Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group

Newsletter

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Visit our website for latest news: http://brlg.org.au

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In this edition:

Welcome 2022 and reflect on 2021

Welcome to 2022 members, we hope you were able to have a break over the festive season and enjoy a celebration or two. A light reading newsletter for the first of the year, to focus more on what 2022 will look like for the Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group. More will be presented at the first meeting of the year on 17th February over a snag.

Firstly, let's take a moment to reflect and appreciate what we achieved in 2021.

Prickly Pear working bee – November, Balliang East Hall – Although unable to help out physically on the day, Jacki's freshly cooked pikelets for morning tea were a well-earned treat after the big job of removing all the prickly pear from the tennis courts. It was a big job, but the final product was a rewarding sight. Thank you to all the BRLG members for helping out in this working bee. Thankfully with minimal prickles to remove!

Balliang Hall tidy up - Many thanks to the BRLG members who helped out, shovels and whipper snippers in hand to clean up the Balliang Memorial Hall and grounds. The Balliang Memorial Hall has been the main meeting venue for the Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group for many years, so thanks to those of you that helped the hall committee make a start to get the hall grounds looking tidy.

Blanket weed clean up – December Murphy's road and/or Staughton Vale Road. A massive trailer load of blanket weed was removed from Murphy's Road. Thank you to those that attended, what a huge effort!!

Lots of plantings - Koala Clancy kindly donated over 1000 trees this spring, all of which were quickly snapped up. Great news for all, especially our koalas. The trees on offer included:

- River red gum 500+
- Grey box 100+
- Red box approx 50
- Yellow gum approx 50
- Prickly tea-tree 100+
- Woolly tea-tree approx 50
- River bottlebrush 100+
- Blackwood 50+

The Werribee River Association also kindly donated trees that were left over from a cancelled planting day.

From the 300 trees donated from 15 Trees, 70 trees/shrubs were planted at the Balliang East Hall. Another great use of the donated trees from 15 trees!! Well done and thank you to those that assisted with the planting at the Balliang East Hall.

In 2022, we look forward to more free trees, plantings, working bees and sourcing more funding grants to support our locals and our region.

Important dates for your 2022 diary:

Here's hoping 2022 enables us to achieve a lot more, including the ability to hold meetings face to face, and to get together for workshops and events. Make sure you put the following dates in your diary, with further dates and details for field trips and other organised events to come. Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Member meetings	Working Bees	Workshops/events
Thursday 17th February	Sunday 10th April	Saturday 19th March - Nesting boxes
Thursday 21st April	Sunday 17th July	Sunday 17th July - Christmas in July
Thursday 16th June		TBA – Trivia night
Thursday 18th August	Sunday 16th October	
Thursday 20th October		

Some of the speakers we hope to engage this year include:

- **Snakes and steaks:** A reptile enthusiast to talk with us about the local scaly friends we find locally, and enjoy a steak following the talk.
- **Brisbane Ranges Bees:** A talk from our local apiarist for those of you considering bees on your property and how bees are important to our local ecosystem.
- Other talks we hope to bring you this year include all you need to know about ferrets, how to get/keep your dam healthy, and use of drones in agriculture.

Managing Covid for our meetings and events:

To remain in line with Landcare Victoria's general advice around how each group best deals with the continuing Covid situation, Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group will maintain communications with members prior to meetings and events, and maintain high infection control standards at events. We ask that you contact us if you have any concerns regarding your attendance at any events, to see if we can assist. We don't want anyone to miss out on something they wish to attend.

Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group will attempt to modify the way our events are organised including moving activities outdoors and in some cases consider a cap on attendance if indoors.

Members Meeting – February 17, 2022

The first members meeting is this Thursday 17th February. A BBQ and informal get together has been arranged to hear your ideas for 2022. So come along, and bring anyone you think may be interested in what BRLG has to offer.

Nesting box Workshop

Learn how to make your own nesting box!!! A practical workshop coordinated for BRLG members to construct your own nesting boxes that you an install at your own home.

