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Brisbane Ranges Landcare Newsletter

News relevant to our local hills and plains!

Number 90 August 2023

Our current Committee:

Robert Hall (President)

Bart Bartholomew (Secretary)

Chris Winfield (Treasurer)

Loretta Wilson (Newsletter editor)

Tony Wilson

Simon Wilkins

Next Meeting: Thursday August 17

Balliang Hall 7:30pm

Presenter: Cameron Steele



This month, Cameron Steele from People for a Living Moorabool will talk about how his organisation's volunteer members have delved into water authority government data and Google Earth to produce a report that highlights how the continued proliferation of farm dams are impacting the most flow-stressed river in the state. Their work has uncovered some remarkable findings. The Moorabool River is regarded as one of the most flow stressed, if not the most flow stressed in Victoria.

Little River is considered part of the Moorabool catchment under the State Government's Sustainable Water Strategy (SWS). Cameron will also discuss how we can help with producing similar data for the Little River catchment.

Please join us for an engaging and informative evening.

You can read more about Cameron's work in this [abc news article](#).

David Goble

“Lara Downs – the long road to recovery”

After more than forty years living in Balliang (& B. East), Pam and I made the difficult decision to retire and downsize in another locality. While change is

always exciting and retirement poses new challenges it is sad to leave such a beautiful and unique place and the friendly people who live here. We first moved to the area from Melbourne in 1983 at the tail end of a drought period and little realized that we would face an even more challenging drought period during the 1990s at Lara Downs.

Lara Downs was previously owned and farmed for many years by the Bufton family but was reduced in size to around 220 Ha when we moved there in 1994. The area suffered badly from dryland salinity, particularly at the rear of the property which boarded the badly scarred and degraded creek area that is clearly seen from the Bacchus Marsh-Geelong road, between the Granite Road and Gilmores Rd intersections.

Around 50 acres of our land was in this most degraded area where the Sandy Creek that runs North-South along the Eastern boundary of our property diverts into the next property and then crosses under the Bacchus Marsh Geelong road heading East to ultimately join the Little River.

While dryland salinity has a number of causes there is little doubt that widescale tree clearing both for local use and more broadly to provide timber for Geelong and surrounding areas last century, was a contributing factor to the problem.



On Lara Downs, attempts had been made to improve this area prior to our time, by fencing off degraded sections and by planting tall Wheat Grass which is relatively salt tolerant together with an underplanting of clover.

In the mid 1990s the area was still in very poor condition with the water table only a few centimeters from the surface and only salt tolerant species growing

