivery of:
 - 352 ha of vegetation with 42,580 tubestock planted
 - 15 ha of direct seeding
 - 27 km of waterway and 76 ha protection of remnant vegetation from stock
 - 206 ha of remnant protection through covenant or similar
 - 2,154 ha of weed control
 - 11,438 ha of rabbit and 1,136 ha of fox control, and
 - 73 nest boxes deployed.



Take a bow folks, our network contributes more than its fair share.

- *Summary by Greg Holland*

Control of Invasive Animals in Victoria

The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio has released the Victorian Government's response to a Parliamentary Inquiry into the control of invasive animals on Crown land. See the following for full details: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/invasive-plants-and-animals/invasive-animals-parliamentary-inquiry>

Recommendations

The Government supports 29 of the Inquiry's 33 recommendations in full, in principle or in part.

The recommendations include:

- exploring amendments to the *Meat Industry Act 1993* that would allow wild deer to be processed as game and general meat-processing facilities for personal consumption
- establishing an inter-agency invasive species committee to provide a strategic, integrated and coordinated approach to invasive species across all land tenures
- 20-year management targets for invasive animals control across public and private land through the *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*

Feral Cats

The Government also supported the recommendation to declare feral cats as established pest animals under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. Feral cats kill an estimated 75 million native animals every year in Australia. In Victoria, 43 Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 listed species are at risk of extinction from feral cats. It is proposed that feral cats will be declared as established pests on public land only. The declaration will not affect private land, nor place a control obligation on farmers or private landholders. Public consultation on the feral cat declaration will start early in 2018, with stakeholders and the community to ensure that animal welfare objectives are met and responsible cat ownership remains respected and enshrined as a fundamental right for all Victorians.



Summary by Jacqui Salter. Cat image from

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2013/03/natural-born-killers-the-problem-with-cats/>

Mornington Peninsula Koala Populations Under Threat

A study focusing on how koalas are coping in built-up areas has shown the marsupials are not thriving on the Mornington Peninsula.



Deakin University masters' student Simeon Zylinski spent most of the year tracking koalas around Somers and Balnarring beach, and about two-thirds of the time, they were sleeping peacefully in residents' yards.

The project tracked 11 female and five male koalas using fitted collars. It is the first Victorian study of its kind and the results are concerning.

"Most of the state's high-profile populations, such as in the Otways and Phillip Island, actually have an overabundance of koalas, but it's completely opposite on the Peninsula," Mr Zylinski said.

"The population here is quite sparse and probably declining." None of the females had joeys. *"This needs further investigation – it could be that they're stressed or that the population is too sparse for them to find a mate,"* Mr Zylinski said.

He said dogs, roads, a lack of habitat and the occasional wedge-tailed eagle were the greatest dangers. However, *"Koalas can be pretty big – the males are up to 15kg, so they're a bit chunky for a cat or fox to take on,"* he said.

The research also found peninsula koalas are particularly fond of manna and swamp gums, and that some had a territory as large as 16ha.

Check out more about the project at the [Mornington Peninsula Koala Project Facebook page](#).

Article summarised from <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/south-east/mornington-peninsula-koala-numbers-under-threat-deakin-university-researcher-says/news-story/04123dccb7c8c8cae8a6d4453105e204>

Tootgarook Wetlands Expansion

Great news that the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has moved to bolster and safeguard Tootgarook Wetlands with the compulsorily acquisition of a seventy-acre lot (92 Elizabeth Avenue, Capel Sound) to be integrated into the broader wetland area (Victorian Government Gazette on 11 January 2018).

The lot forms part of the Tootgarook Wetlands – a 590 ha area of significant environmental and cultural values and home to more than 240 indigenous plant species and a variety of fauna, including internationally significant birdlife.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Mayor Councillor Bryan Payne said Tootgarook Wetlands provides significant conservation, social and amenity benefits for the Mornington Peninsula and the broader community:

- *“As the local council, it is our responsibility to protect and enhance these important areas of our environment for future generations.*
- *This parcel of land has high wetland values suitable for rehabilitation and integration into the broader Tootgarook Wetlands area.*
- *“Together with local residents and community groups, we are determined to protect this important area,”*

said Councillor Payne.



