



ATO staff helping revegetate old pasture land.

Barrabool Hills Landcare Newsletter

August 2015

Forthcoming events.

- NOT TO BE MISSED -

Annual General Meeting

7.30 Wednesday 19th August 2015

Gnarwarre Tennis Pavillion

Corner of Gnarwarre and Barrabool Road , Gnarwarre

LAUNCH OF STAGE 3

THE GREAT BARWON RIVER WALK

“FROM SOURCE TO MOUTH”

Come and hear from two of the inspirational masterminds of this amazing project, Jennifer Morrow and Mandy Baker, and learn how you can be a part of the next stage, travelling from the confluence of the Barwon and Leigh to where the Moorabool joins the Barwon at Fyansford. Be a part of this wonderful community event as it travels along the northern boundary of our landcare group's area.

Barrabool Hills Landcare Group will be organizing and leading the next section of this walk in 2016. We are forming a group to make this happen so let Kaye know if you would like to help.

The evening will commence at 7.30pm with a free “wine and cheese tasting”, followed by Jennifer and Mandys’ talk.

The formalities of the AGM of the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group will follow.

RSVP 14th August Kaye Rodden 52651241

Sweet Bursaria - A story of intimacy, trust and protection. Part 1

Steven Murphy

It was one of those windless nights in late September, the crisp Spring air cloaking us in almost total darkness. A soft yellow light from the torch revealed our exhaled breath adding to the prickle of excitement and our own sense of vulnerability. We were standing on one of the few flat areas in an undulating woodland of ghostly white trunks and shadowy shrubs. An almost inaudible whisper of "there" broke the silence and a finger pointed to a place at the edge of the darkness, a place that was about to reveal one of nature's most remarkable and very intimate relationships of trust and protection. From a small hole at the base of the tree emerged the advance party of tiny black-brown ants guiding a small caterpillar onto the trunk of a prickly shrub, rather like a group of small children leading the family milking cow onto a grassy meadow.

This scene gives us a glimpse into a story of symbiosis involving a plant, a species of ant and a species of butterfly. Symbiosis implies a relationship of dependence and cooperation and in many cases trust between different species. In human society we might describe it as 'give and take' for the benefit of both parties. Other words for symbiosis in society are partnership, friendship and support. It's easy to imagine our social structure falling apart if we didn't have these important nurturing relationships.

Fig 1. An ancient Sweet Bursaria (tree form) in the Barrabool Hills



In a similar way the natural world couldn't function without one organism supporting another while getting some benefit in return. Symbiotic relationships in nature between two life forms are common but a three way symbiosis between a plant,

a tiny ant and a soft squishy grub many times its size seems unlikely, yet it is a relationship that has endured for thousands of years.

The small group of young scientists stood in astonished wonder as more and more caterpillars were lead onto the prickly shrub. They were here on this cold night to study a symbiotic relationship that has at its centre a plant called Sweet Bursaria.

Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) varies from a graceful 6 m tall small tree in the Barrabool Hills to a prickly shrub that only grows to 2 m in Central Victoria around Castlemaine and also near Melbourne in Eltham. This shrubby form supports the life cycle of the Eltham Copper Butterfly (*Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*).

The larvae of this colourful butterfly live under Sweet Bursaria bushes in the ant nest of the tiny Notoncus ant (*Notoncus ectatomoides*). Each larvae usually has four ant guardians that guide them into the Bursaria bush at night where they gorge themselves on leaves slowly turning from cream to green. By morning they are safely back in the ants nest feeding the ants on honey like secretions from their abdomen.

Fig 2. The Eltham Copper Butterfly.



This goes on every night until Summer when the caterpillar transforms into a beautiful copper coloured butterfly. (see footage this amazing relationship on –

[http://www.ehpartners.com.au/NewsandMedia/LatestNews/ElthamCopperButterflyMonitoring\)](http://www.ehpartners.com.au/NewsandMedia/LatestNews/ElthamCopperButterflyMonitoring)

To complete this truly remarkable story, the lively butterflies enjoy a Christmas dinner of sweet nectar from the bursaria's white flowers, pollinating them as they feed. The adult females deposit their eggs on the roots of the Bursaria bush where the Notoncus ant take over duty of care when they hatch.