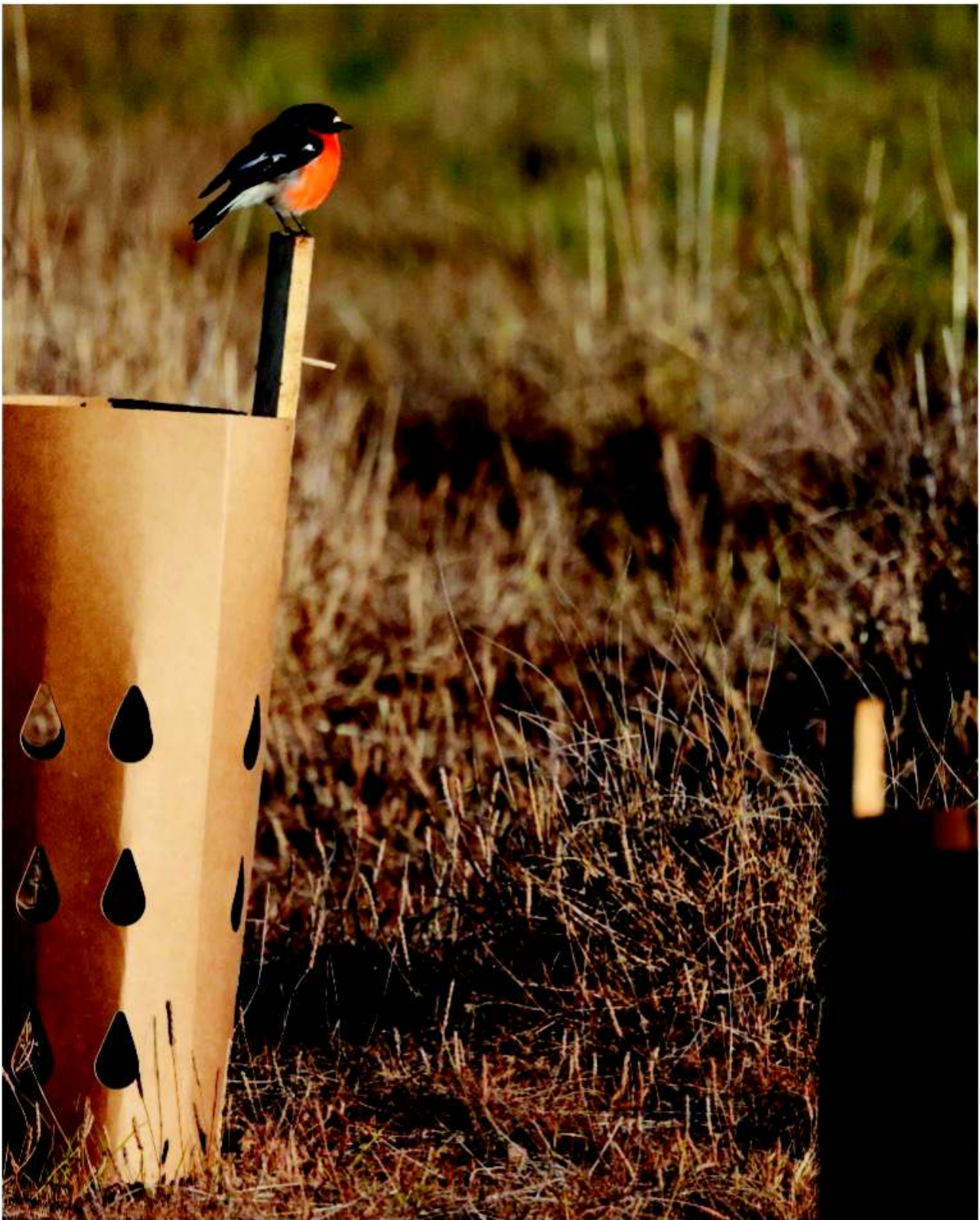
there. Significantly, today, following periods of significant drought together with extensive tree planting on Lara Downs and neighboring properties, the water table in the same location is now several metres down. How badly degraded the area was, can be seen from this photo taken around 2010.

Our first big revegetation project was in 1999 where we fenced off and ripped an area adjoining this most degraded area and planted around 1000 native trees. We were assisted in this project by members of the Brisbane Ranges Landcare group together with some funding through the Geelong Landcare Network. The varieties planted included Eucalyptus (Red River Gum, Yellow Box, Grey Box), Acacia (Gold Dust, Black, Golden, Varnish), Mint Bush, Moonah Melaleuca, Bull oak and Drooping Sheoak.



After 23 years this planting is now mature as can be seen from this photo. It also has been self-renewing for about the past ten years and has helped to attract considerable bird life and other native fauna into the area.

Pam has been surveying our farm for Birdlife Australia's "Birds on farms" research for a number of years and where there were zero birds recorded in the degraded area originally, there are now a variety of species visiting and in some cases, nesting there. The flame robin is now a regular Winter visitor, seeming to favour this area in particular. (See image below)



For many years we also worked on creating shelter belts on other parts of the property. These were largely self-funded but we did get assistance from the 15Trees Group for one planting which was much appreciated. This plantation is now a significant windbreak and wildlife habitat, between open cultivated areas.

From around 2010 through until 2021 we continued planting along the creek line and in the worst affected areas. During this period over 3,500 trees were planted, some to replace ones that had died, although the loss rate was not high, due in part to the selection of local and indigenous species. Funding assistance was obtained from Melbourne Water via their Stream Frontage Management Program with considerable assistance from their representative

Lloyd Stanway. From around 2016/17 we obtained significant planting assistance from Janine Duffy via her Koala Clancy Foundation and it's growing band of volunteer tree planters, who were seeking in particular to help restore habitat in and around the YouYangs which had once been prime koala habitat.

In 2022 based on her previous experience with the area Janine was keen to undertake a much larger project on Lara Downs. We therefore jointly decided to plant out the 9.8 Ha area adjoining the original large scale planting done in 1999. This area was already largely fenced and of little agricultural value due to the salinity issues. Melbourne Water provided funding to assist the Koala Clancy Group with the project and after site preparation, 8,000 trees were planted over a number of weeks. The following photo shows the extent of the planting as viewed from Granite Road looking north. We look forward to seeing this sea of green plastic sleeves, eventually replaced by the trees and shrubs they currently protect.