*Nankeen Kestrel with Swamp Skink
(Lissolepis coventryi)*

Seawinds Ward Councillor Antonella Celi said - *“This is fantastic for the many community groups who have worked with council to advocate for the protection of this land within the Tootgarook Wetland. I look forward to continuing my work with the local community to ensure this land is appropriately managed”.*

Seawinds Ward Councillor Frank Martin added - *“The acquisition of this land will enable the Shire to retain and preserve the significant biodiversity values, natural vegetation and wildlife on the southern peninsula for our community”*

Seawinds Ward Councillor Simon Brooks concluded - *“We can now work with the community to develop some definite directions for this land and the greater swamp. This will provide great opportunities to raise the profile of the swamp with the community and to have it as a centrepiece of our natural systems”.*



Running Marsh-flower (Villarisia reniformis)

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council acquired the land under the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986* and is working with the community on the development of a draft Management Plan for the wetlands. This plan:

- Aims to ensure that the environmental importance of the wetland is realised, through
- Establishing strategies for the use, development and management of land in the Wetland and the supporting catchment

It is anticipated a draft of the plan will be considered by Council in early 2018 with the intent of placing the draft on exhibition for further community comment. Stay tuned for more information at mornpen.vic.gov.au/news.

- Images by Greg Holland

Removal of public acquisition overlay (proposed freeway) through Tootgarook Swamp and Rye

The MP Shire is looking to remove the public acquisition overlay from the Southern Peninsula. My understanding is that the MP Shire has some alternatives and has also written to VicRoads to remove the overlay.

This will likely head to a panel hearing at some stage. We need to be prepared for this hearing to put forward the community view on this removal.

“Save Tootgarook Swamp” and “Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association” (SPIFFA) will host a meeting on Saturday the 21st of April at 5pm at 12 Napier St Rye. All welcome.

The purpose of this meeting is to collate information and capture this into a single working document to summarise our views on the PAO. I would like to unite people who hold extensive valued expertise, skills and knowledge. We need to pose questions, analyse strengths, weaknesses and threats and formulate alternative concepts.

Together we can achieve more.

“Hope is what motivates us to work hard and get things done. It’s the idea that something better will happen in the future because of what we do.”

- Cameron Brown, “Save Tootgarook Swamp” (abridged by J. Salter)

3. Monthly Features

Book of the Month: Birds and People

It is one of those days. Outside it could be sweltering and the air conditioner is barely keeping up. Or it is mid-winter with rain lashing the windows and a lovely, warm fire beckoning. These are the perfect times to visit the bookshelves, select that huge book, open it at a random location and start reading.

Birds and People by Mark Cocker with exquisite photos by Mark Tipling is that sort of book. Firstly, it is massive at nearly 600 pages. Secondly, it explores the complex relationships that we have developed with our feathered friends over the millennia. Moving from species to species, it reaches from Homer’s Iliad right up to the present. At times the relationship has been mutually beneficial, at other times we have exploited the birds terribly, and yes there are many occasions where the birds have exploited us.

Read up on the journey of the humble chook from our mutual courtship with a jungle fowl over 8,000 years ago in the Thailand-Vietnam area. Along the way chooks have hitched rides with us to spread west into Europe and east through the Pacific Islands and on into the Americas - and ultimately to conquer the world. In return, they provide us with our major source of protein from both eggs and meat.

See if you can find the goldfinch in Leonardo da Vinci's Litta Madonna. Even better, the next time you are in an art gallery see how many latter Middle Ages and Renaissance paintings you can find with an embedded goldfinch. There are at least 486!

We wiped out passenger pigeons, which at one time were estimated to comprise up to 40% of the total bird population of North America. Their only legacy to later generations has been the invention of the clay-pigeon to continue the original "sport" of shooting passenger pigeons.

But then we took a liking to flocks of relatively insignificant rock doves, built homes for them - built entire cities for them - and spent hours in the park or the town square diligently feeding them – often for no other reason than it made us feel good!

This book is not a cheap buy, but you will be reading it on and off for years.

References:

Cocker, M. and D. Tipling, 2013: *Birds and People*, Jonathan Cape, London, ISBN 2468 10975 3, 593pp. Available from Booktopia at <https://www.booktopia.com.au/birds-and-people-mark-cocker/prod9780224081740.html>

- *Article by Greg Holland - da Vinci painting from the Hermitage Museum.*



Weed of the Month: Ragwort

Species name: *Senecio jacobaea*.