Date: Saturday 19th March
Time: 10am – 2pm
Location: Balliang Hall, Bacchus Marsh, Balliang Road, Balliang.

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 from a nesting box specialist, MiIes, Geldard.

In the workshop, you will construct a nesting box suitable for one of the following:

- Sugar glider/Brushtail phascogate/Antechinus
- Ringtail possum
- Small Parrots such as lorikeets and budgerigars
- Medium Parrots such as eastern Rosella
- Large parrots, such as crimson rosella, rainbow lorikeet or gang

The workshop is free for members, for non-members it's $70. If you're not a member, and would like to attend, membership that is normally $25 (is now free due to Covid!) How's that for a bargain!!! All you do is come along to the next meeting and sign up!

Registrations are required for this event and limited to only 15 participants, so get in quick! To register, follow the link below.

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/brisbane-ranges-landcare-nesting-box-workshop-tickets-254755680097

Local friends – Jacky Dragon

The **Jacky dragon** (*Amphibolurus muricatus*) is a type of lizard native to southeastern Australia. It was one of the first Australian reptiles to be named, originally described by English zoologist George Shaw. It's well known for its bright yellow mouth and well-developed vertebral crest, as well as the temperature-dependent sex determination of its offspring. Other common names include blood-sucker, stonewalker, and tree dragon.

The Werhaia people of the Wimmera region of north-western Victoria call it *nganurganity*. The Jacky dragon is usually found in dry sclerophyll forests and woodlands. They are present in the eastern highlands, but not in alpine areas. They are semiarboreal, and individuals are often seen perching on fallen or standing timber.

The Jacky dragon, one of the 70 species of dragons (Agamidae) found in Australia, is generally diurnal and tends to run in an upright posture when pursued. Common morphological characteristics include rough, nonglossy scales; broad, thick, and fleshy tongues; and well-developed limbs, especially hind limbs which are generally longer and have five-clawed digits. Most dragons are also characterized by a lack of tail autotomy and the presence of femoral and/or preanal pores. Agamidae dragons are also oviparous and tend to deposit their eggs in burrows.

The coloration of the Jacky dragon is pale grey to dark brown with dark patches along the middle of the back. The dark patches are interrupted by pale blotches that often blend together to form a continuous stripe from above the arm to the groin. A dark brown bar is present between the eye and the ear, but no dark stripe is present between the nostril and the eye as in many other dragons. The lips and lower jaw tend to be of a lighter coloration than the rest of the head. Jacky dragons are also characterized by a bright yellow lining in their mouths. Specimens have been seen with orange-red corners of the inside of their mouths, which may have given rise to the common name of blood-sucker.

The average size of a Jacky dragon is 9in (22.86 cm) including the tail, though they have been recorded at lengths up to 17.5in (44.45 cm). The length of the tail is generally twice as long as that of the body. The average mass of the Jacky dragon is 30g. The largest dragons, however, have been recorded at around 67g. The size of the dragons' heads can be used to differentiate between sexes, with males usually having conspicuously larger heads.

Females lay up to eight eggs. Clutch size tends to be positively correlated with female body size. Most adult females lay at least one clutch every summer. They tend to lay their clutches under sheets of bark or decaying vegetation over sandy deposits. The first young begin to appear at the end of December and are abundant by February. Jacky dragons are usually about three inches in length immediately following hatching.

The sex of the hatchlings is determined by the temperature of the nest, a process known as temperature-dependent sex determination (TSD). The hatchlings are females in low- and high-temperature environments and males in medium-temperature environments. This causes young dragons from clutches laid earlier in the season to be predominately male. Shine suggests, however, that the sex of the hatchling is determined soon after oviposition when the

mother still has considerable control over the temperature of the nest. This may falsify the hypothesis that TSD evolved in lizards so as to match the sex of the offspring with environmental conditions that may be unpredictable when the clutch is laid, as is most likely the case for turtles, tuataras, and crocodiles. In fact, recent research suggests TSD has evolved in lizards so as to ensure reproductive success in the offspring.

