

# BARRABOOL HILLS LANDCARE

Barrabool Hills Landcare Group Newsletter. April 2023.



2022 Barwon river flooding provided great benefit for the remnant vegetation

## Your invited!

Dont miss the opportunity to come along to our next Past Projects Bus Tour to see Landcare in action. A great opportunity for new members eligible for funding assistance. Numbers are limited.

### Sites will include:

- Biodiversity and Agroforestry plantings
- Native vegetation linkages to the Barwon River
- Direct seeding
- Landcare group plantings
- Large scale landscape change
- Protecting waterways
- Strategic plantings to reduce the spread of Serrated Tussock
- Wauron Ponds creek protection

## BHLG NEWSLETTER IS GOING DIGITAL!

Do we have your email address?

Update your contact details online at:  
[www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au](http://www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au)

### WHATS ON IN 2023?

#### APRIL 2023

**GLN Biofertilisers on Farms**  
She Oaks. April 3rd.

**BHLG Nesting Box Workshop.**  
Gnarwarre Hall. April 23. See page 2 for details.

#### MAY 2023

**BHLG Landcare Projects Bus Tour.** Sunday May 7, 2023.

**GLN Dung Beetle Identification Workshop**  
Teesdale Hall, May 21.

#### JULY 2023

**GLN Small Block, Big Dreams Project Launch.**  
Provincance Wines. Date to be confirmed.

#### AUGUST 2023

**BHLG AGM**  
Wednesday August 9, 2023.

## BHLG 2023 Past Projects Bus Tour.

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023. 10am – 3pm. Cost is FREE.**

Starting at Geoff Anson's property 'Barwon Ridge Wines' 50 McMullens Road Barrabool. Arrival from 9.30am, Bus departing at 10am. Participants may choose to take their own vehicles.

Bookings are essential as numbers are limited. Go to our website at [www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au](http://www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au) and go to the shop.

# RABBIT BAITING PROGRAM 2023.

By Heike Dunn.

Thank you for participating in this year's Barrabool Hills Landcare Group rabbit baiting program.

This is a "not-for profit" program run entirely by volunteers for the community. Although numbers were down from previous years perhaps due to the exceptionally wet spring, 48 landholders participated this year in an area stretching from Inverleigh through to Waurin Ponds, ordering a total of 1,665 kg of bait.

Annual baiting of rabbits is only a small part of the process to control these feral animals in the long term. To prevent immigrant rabbits from

moving into the old warrens it is best to rip the warrens or fill them in, about two weeks after the last baiting. It is also best to manage any sites that provide harbor for rabbits above the ground, such as wood piles, low growing trees and shrubs and stone heaps. Those who have been part of the program for a number of years will know that the only way to really eradicate rabbits on your property is to maintain a year-round vigil and, where possible, enlist your neighbours to do the same.

Funding for our rabbit management programs is subsidized from the

sale of our very own published Rabbit Cookbook, the Feral Feast, now in its third print run. The more of these books we sell, the more funds we will have available. If you would like a copy it is available via our website.

In the next couple of weeks, the small committee of volunteers which organised the Barrabool Hills program will be having a "debrief", so if you have any constructive comments, we would be keen to hear from you. Contact either Jim Seager ph 0409 935 700 or Heike Dunn ph 0417 020 012.

## FERAL FEAST

Feral Feast is a colourful rabbit recipe book, featuring twenty one rabbit recipes, superbly illustrated with photographs of the dishes and the Barrabool Hills landscape, together with snippets of history and bespoke cartoons by a renowned local artist.

An ideal gift for friends or family, with all profits going towards the efforts of the community to control rabbits. Books cost \$25 which includes GST and postage in a padded bag within Australia.

Order & pay securely via our website <https://www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au/shop/>.



## Barrabool Hills Landcare Group



### Nesting Box Workshop

Hollow-bearing trees are typically only found in trees exceeding 100 years of age, with larger hollows developing in much older trees. Hollows are essential for birds and small animals to breed.

In this workshop, you will be led to construct your own nesting box for your property, as well as learning about the importance of hollows and nesting boxes.