While in many ways we regret leaving Balliang after such a long time, we feel a sense of accomplishment and pride in looking back at the projects that we have undertaken and knowing that the land is in a better place than when we arrived. It will take many more years for the land to recover fully if ever, but at least the recovery has started.

We have been assisted and supported by many people in this work not least, by the members of the Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group. and for that, we thank you.

David Goble

July 2023

A Note from the President:

It is with sadness that we farewell David and Pam Goble from the Balliang district. Their Landcare activities over many years are commendable and we will miss their dedication and company. We will also miss Pam's excellent photographic contributions to the Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group calendar. Many of the photos were birds from their property and surrounds (at last count Pam had photographed 98 different bird species!). We wish them the very best in their new landscape further west.

Robert Hall

OFFICIAL

Multi-species Pastures



Tuesday 12th September 2023
2:00-4:00pm, inc afternoon tea
BALLIANG EAST HALL
1265 Bacchus Marsh-Balliang Rd, Balliang
Register:
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/where-to-start-with-multi-species-pastures-with-jade-killoran-tickets-691415401077>



Guest speaker

Jade Killoran- Healthy Farming Systems

Are you wondering where to start with multi-species pastures?

Jade is an independent cover crop advisor and researcher, helping farmers trial, adopt, and manage multispecies cover crops on-farm. Jade completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Science in 2013 focusing her Honours year on multi-species cover cropping in the Victorian high rainfall zone.

Jade likes nothing better than to be out and about on-farm, helping farmers and evaluating the success of cover crop adoption on farming systems.

Jade will cover:

- Getting started with multi-species cover crops
- Sowing a multi-species, seed selection
- Conducting a feed test
- Terminating a multi-species cover crop
- Good grazing practices for multi-species pastures



Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator



Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/...>

Recent Group Activities 5/7/2023

Planting day with corporate volunteers from *Like Butter* on the property of Shaun and Zoe Adams in Staughton Vale. 500 indigenous trees and shrubs planted.

<https://15trees.com.au/tree-pl...>





**Sunday July 30 – Working Bee
at the Triangle**

Guards cleaned up and a further 125
indigenous trees and shrubs planted!





Photos for the 2024 Calendar...Have a great photo? Share it with us to feature in our newsletter and in our calendar!



Are you loving your Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group 2023 calendar? To ensure it continues into 2024 and beyond, we need more photos! Send your favourite shots, including landscapes, flora and fauna, farming and agriculture, to fly2nina@gmail.com No photos = no calendar!

Photo Above: A Sacred Kingfisher visiting Tony and Loretta Wilson's garden, Balliang.

An El Niño summer is coming – 3 webinars

[Find out more](#)



Nestbox Building Workshop, 27th August

[Find out more](#)

News round up

A round up of interesting events and other information.



Moorabool Landcare Network News

Read up on recent activities...



Screening of "Rachel's Farm" movie on Thursday August 10

Join us to celebrate Landcare Week Thurs 10 Aug and see 'Rachel's Farm movie', 6:30pm at the Village Cinema Geelong.



The Very Fast Break

Seasonal Climate Update For Victoria

Published by Agriculture Victoria, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia



Echidnas Spotted!

Coimadai Primary School children were delighted to have not multiple echidnas visit the school buildings in the first week of August!

Landcare Resources

Need help on your property? These Internet resources offer good advice.



Weeds

Identify your weeds and make informed decisions



Pest Animals

Control methods for deer, feral cats, feral goats,

about how best to control and manage them



Moorabool Landcare Network

MLN is one of two networks we are in.



Geelong Landcare Network

We are members of GLN and MLN.



DELWP Mapping Tools

Free interactive mapping tools from the Dept of Environment, Land, Water and Planning



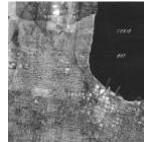
Traditional Owner Boundaries

for our area and across Victoria



Spatial Mapping Data

Great data resources from Vic Gov data that you can download and use for mapping



Historical Aerial Photography

What did your property once look like? Here's some links to answer that.



Moorabool Council Grants Information

Grant opportunities funded by Moorabool Council



Grants Hub

Register for this free email alert advisory service on grants from a wide variety of organisations



Melbourne Water Grants

Funding opportunities from Melbourne Water



City of Greater Geelong Grants

Grant opportunities from Greater Geelong Council

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, the Wadawurrung, and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

BRLG Landcare

610 Staughton Vale Road, Balliang
Australia

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