The Jacky dragon reaches sexual maturity rapidly. Females can lay clutches within one year of hatching. The average lifespan of the Jacky dragon is four years, which is significantly shorter than most lizards.

Insects compose most of the diet of the Jacky dragon. These include flies, moths, caterpillars, grasshoppers and small beetles.

Predators of young Jacky dragons are numerous and can include small mammals, such as feral cats or rats, and other reptiles. Adults face aerial predation from birds such as kookaburras, ravens, black-shouldered kites, and Nankeen kestrels. The dragons use visual cues such as the changing area over time, edge length, shape, and orientation in the recognition of aerial predators.

The Jacky dragon is not in danger of extinction. The abundance of the Jacky dragon and other common reptiles is a result of the heterogeneity and structural complexity of the ground and groundcover of undisturbed areas, which is an important observation in the conservation of reptiles in Australia.

Conservation dogs sniffing out ways to care for the environment

Conservation dogs are using their noses to help to sniff out friends and foes in land management practices with landcare groups and landholders.

Trained sniffer dogs are being used to find the scats of native animals and feral pests to understand their diet and roam within areas of East Gippsland. The highly trained canines are able to do it much quicker than people. Supported by a Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery Grant, the East Gippsland Landcare Network recently used detection dogs to locate fox scats.

Following the horrific Black Summer Bushfires in 2019, areas within the district were badly burnt, leaving native animals extremely vulnerable to foxes. The local Landcare group also wanted to understand how many foxes were in the district, what they ate, and where they roamed.

Matt Stephenson, a Project Manager with the East Gippsland Landcare Network, said trained sniffer dogs brought over from Phillip Island and were crucial for finding this information and did so in significantly less time than if the Network relied on the legwork of its volunteers.

"What would have taken a week and a half with three or four volunteers only took a day and a half with the dogs," said Stephenson, when asked about the benefits of using canines for scat detection work.

The dogs had previously been used for fox control to help protect the famous Little Penguins on Phillip Island, so they knew the scent they were looking for before they arrived to work in East Gippsland.
Dog handler, Craig Bester, said he chose English springer spaniels "to sniff out the fox waste because they naturally work from side to side in front of the handler."

Once collected, the droppings proved the feral foxes ate everything from small lizards and amphibians, to feasting on cattle and sheep carcasses, plus the odd lamb. Stephenson said this information, and an understanding of the fox number and range, all derived from the scats, will be used to strategize control of the vulpine (fox) population.

The $14 million Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery Grants Program is supporting projects in regions impacted by the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20, and has been funded by the Australian Government's Bushfire Recovery Program for Wildlife and their Habitat.

eDNA testing for platypus in the Moorabool catchment

A problem shared by many Landcare groups is a lack of data on the presence of wildlife in their waterways. The platypus is a good example. It is nocturnal, most active at dawn and dusk and sometimes during the day when the sky is overcast.

It lives in rivers, creeks and dams needing both freshwater and the riparian zone where it can find prey and dig burrows for resting and breeding.

A lot of information about platypuses in particular waterways is anecdotal.

Without the intimate knowledge and access to our rivers once enjoyed by Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung, the health and distribution of local platypus populations in the area where I work, the Moorabool catchment, is largely unknown.

Platypus monitoring techniques have been very labour intensive, expensive, and often inaccessible to community citizen science projects. The Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG) is using a new technique developed by EnviroDNA to investigate the current distribution of platypus throughout the catchment while engaging the community and raising awareness of local conservation issues.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) is a non-invasive sampling technique that detects genetic material from a target species secreted into its surrounding environment.

According to Josh Griffiths, a senior ecologist at EnviroDNA, this includes skin, faeces and urine.