Family: Asteracea



Origin: Northern Africa and Asia

Status: Weed found mainly in south-eastern Australia, that is widespread and a problem weed in Port Philip/Western Gippsland and Tasmania, where they are declared as “regionally controlled”.

Growth Habit: An herbaceous plant to 0.4-1.5 m that may be biennial or perennial. Seedlings may appear at any time, though winter and spring is generally preferred. Ragwort forms a rosette in the first year then flowers in later years. After flowering it dies.

Reproduction: Summer flowering plants produce thousands of seeds that remain viable for 8-16 years. Reproduction also occurs readily from any roots left in the ground.

Dispersal: Seed dispersal is by wind, water, animals, farm implements, agricultural produce including hay, clothing and equipment.

Why Control It: Ragwort causes cumulative damage to the liver, especially in horses and cattle, leading to photosensitisation, jaundice, wasting and occasionally death. This liver damage may only become obvious long after the consumption. The rosettes also suppress other growth leading to pasture degradation.

Control Methods: Hand removal is not overly effective as new plants generate from root sections. Regular cultivation can be effective, and intensive sheep grazing has been successful (though care needs to be taken over potential liver damage). I have found that spot application of glyphosate at the rosette stage is very effective (for other chemical applications consult an expert). Once flowering has occurred I remove the flowers and burn, then apply glyphosate just to the remaining plant.

Similar Indigenous Plants: There are a number of Australian fireweed species that could be mistaken for ragwort. For example, in our area we have Floodplain Fireweed (*Senecio campylocarpus*) and Broadleaf Fireweed (*Senecio linearifolius ssp latifolius*). These can easily be differentiated from ragwort by its deeply-lobed leaves - the others have leaves with narrow spikes along the edges.

Further reading: http://www.herbiguide.com.au/Descriptions/hg_Ragwort.htm or <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/a-z-of-weeds/ragwort>

- Article and images by Greg Holland.

4. Newsletter Feedback

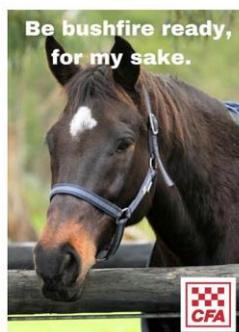
Do you have a story to tell? Is there a weed that you want to know about? Have you identified a new, rare, or interesting species? Or a good book? Please contact greg@carranya.net for it to be featured in the newsletter.

5. Upcoming Events

Description	Time & Date	Location	RSVP date	Contact
Horses and Bushfire Community Info Session – MP Equine Landcare & CFA (details below)	Sun 18 Feb 3pm onwards	Main Ridge Hall, 441 Main Creek Road, Main Ridge	Wed 14 Feb	CFA District Office email: ser-commmed@cfa.vic.gov.au
Sheepwash Creek weeding working bee	Sun 25 Feb 9am – 12pm	Arthurs Seat Road, Arthurs Seat. Enter via farm gate opp William Rd	N/A	Michelle de la Coeur mdelacoeur@gmail.com
Red Hill Show – Volunteers to host our Landcare stall needed!	Sat 10 March All day	Red Hill Showgrounds, Arthurs Seat Rd Red Hill	ASAP	Please contact Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au to volunteer on the stall
Biodiversity and the Plague Ape <i>See details below</i>	Sun 25 March	Main Ridge Community Hall	N/A	Bernie Schedvin, 5989 6408 berniesched@vic.chariot.net.au or Adie Smith, 5989 6078 adriennemjs@bigpond.com
Public meeting – remove the “Public Acquisition Overlay” that runs across Tootgarook Swamp and Rye	Sat 21 April 5pm onwards	Rye Civic Hall, 12 Napier St Rye	N/A	spiffa.secretary@gmail.com



CFA Horses & Bushfires Community Meeting



What: Horses & Bushfires Community Meeting

Where: Main Ridge Hall, Main Ridge Recreation Reserve, Shands Rd, MAIN RIDGE

When: 3.00pm, Sunday 18th February 2018

Find out: Information for the current fire season and how to prepare your Horses for Bushfire

For more information:

