

Barrabool Hills Landcare AGM

21st August 2019

Presidents Report

25 years ago a group of landholders in the Barrabool Hills decided that the only way they could defeat an insidious weed that was threatening the landscape was to team up, and work together as a community.

This weed was serrated tussock and the community group they formed was the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group.

Not only were they successful in their endeavours, serrated tussock is now effectively under control in the Hills, but the community group has grown and prospered with up to 100 financial members and lots to show for our efforts, other than serrated tussock management that is!

The diversity of what we now do really reflects our community's interests.... From broad acre farming through to weeds and pests and native biodiversity...

Take the last 12 months for example. It started at this time last year with an inspiring presentation from Josh Griffiths about measuring the E-DNA of rivers and streams, to monitor especially platypus numbers. We had hoped as a group to run a program across our length of the Barwon, to help monitor its health, but this was superseded in the short term with our involvement and support of the broader *Friends of the Barwon* group, which will hopefully give the Barwon and its catchment a much stronger voice in government.

At the October gathering we then heard from Stephen Murphy about the history of native flora in the Barrabool Hills. Much of this research was completed in 2017 as part of our Flora of the Hills book project, copies of this are free and available here. Stephen also is a regular contributor to our bimonthly newsletter which is so ably edited by Tim Harte, has a circulation of over 300 copies, and is the way we keep connected to our members, partners and friends far and wide.

On a very warm summer evening in December, and after a wonderful celebratory BBQ, Rowan Reid gave us an enthralling talk on the benefits of using harvestable trees on farms.... Agroforestry.

Of course it was then into planning our annual February rabbit baiting in program, once again well subscribed by the community, and so well managed by our Treasurer, Anthony Jones.

A brief respite from baiting and an enjoyable evening in Ric Walters shearing shed cinema for a full house to watch a great movie and enjoy scrumptious supper.

Planning was then in full swing for our major Field day in late April at Murnong Farms entitled *Water on Farms*.

It was still extraordinarily dry at the time and our Vice President, Jim Seager together with our partners, the CCMA, Southern Rural Water and Ag Vic provided very sage advice about how to manage this limited resource... even though it may not look like this at the moment. Another well attended event, great feedback and of course ably catered for by Christa Jones and our unofficial "catering team".... Good food. none of our efforts would be nearly as successful without this!

The last few months of our busy landcare year have been spent in organising the planting of the ephemeral wetland south of Mount Pollock, a large project supported in part by a Victorian Landcare grant from the state government.

The concept of organising preparation of the site and having all the plants and equipment, guards and volunteers at the one place at the one time was an interesting exercise, but could not have happened without the support of our project team, Jim Seager, Stephen Murphy, Tim Trottier and Trevor Jones, and of course Maddie and Andrew Steel. We somehow managed to plant 10,000 trees, shrubs and grasses over 4 weeks which was a pretty amazing result.

In all this involved over 300 volunteer hours from members of our own community, and others young and old...including 20 students from Oberon secondary school and members of the Geelong Intrepid landcare group. We finished this last Sunday, 19 of us frantically planting 3000 poa plants in what one could only say was paddy like conditions, so that we could celebrate in the Steel's woolshed before the weather changed..... So none of us have had much time to breath. Needless to say, the portaloo and all the empty plant trays still have to be returned to their rightful home, and Trevor has kindly offered to do this.

Our very own rabbit recipe book, the Feral Feast, continues to be in demand and the executive made the decision to go to a THIRD print run of 500, mainly as finally we have successfully got copies into Barwon Park, and we had national coverage through an ABC rural report. All of the profits from the book go to our programs, which is a small but regular income and great promotion for the group. In fact we just received an order for 15 copies in northern Western Australia!

So you see it has been a very busy time for our group. Our events are varied but have all been well attended and there is always terrific grub. But none of this would happen without your support and welcome suggestions and most importantly without the dedication, energy and enthusiasm of our executive team.

The executive of 11 has bimonthly meetings, over great food and beverage, and keeps an eye on the governance and finance of the group, so essential for an incorporated organisation like ours, plan for events and generally enjoy each other's company. Every one of this team has been a vital cog in the groups activities. Many of you I have mentioned already but thank you Heike for stepping up to the secretarial role, Ian for maintaining our signage on Barrabool Road and being such an important representative on the Geelong Landcare Network, Geoff and Joan for always contributing when asked even though it has not been easy, and for giving the group such an amazing plug in your recent award. Anthony, what can I say you are an exemplar treasurer and we are extraordinarily grateful

for you always keeping us on track and with Sally too for your ongoing support for all our programs. Judy dropped everything and helped engage with landholders along Waurin Ponds creek when we were discussing a joint project with Deakin earlier in the year. Even though the project has been put on hold, all the landholders are still engaged, because of Judy's welcoming manner.... it's all about real engagement..

I think I have mentioned the others in dispatches above along the way, but it is a great team and I am very grateful for your support

Last but not least, my husband Brent, who keeps our website up to date, manages our email circulation and keeps the home fires burning and is the only reason I can do what I do.

Thank you.

It has been another terrific year for the group. We keep connected via our newsletter, website and facebook page which is growing in popularity.

Our newsletter is delivered cross the region in a hard copy for a reason..... to keep everyone whether they are members or not in the loop and part of our precious community... it is this entire community which is vital for the health and wellbeing of our landscape not just the members.... ... but if you would like to become a financial member, every dollar helps to keep our group viable and able to offer a range of exciting programs.