"We are looking for pretty much any bodily secretion you can imagine platypus making into the river This genetic material is then screened and tested in the lab to determine the species that it came from," Josh said.

Left: **From left, ecologist Josh Griffiths instructs MCLG volunteers on how to take eDNA water samples, assisted by Dr Farley Connelly.**

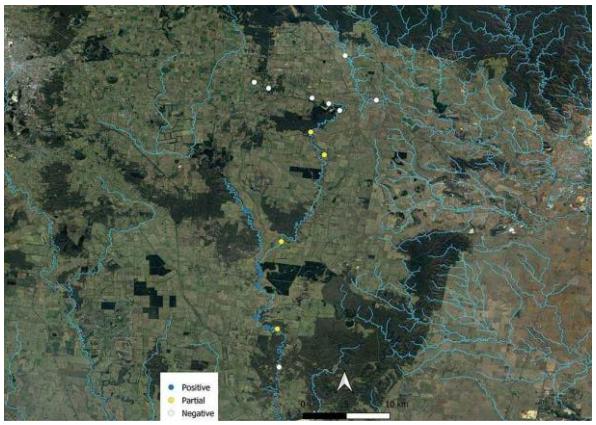
Citizen scientists test local waterways

In May 2021 MCLG members undertook training in collecting water samples to be screened for platypus eDNA and went on to test the Moorabool River (east and west branches and at the point of bifurcation), Paddock Creek, and the Werribee River.

The implications of having a clear picture of platypus population distribution in the MCLG area are massive. Platypus are a flagship species that indicate macro-invertebrate abundance, species diversity, water quality and vegetation quality.

The results were available a month after testing. Six out of the eighteen sample sites returned positive results, while trace amounts were detected at another four. Positive detections occurred in the west branch of the Moorabool River and downstream from the point of bifurcation.

Partial detections in the east branch of the Moorabool River means platypus may be present, but in low abundance. These partial detections may also be a result of sample contamination or dispersal of DNA from further upstream. Repeat sampling is recommended to confirm presence or absence at these sites.



The collection day was a thrilling event for the community. MCLG members enthusiastically took on the role of citizen scientist and collaborated with others they had not met previously. They also got to visit parts of our catchment they had not previously seen. The event rekindled our sense of community after many difficult months of COVID-19 restrictions.

Above: Results from eDNA sampling in the MCLG area. Blue is positive detection for platypus, yellow is partial and white is no-detection.

MCLG President, Julie Keating, said the day was inspiring. “The opportunity to participate in the eDNA data collection day reminded me of how much there is to do, how everyone can make a difference, and how important these things are. Connecting with the river and its wildlife this way with members of my community, and learning from experts, has inspired me to want to do more,” Julie said.

Baseline established

With very little historical data, platypus population trajectory in the MCLG area has been hard to determine. We now have important baseline data from which we can continue to monitor and track local populations.

MCLG will now use this data to target revegetation projects in riparian areas with poor vegetation quality. Improving these areas can help expand and improve the health of platypus populations and all other biodiversity that depend on healthy waterways.

eDNA technology was used to test more than 2000 sites across Victoria from August-November 2021 as part of The Great Australian Platypus Search. The MCLG eDNA testing project was funded by the Corangamite CMA.

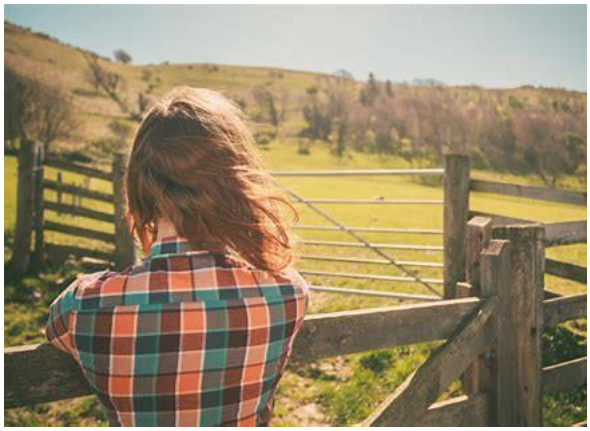
Jackson Cass is Landcare Coordinator for Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group.
For more information email moorabool.landcare@gmail.com