CFA District Office – 9767 1800 or
ser-commmed@cfa.vic.gov.au

Maxwell Campbell

President of Field Naturalist Club of Victoria (FNCV Inc)

“BIODIVERSITY AND THE PLAGUE APE”

and Main Creek Landcare AGM

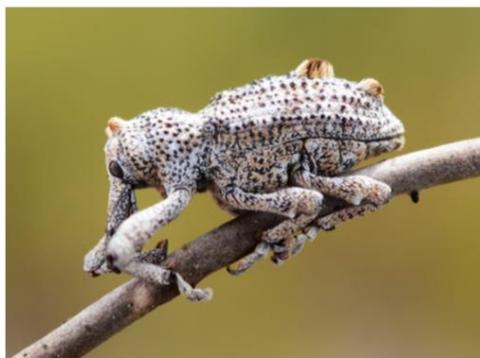
9.45am SUNDAY 25 MARCH (Talk at 11am)

In Main Ridge Community Hall, Main Creek Road, Main Ridge,
Melways Map 171, J 12

ALL WELCOME

FREE ADMISSION

**REFRESHMENTS
SERVED**



Enquiries: Bernie Schedvin on 5989 6408 or email: berniesched@vic.chariot.net.au
or
Adrienne Smith, on 5989 6078 or email:
adriennemjs@bigpond.com

Main Creek Catchment Landcare Group



6. Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network Grants Guide February 2018

Name of Grant	Date due	Amount	Details
Port Phillip Bay Fund Round 2	14 th Feb	\$10,000 or \$100,000	https://www.coastsandmarine.vic.gov.au/grants/port-philip-bay-fund
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust	15 th Feb	\$31,000 to \$90,000	http://hmstrust.org.au/grantseekers/grant-dates/
Norman Wettenhall Foundation	Open 20 th March (also: 19 June, 18 Sept, 11 Dec)	\$5,000 or \$5,000-\$25,000.	https://wettenhall.org.au/grants/small-environmental-grants/
Ian Potter Foundation	20 th April	\$500 and \$5,000	http://www.ianpotter.org.au/funding-rounds/
Australian ethical community grants	TBA upon registration	TBA upon registration	https://www.australianethical.com.au/community-grants/
MP Shire Flexigrant	All year	Up to \$1000	http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/our_shire/community_grants
FNCV Environment Fund	TBA upon registration	Up to \$1000	http://www.fncv.org.au/environment-fund/
RACV	All year	Up to \$2000	https://www.racv.com.au/about-racv/our-business/community-involvement/community-support.html
Ross Trust	All year	Up to \$20,000	http://www.rosstrust.org.au/grants/apply-for-a-grant/
EPA Inspiring Environmental Solutions community funding program	All year	Around \$25,000 to \$100,000.	http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/inspiring-environmental-solutions
John T Reid Charitable Trust	All year	Not specified	http://www.johntreidtrusts.com.au/whatwefund
Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grant	All year	Variable	https://www.melbournewater.com.au/
Canon Oceana Environmental Grants	Ongoing	\$11,000	https://www.canon.com.au/about-canon/community/environmental-grants
Sidney Myer Foundation	Ongoing	Not specified	http://myerfoundation.org.au/grants/sustainability-environment/
Colonial Foundation	Ongoing	Not specified	http://www.colonialfoundation.org.au/4330926/colonial-foundation-trust-grant-program.htm

7. Local Information

Shire Nursery

Open Wed/Thurs/Fri 9.00am – 3.00pm and first Saturday each month 9.00am-1.00pm. The Shire Nursery specialises in indigenous and native plants. Ph: 5974-8417, email nursery@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Eco Living Display Centre

Open: Fridays 1-4pm & first Saturday each month 9.00am-1.00pm. For activities and workshops visit www.mornpen.vic.gov.au or contact the Renewable Resources department on 5950-1259.

Home Harvest exchange

Too many lemons and not enough parsley? Why not take part in a Home Harvest Exchange? This community initiative allows people to bring their own excess produce and go home with someone else's for free! Bring home grown edibles, eggs, preserved produce, honey, seeds and seedlings. No minimum amount and no money changes hands.