BYO: drill or screwdrivers and pliers if you have them.

**Sunday 23rd April, 10am  
Gnarwarre**

Non - Members most welcome but are encouraged to join to receive subsidies for Nesting Boxes

#### Book here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/591861552837>

Or use your phones camera to hover over the QR code, select the link that comes up.



For more details or enquires, please contact Christa 0408 342 403.







Blue Green Algae bloom on farm dam.

# Blue Green Algae

By Jim Seager, Agricultural Consultant.

Have you checked your dams lately?

Last year we had good run off, filling many farm dams. Some of these dams had significant nutrient inflows resulting in algal blooms over summer.

While green algae is common in farm dams and causes no threat to livestock, Blue green algae can be toxic to livestock, domestic pets and fish.

If you notice the dam water has gone green or has a bluish green scum floating on it in the middle of the day, you should get it tested.

If you have a toxic type of blue green algae you should immediately exclude livestock & pets from the dam and avoid direct skin contact.

It may still be ok to use the water for troughs and the garden. Make sure the suction in the dam is well away from the edges of the dam and a few feet below the surface. Monitor the water in the troughs and garden for signs of the blue green algae and switch to an alternative water source if a problem.

Fencing off dams to exclude livestock and creating a vegetation buffer zone helps maintain better water quality, reduce nutrient runoff and prevent animals getting bogged when water levels get low.

When seeking advise on identification & treatment for a blue green algal bloom contact your local Water Authority, farm consultant or agronomist. Early identification and treatment will prevent a significant

bloom which can result in stock losses.

Livestock which have access to a local waterway may also need to be monitored as Blue green algal blooms can also occur in creeks and rivers.



Pictured left: *Anabaena circinalis* greatly magnified.

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# Farm Planning Checklist – March 2023.

By Jim Seager, Agricultural Consultant.

If you have a small hobby/lifestyle farm or run a larger farming operation there are many issues to consider at this time of year.

Planning for the months ahead can help prevent some problems while ensuring those important jobs aren't left to the last minute or forgotten.

## LIVESTOCK

- monitor sheep to prevent losses from flystrike and pinkeye (from grass seeds) in sheep this summer.

- monitor sheep for Phalaris staggers which has been affecting sheep grazing phalaris based pastures. Move to other pastures if affected.

- Drench lambs at weaning and adult sheep at the autumn break to reduce worm build up over wetter months.

- A clean and reliable water supply is essential for livestock heading into the warmer months. Make sure young lambs can reach water in troughs.

- Assess the need for supplementary feed requirements. Feed testing hay or grain will help you determine if stock are getting what they need.

- Be sure to introduce grain feeding gradually to prevent deaths in livestock. High protein, mineral and trace element blocks can help stock on dry feed.

- all sheep in Victoria must be tagged with electronic ear tags. Contact department of Agriculture for orders.

- consider what you would do with your livestock if there is a fire threat this summer. Moving stock into a

paddock or laneway with a water trough, which has been slashed or heavily grazed can help prevent losses.

Prepare ewes and rams for joining, increasing nutrition will result in better conception rates.

Sell any unproductive cows and fattened steers.

Drench and vaccinate cows prior to calving.

## PASTURES

- Preparing paddocks for re-sowing to new pastures this autumn.

Order seed and contact contractors if required.

- Soil testing & spreading fertilizer is best done prior to autumn break.

- Check paddocks for Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass. Treating these weeds while they can be easily identified will reduce the need for control prior to seeding.

- Control summer weeds such as thistles to prevent seeding and impact on livestock.

- Plan any spraying which might be required after the autumn break such as capeweed control. Controlling weeds when they are small reduces cost and will significantly improve long term control.

- Spray woody weeds in the warmer months such as Gorse, Blackberries, Boxthorn, Galenia, Horehound etc. Using a selective herbicide will reduce off target damage to pastures which are needed to replace weeds.

## GENERAL

- The Barrabool Hills rabbit baiting program follow up. Plan to destroy rabbit warrens after baiting to avoid the same problem next year.