If you see a platypus in your travels? Be sure to record it using the Platypus Spot app in the below link or via your phone's app store.

https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__platypusspot.org_&d=DwIFaQ&c=JnBkUqWXzx2bz-3a05d47Q&r=_E3eDhxEMV05JTxG_sJMMKFtoSH-9sE2pG-A24mMwhsQPwJe72In_1VasWMsW_5l&m=4gm4rJ-ri0RcKQFR7l62U2V_iB8HUPkQj62JH6LfyDfMQf4RpT0R3riNIwJ8ZTqR&s=2s9VgGdEQmSunDf8KneWeYjTcKcjB-IrDUxgy_LBuAg&e=

Rural Women’s Network Mentoring Program 2022

Applications for the Rural Women’s Mentoring Program are now open. The Victorian Rural Women’s Mentoring Program provides rural women and opportunity to take part in a reciprocal peer-to-peer style mentoring relationship that will be guided by an experienced facilitator. The mentoring or ‘buddy’ style relationship as guided by the facilitator will assist participants in:



- identifying leadership challenges
- tackling business goals

- developing leadership skills
- career development and progression
- building professional networks, and
- implementing change with support.

The participants will be paired based on alignment of the participant's experience and development goals. The program will run until November 2022. During this period the mentorship buddies will work together overseen by their facilitator.

Up to eight mentoring partnerships will be established. The expression of interest period opens on Thursday 16 December 2021 and will accept expressions of interest until the program is fully subscribed. The program is managed by Agriculture Victoria.

2022 Victorian Rural Women's Network Mentoring Program Guidelines

These guidelines provide information on what you need to do to apply, eligibility, selection criteria, and what is required of mentoring participants.

The Victorian Rural Women's Network welcomes and encourages interest and applications from people from diverse backgrounds, capabilities and experiences.

- 2022 Victorian Rural Women's Network Mentoring program guidelines

Apply Now

You can apply for our 2022 program now via Expression of Interest;

Download and complete the Expression of Interest Form (in Word) and submit to the Victorian Rural Women's Network via email vrwnetwork@agriculture.vic.gov.au.

- 2022 Mentoring Program Expression of Interest Form (Word) (WORD - 120.7 KB)

More Information

For more information, contact Lara McPherson Senior Policy Officer Rural Women vrwnetwork@agriculture.vic.gov.au. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to share and gain knowledge and skills with other like-minded rural women.

NAIDOC Local Grants Program

The Australian Government is inviting applications for funding through an open process in 2021-22 for the 2022 NAIDOC Local Grants Round, delivered under Program 1.4 – Culture and Capability of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

This grant round provides funding to Indigenous and non Indigenous organisations to contribute to the costs of local and regional NAIDOC activities across Australia. NAIDOC activities should align with the 2022 theme 'Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!'.

The objectives of the program are to promote:

- the expression, engagement and conservation of Indigenous Australians' cultures

- Indigenous Australians' participation in the social and economic life of Australia through healing, and strengthening the capability, governance and leadership of Indigenous Australians, organisations and communities,
- broader understanding and acceptance of the unique place of Indigenous Australians' cultures in Australian society.

The intended outcomes of the program are to:

- contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous Australians' cultural expression and conservation, including recognition of Australia's shared history and valuable Indigenous Australian heritage
- support activities that increase the participation of Indigenous Australians in Australian society through healing and improved individual, community and organisational capability and leadership,
- promote the unique place Indigenous Australians and their cultures have in Australian society.