StopPitt

Mornington 3 rd Sat of the month; 2pm - 3pm Dig It, Mornington Community Garden, Mitchell St, Mornington. (Melways Reference: 145 D3)	Rosebud Last Saturday of the month; 2- 3pm Rosebud Community Garden, Lawson Park, Leon Av, Rosebud. (Melways Reference: 170 F2)	Mount Martha First Saturday each month 3- 4pm The Briars, 450 Nepean Hwy, Mt Martha.
---	---	---

The StopPitt Program is dedicated to reducing the high impact of pittosporum on our bushlands. Information can be found at <http://www.stoppitt.org.au/about-pittosporum.html> and <https://www.facebook.com/stoppittosporum/>
Ben O'Leary, StopPitt Program Chairman at benjamin.oleary@monash.edu.

Birds on Farms

Birds on farms is an initiative of Birdlife Australia who work with a number of regional partners, local branches and Landcare groups to survey birds on farms and engage the community in conservation. They are looking for landowners prepared to host surveys, which can be done by the farmer with Birdlife Australia help, or by trained volunteers. In addition to bird surveys, outcomes will include evaluations of the ecological condition of farms, information for identifying priority sites for conservation, guidelines for increasing bird diversity in rural areas. Findings will be shared with participating landowners and volunteers.

Further information, please contact the Project Officer, Caroline Wilson at woodlandbirds@birdlife.org.au.
Electronic copies of the *Birds on Farms: Ecological Management for Agricultural Sustainability* publication can be obtained at <http://birdlife.org.au/documents/OTHPUB-BirdsOnFarms.pdf> .

8. Contacts

- **Jacqui Salter**, Landcare Facilitator, MPLN and project coordinator for Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink Project: Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au ph: 0408 213 079
- **Greg Holland**: Newsletter Editor greg@carranya.net
- **Michele Sabto**, Project Coordinator for 'Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape' project linkingmplandscape@yahoo.com.au
- **Sarah Saxton**, MP Shire Agribusiness & Food Industry Officer, sarah.saxton@mornpen.vic.gov.au
- **Sarah Halligan**, Sustainable Land Management Coordinator, PPWCMA phone: 8781 7908 sarah.halligan@ppwcma.vic.gov.au
- **Paul Hodgson**, Melbourne Water River Health Officer, paul.hodgson@melbournewater.com.au ph: 9679 7054
- **Briars Nursery**, Nepean Hwy Mt. Martha, Tel. 5974 8417 Email nursery@mornpen.vic.gov.au
- **Wildlife Help on the Mornington Peninsula** (WHOMP) All hours 0417 380 687 0417 395 883
- **Animalia Shelter**, 0435 822 699 All hours www.animaliawildlife.org.au
- **Crystal Ocean Wildlife Shelter** (Rye) - crystal_ocean2003@yahoo.com.au 0407 787 770

9. Image at the End: Bird Fires

A change from the normal format to summarise a recent report on Aussie raptors deliberately lighting fires in northern Australia grasslands (Bonta et al, 2017).



Black kites foraging near a fire in Australia's outback. Image: Bob Gosford.

Whistling Kites, Black Kites and Brown Falcons may deliberately spread grass fires to enable them to feed on fleeing animals according to a controversial study by Bonta et al (2017) as recently reported in The Register (details below).

The behaviour is widely documented in Koori culture and stories, and has been confirmed by recent observations. It is apparently a deliberate act by a minority of the large assembly of raptors that assemble to forage at fire locations.

There is some scepticism on the observations, but the authors provide a convincing argument, including personal observations by two of the co-authors.

Whether the action is intentional or accidental is not confirmed, but intentional carriage of burning sticks is the most likely answer. If true, this is not only an additional example of avian tool use, it adds another factor to northern Australia fire ecology, with the birds providing an addition vector to the commonly observed lightning and human causes.

- *Summary by Greg Holland, with thanks to Jacqui Salter for finding the original story.*

Original article at: https://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/01/08/australian_birds_light_fires/.

The paper reference is: Bonta, M, R. Gosford, D. Eussen, N. Ferguson, E. Loveless, and M. Witwer, 2017: Intentional Fire-Spreading by “Firehawk” Raptors in Northern Australia. *J. Ethnobiology*, **37**, 700-718. doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-37.4.700 (<http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.2993/0278-0771-37.4.700>)