- Are you planning to establish some native plantations or need some replacements for other plantations in 2023? Contact your nursery and order your trees now.

-The Barrabool Hills Landcare spray unit is available for hire, contact Trevor Jones 0352656126.

- This is a good time to service spray units and other equipment you will need to use when the autumn break comes.

- Organise any contract works such as fencing, sowing and spraying to make sure you don't miss out.

- Fencing off dams and watering stock from troughs will provide better quality water and prevent losses from bogging and toxic algal blooms. Don't forget to put the location of your pipes etc. on a farm map.

- Talk to your neighbours about joining the Landcare group where they can meet other landholders and find answers for many land management issues.

- Consider attending a field day, workshop or farm tour to improve your management skills.

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# Goodbye La Nina. Hello El Nino!

Tree planting when spring rains are less predictable. By Stephen Murphy.



A long interest in revegetation on farms has made me a keen observer of rainfall. Every morning around 9 am, I expectantly check the rain gauge and record the data, now a routine of over thirty years. Last year I recorded a total for the year of 761 mm, the highest annual total on my records and the highest of the three recent La Nina years when useful soaking spring rainfall was quite reliable.

The long-range forecasts are now predicting El Nino years, when rainfall is likely to be far less reliable. They are saying that we can expect dryer, hotter weather which makes the job of putting trees back on farm landscapes a lot more challenging.

The spring rains in La Nina years, which helped establish tubestock planted in July, August and September, may not come. In the El Nino years of the late 1990's, September and October were often dry and in some years this followed

a dry winter.

## **When should we plant trees when faced with the prospect of dry seasons?**

When rainfall is less reliable, it's safer to plan for dry springs. Therefore, have your last trees planted by mid-August and the soil moisture from average winter rains will sustain good growth before the weather heats up and the soil starts to dry out. Most plants will have roots deep into the subsoil by mid-November, and this will get them through the dry hot summers without extra watering.

**But here is the key** – surviving dry springs and hot summers depends on excellent site preparation and a weed-free zone of 1 – 2 meters around each plant. If your weed control is patchy, too small, or non-existent, your plants are not likely to see in the New Year.

In dry years making the most of

rainfall becomes critical to the survival of a new plantation. In these years, shallow ripping in autumn to a depth of at least 200mm fractures the soil profile and ensures that any run-off benefits the young trees, watering deeper down where it is of most benefit. Though ripping is unsuitable for heavy clay (self-ripping) soils that crack in the summer, as they tend to crack wider along the rip line, exposing young tree roots.

So far this year I have recorded 17 mm in January, 19 mm in February and March is yet to reach double figures. Though this is not unusual for summer in southern Victoria, it still feels quite ominous given the predictions of El Nino. Though with good planning and site preparation, tree planting on farms can continue with the optimism we came to expect in La Nina years.

Stephen Murphy,  
Sustainable Biorich Landscapes.  
<https://www.recreatingthecountry>.



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# Message from the President.

APRIL 2023. By Jim Seager.

Welcome to the Barrabool Hills community.

The BHLG members have been busy already this year, with our annual rabbit baiting program completed in February and organising upcoming events.

While there is some uncertainty for the year ahead in terms of rainfall, it is still important to check paddocks and control weeds. Many invasive species such as Serrated Tussock can spread rapidly following dry seasonal conditions and over grazed paddocks.

While you may plan to plant less trees in a dry year, it is a good idea to replace lost plants in existing plantations and secure guards & fences to protect previous plantings.

Many of our 2022 plantings of indigenous native trees, shrubs & ground covers have survived the summer, so follow up weed control this autumn will improve their growth and help establish some

great habitat & stock shelter for years to come.

Thanks to all those who helped with another successful rabbit baiting program in February this year. Numbers of participants were down this year with some members missing the deadline for orders. Hopefully we don't let the rabbits take advantage next year!

It was great to see those who attended the film night in February at Rick & Sheila Walter's. It is important to make sure we have a good attendance to this annual event or it will not continue.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our past projects bus tour for 2023. This is to be held on May 7th and will be a similar format to the last one held in September 2022. The tour includes some of the sites we visited last time along with many new ones.