Fig 3. Clusters of white nectar-rich flowers at Christmas on Sweet Bursaria



Sadly Sweet Bursaria in all its forms is slowly disappearing from our landscape as are the many insects, including the Notoncus ant and the Eltham Copper Butterfly, that depend on them for their survival.

Sweet Bursaria - A story of hope and resilience. Part 2 (next newsletter)

Farm planning check list

August 2015

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

- consider worm testing sheep prior to spring lambing and treat if required
- vaccinate ewes before lambing with 6 in 1 and lambs at marking & again 4-6 weeks later

- Cows should be vaccinated prior to calving and have good shelter to reduce cold stress.
- check stock for lice and foot problems and treat if required prior to spring
- Pregnancy testing stock can allow you to sell non productive animals early, ensure all stock have NLIS ear tags prior to sale and you have the latest vendor declaration version.
- Future ram and bull requirement, many sales are held in the spring.
- check water supply and consider fencing stock out of dams to ensure good water quality heading into dryer months.

Pastures

- spring sowing new pastures such as Lucerne should be delayed until the soil temperature increases, order seed and contact contractor if required. Allow a good germination of weeds before spraying out prior to sowing new pasture.
- Spreading fertilizer now on hay paddocks will increase the quality and quantity.
- Noxious weed control; check paddocks for serrated tussock and chilean needle grass, spray or remove now to stop seeding this year. Get to know what is growing in your paddocks and act now to stop weeds seeding this spring.
- It is important to actively manage you existing pastures as this will help maintain productivity and reduce the need to resow.
- consider mapping weed infestations so they can be treated earlier next season.
- Now is the time to burn or remove areas of Gorse sprayed last summer. This will reduce rabbit harbour and allow you to see any new seedlings which you can spray. Use a selective herbicide where possible to remove weeds from pastures.
- Make sure you read the chemical label, stick to withholding periods and keep a record of any chemical use.

General

- It is important to plan what you need or want to do on your farm before you start. This will save you time and money while ensuring you enjoy the experience. This can start even before you purchase a farm.
- consider attending a field day or workshop to improve your management skills
- plant any native trees now while soil moisture is good and they will have time to establish before the summer.

Are you planning to establish some native plantations this year?

The Barrabool Hills Landcare group provides native trees free to members. Tree seedling propagation at the Geelong Community Nursery, contact Jim 0409935700.

Please contact now if you want trees through this program. Preference will be given to those who helped with propagation.

If you plan to use the landcare groups spray unit contact Neville Trotter on 0428811009.

- Monitor rabbit numbers through the spring and sign up for the Barrabool Hills February 2016 rabbit baiting program.
- Organise any contract works planned for this spring to make sure you don't miss out.
- Talk to your neighbours about joining the Landcare group where they can meet other landholders and take advantage of community events such as field days, pasture & river walks and funding opportunities.

Jim Seager Agricultural Consultant

0409935700

2015 Barwon River walk near Winchelsea



First Successful Small Landcare Project Grant Provided By The Barrabool Hills Landcare Group

The Group has set aside some funds to be used to directly support our members who are undertaking "small landcare projects". The funds have come from savings that we make to local projects, by providing local provenance trees and shrubs grown by the group at the Geelong Community nursery.

The executive of the group decided that the maximum amount available per project would be \$500 and that we would allocate up to 2 projects in the first financial year.

The first project to receive a \$500 grant has recently been completed by Julie Oataway, with around 0.6 ha of land and around 216m of a watercourse fenced off and revegetated with local provenance trees, shrubs and grasses. Over the last few years Julie has worked hard to remove gorse and rabbit warrens from this site on the northern slopes of Mt Moriac, and the transformation is very visible.