Thank you to our executive committee for their continued

support and contribution.

Heike our treasurer, Christa - Secretary, Leah - newsletter & website and all those members who contribute to the running of the landcare group.

We have many new members this year and I would welcome them to join our executive committee. We are all volunteers, so any contribution to running the group would be appreciated.

Thanks to all the other contributors and for those who help get the newsletter out every two months. Thanks to Geelong City Councils who print our newsletters. Remember we are always looking for new articles.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the nesting box workshop 23rd April and the Bus tour 7th May.

Cheers Jim.

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## What Bird Is that?

By Tim Harte.

Ric Walter identified the species of bird in the February BHLG newsletter correctly, well done Ric. The bird below was an Australasian Grebe. (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*). Australasian grebes are one of the 3 smallest members of the grebe family and are common on bodies of freshwater across Australia. Grebes are particularly known for their very impressive diving abilities, if disturbed Grebes dive and reappear



10-15 meters away rather than taking flight.

This issue's mystery bird is a common sight throughout the Hills and can be seen catching small gnats and insects on the wing; and in summer enjoying birdbaths in gardens, particularly towards the end of a warm day.

Email us with your 'what bird is this?' answer, the first person to answer correctly will have their name published in the next newsletter.



Above: This issue's mystery bird.



## BARRABOOL HILLS LANDCARE GROUP NEW MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Subscription is \$15.00 per family per year. Renewal is due on 1 July.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICAL ADDRESS (if different to above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

MOBILE PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ (useful for SMS alerts)

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
(essential for forwarding of newsletter, minutes of Group meetings etc)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: \_\_\_\_ I yr \$15.00

Number of people covered by this membership \_\_\_\_



### PAYMENT METHODS:

Options for payment are in the following order of preference:

EITHER

1/ Order & pay via our website: <https://barraboolhillslandcare.org.au/shop/>

Payment options are bank transfer, credit card or PayPal.

OR

2/ Mailing your cheque & completed paper form to  
1270 Barrabool Road, Gnarwarre VIC 3221

Note: Unfortunately we **cannot accept cash** payments

## BECOME A MEMBER.

Join our vibrant Barrabool Hills Landcare community and help support our projects and events? Only \$15 annually per family.

Go to our website for all the details on how to join [www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au](http://www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au) or email us at [barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com](mailto:barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com)

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR NEWSLETTER.

Contributions to the newsletter are most welcome. Let your fellow community and members know what is happening in the Barrabool Hills.

Send articles and photos to [barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com](mailto:barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com). Deadline for next issue is 16/05/23.

Members are able to advertise their Barrabool Hills business in the newsletter @ \$30 per issue (space allowing). Ads. are approximately 50 mm x 70 mm, and will be printed provided there is space.

## CONTACT US

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SOCIAL MEDIA

**Facebook:** [barraboolhillslandcaregroup](https://www.facebook.com/barraboolhillslandcaregroup)

**Instagram:** [barraboolhillslandcaregroup](https://www.instagram.com/barraboolhillslandcaregroup)

**Website:** [barraboolhillslandcare.org.au](http://barraboolhillslandcare.org.au)

Special thanks goes to the Leigh family for distributing the newsletter and the COGG for kindly printing this edition.

# Become a member of BHLG! Join, renew or update your membership now.

**Annual memberships are due in July each year. But you can join at any time. Group memberships are just \$15.**

If you provide updated details including emails, you will get the latest information on upcoming events, such as community planting days & catchment bus tours. You will also be eligible for our small grants program and be able to access our equipment to

help with vital projects including tree planting, weed and pest control. Additionally there are often larger regional projects which you can benefit from for weed control and re-vegetation. Our members have a broad range of experience and may be able to provide advice

on weed identification and control, preparation for tree planting and indigenous plant lists.

**To join, renew or update information:**  
[www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au](http://www.barraboolhillslandcare.org.au)  
or email us at  
[barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com](mailto:barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com)