Congratulations Julie and Graham

If you wish to apply for one of our "Small Landcare Project Grants" they are open to all Barrabool Hills Landcare Group members. To be eligible the applicant must :-

- Be a current financial member of the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group.
- Contribute 50% or more financially to the proposed project.
- Propose a project which the selection committee deems aligns with the groups priorities.
- Complete the project 12 months from receiving approval.
- Agree to the group promoting the project and its outcomes across the landcare community.
- Agree to the terms and conditions set by the selection committee.
- Accept the final decision of the selection committee.

Application forms are available from our website, or talk to Jim Seager or Kaye Rodden.



Oataway's paddocks before fencing.



After fencing – protection for the vegetation and the watercourse.



Rabbit Management Programs Update

Pindone Baiting Program - 2016

Planning for the Barrabool Hills Landcare group's rabbit baiting program in 2016 is well underway and the traditional YELLOW baiting order form will accompany the October newsletter. We have met with the environment team of Surf Coast Shire and they have once again offered to not only once again print the order form and send out a reminder letter in early 2016, but will also be aligning their roadside fumigation program to follow our baiting.

The dates for next year are **15th, 18th and 22rd February.**

So look out for the 2016 baiting notice in the next newsletter and in the meantime don't forget to

continue to destroy warrens and if you can, remove any woody weeds such as gorse and boxthorn that provide such inviting cover!

Rabbit Harbour Removal Update

In May and June, the Barrabool Hills Landcare group successfully managed a \$5000 project to provide 50% of the costs of removing rabbit harbour and ripping warrens on 10 properties in our landcare area. These funds were provided partly by the group and also through a grant of \$4000 from a consortium of the CCMA, Surf Coast and Inland Plains Landcare Network and the Geelong Landcare Network.

There are plans afoot to seek more funding for a similar program in 2016, so if you missed out this year because of the short time lines, watch this space and please make sure we have your email details so that we can contact you easily.

Healthy land = healthy horses = happy horse owners

Around a dozen members braved the cold wet night at the last group meeting in June to listen to Karen O'Keefe, the Corangamite Regional Landcare Facilitator, talk about how to achieve healthy land, healthy horses and happy horse owners. Jim Seager arrived early to heat up the room and in comfort we heard how to adapt traditional methods of farming to suit the heavy concentrated weight of a horse and their very selective grazing style, so that weeds can be managed and soil erosion minimized.

Karen's easy manner and great slides provided an entertaining insight into how to design a property to minimize the impact of horses on soil and water health.

It was a great social night, once again topped off with a cuppa and yummy supper.

A Rabbitty affair!

We have to apologise that our original plans to launch a collectors edition of a rabbit recipe book for our AGM on August 19th, have had to be postponed.

We felt that with the major Rabbit Event for the landcare community being hosted by the CCMA and Surf Coast Shire at Barwon Park on the 7th August and the Rabbit Management Conference for community members in Melbourne on 14th August

we would be all “*rabbitied out*” by our meeting on the 19th!

We still plan to mark our ongoing battle in the Barrabool Hills with the “feral-devil”, the rabbit, and celebrate our 21st birthday with a cookery book **BUT we need your HELP**. We have a heap of recipes collected, now we need a small team to design the book and perhaps test a few recipes!!!!

Don’t miss out on being part of creating this new Barrabool Hills heirloom publication. The more hands the lighter the workload.

Please contact Kaye as soon as possible to give a helping hand.

Diary of budding agroforesters – planting.

Geoff and Joan Anson

Well, planting has come and gone. Over July, with the considerable help of a merry band of helpers we have survived the freezing winds, limited but at times annoying rain and planted out the two main paddocks.

The site preparation paid off with clear sprayed spots for each tree and ripped lines making planting and stake pushing easier. Given the limited rain that has fallen over this autumn/winter the ground was damp rather than wet, but at least there were some light showers after each planting to bed the trees in. A sheep graze and spray of MCPA was done just before planting to help manage the broad leaf weeds and the Sand Rocket that was growing prolifically outside the sprayed circles.

With lots of volunteers involved it was important to make our planting ideas clear. We set up the structure of the paddocks by planting ourselves all of the large trees (eucalypts) in clumps of 5 spaced every 20-30m across the paddocks, planted to define the internal roads and turning circles (and made sure that we could turn a car and trailer around) , and under the power line (all trees >10m from power lines). This meant that the volunteer planters had less to worry about when deciding what to plant where.

Along the roads we planted the farm forestry (White Cypruss Pine, Spotted Gum and Red Ironbark) and the seed trees (Lightwood, Silver Banksia, White Cyprus and Sweet Bursaria). This will allow easy access for thinning and seed collection.

On the day we colour coded the planting stakes – red for understory and yellow for small bushes. Then it was easy to ensure that there was a mix of the two types and that planting groups were the correct size (10-20 plants per group for the understory and 20-40 for the small plants). The clump numbers provided enough trees in a clump to make seed germination and hopefully long term ongoing regeneration of the area easier.

Our ‘star’ Sweet Bursaria is the one area that is not planted. Only 5 cuttings were strong enough to plant out this season so we have left an area around the ancient tree mentioned in Steven’s article for planting next autumn when the cuttings are stronger.



Sun shine on a Winters Day.

We could not have done the job without a huge amount of help. Our thanks go to the ‘Green’ group from the ATO Geelong Office and the students from Gordon TAFE.

The TAFE students also started site monitoring as part of their course: this includes GPS recording of each tree clump to spatially map plant growth, soil testing, snail, bird and other surveys. We will be working together over the coming years to see how the site develops and what impact it has on the ecology of the farm.



Planting before the rain came.

Rare and endangered plants

If you think that you may have remnant vegetation let us know.

We are keen to hear from anyone who knows of tree and shrub remnants in the Barrabool Hills so they can be recorded. If the landholder is interested, funding can be sourced to protect them and help them regenerate. Opportunities also exist for bringing in other genetic material from around this area to raise the chance of the old plants producing viable seed.

Join the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group Committee

Help ensure the ongoing health of our landcare group and shape its direction.

Nominations are now open for the 2015/16 committee. As well as the positions listed below general committee members are very welcome. Meetings are held every 2-3 months and you can be as active as your situation allows. Our aim is to have a committee where lots of people help a little, rather than one where a few do a lot.

Subscriptions due.

For those families who have not paid this year's BHLG sub (due 1 July) we need you to hop to it and support your local Landcare Group.

We are one of the most active Groups in the Geelong region, run by a highly motivated, very competent and dedicated executive. Managing the

rabbit baiting campaign, negotiating Government grants on behalf of members, maintaining our sprayer and other equipment, communicating with members all costs money. We depend on your support.

All members of BHLG are entitled to:

- a BHLG gate sign
- a brochure outlining the Group's achievements
- mentoring / assistance with weed control and revegetation
- Newsletters and Emails
- Access to Government funding for landcare
- Involvement in Group activities and projects eg. gorse spraying, carbon pastures and biodiversity and tree seedlings.
- Access to Group tree planting and spraying equipment

Annual membership costs just \$15 per family. Pay by cheque or direct credit for 1, 2 or 3 years. Support us so that we can keep offering the best for the Barrabool Hills community.

PAYMENT OPTIONS:

By Cheque:

Please make cheques payable to: **Barrabool Hills Landcare Group**, and post with this form to:

BHLG Treasurer, 33 Ballanlea Road , Barrabool Vic. 3221

By Direct Deposit:

Bank Account details: Barrabool Hills Landcare Group,

National Australia Bank

BSB: 083 537

Account Number: 650 230 924

Please include your surname and initials as a reference & email your application to:

joan.e.anson@gmail.com

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For more information go to
www.barwonridge.com.au

Barrabool Hills Landcare Group

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Let your fellow members know what is happening in the Barrabool Hills. Contributions to the newsletter are welcomed. Send articles and photos to geoffanson@mac.com.

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

The newsletter is printed through the generosity of Andrew Katos, State Member for South Barwon and is distributed through the efforts of the Leigh family.