This program is delivered on behalf of National Indigenous Australians Agency
Closing date and time 0 22 February – 9pm AEDT

Subscribe to receive updates - Organisations and individuals interested in Community Grants Hub grant rounds are encouraged to subscribe to receive alerts when new information is made available.

Other future grant opportunities are published on GrantConnect, the Australian Government grants information system.

Contacting the Community Grants Hub - If you would like assistance, please call the Community Grants Hub Hotline on 1800 020 283 (option 1) or
email support@communitygrants.gov.au(link sends e-mail).
More information about the Community Grants Hub can be found on the Community Grants Hub website.

Please quote **2021-6696 – NAIDOC Local Grants Program 2022** when you phone or email the Community Grants Hub.

Restoring ground flora in degraded landscapes

The Friends of Campbells Creek Landcare Group (FCC) are active in an area of Central Victoria devastated by gold mining and subsequent weed invasion. Since it started in 2000, the group has transformed creek-side public land previously dominated by blackberry, gorse, and willows.

Nearly all the ground flora species were missing, with herbaceous weeds preventing most native plants from regenerating. The group is still learning which species of ground flora can be restored, what's sustainable with limited maintenance effort and how restoration helps exclude weeds and promotes recruitment of natives.

Taking control of the soil surface vegetation is important – that's where all our plants, except mistletoes, begin life. Without self-recruitment we would only be able to maintain a few large and long-lived species. It's largely a trial-and-error process. We plant or direct sow species, but it can take years to discover their ability to persist or regenerate.

FCC members have now re-introduced over 100 missing plant species of which around 40 now exist as self-recruiting populations.

Although gold mining devastated Campbells Creek, we think what we've learnt is applicable elsewhere and will be of interest across Victoria.

Ground flora restoration tips

- Remove perennial weeds before attempting restoration. Many of our native ground flora can coexist with, or even out-compete, annual weeds, but eradicating perennial weeds among native herbs is difficult.

- Be patient. Preparing a restoration site can take several years. Some native plants take years to mature.

- Soil nutrient levels are a key consideration. The combination of soil disturbance and excessive nutrient levels is fatal in fragmented native vegetation.

- Seed production areas are essential for producing enough seed of ground flora species. FCC produces seed of some of these species in private gardens. We can now also collect seed from our previous restoration successes.

- Restoration in severely damaged, weedy environments is not practicable without herbicides. Selective herbicides (for either broad-leaf or grass weeds) are also useful in follow up weed control work in newly established stands of ground flora.

In the woodlands and forests of our district, ground flora species comprise the bulk of our plant biodiversity, but all too often they were eradicated by past land management practices. This is especially so in riparian zones and more fertile areas. We're learning that with minimal maintenance, it is possible to sustain assemblages of at least some indigenous species and that these support natural regeneration and help exclude weeds.

Ian Higgins has worked in revegetation and environmental planning in Victoria for more than 30 years and was one of the instigators of the Friends of Campbells Creek.

For more information go to www.focc.org.au or email ianhiggins54@gmail.com

Moorabool Koala count

In recent years Koalas have become less common in the Moorabool region including the Brisbane Ranges. Reports of Koalas are largely anecdotal, so the actual number of Koalas is unknown. Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group have been successful in an application to join the National Koala Monitoring Program partnering with the CSIRO.

Instead of relying on one element to conduct a survey, they are employing three focus areas. Including the use of new thermal drone and machine learning technology, Traditional Owner knowledge and cultural perspectives of Wadawurrung representatives, and the empowerment of citizen scientists to collect valuable on-ground data.

To participate in the citizen collection of data for the project, you can download iNaturalist on your phone and join our project, or search 'Moorabool Koala Count 2022' in the iNaturalist app under projects.

OR you can contact Bart on **0401 925 886**. He can register your koala.

Community BBQ + Guest speakers
MCLG will also be hosting an event to celebrate the contribution of collaborators and volunteers towards the conservation of our local Koala populations.

Guest Speakers Janine Duffy (Koala Clancy Foundation President) will be discussing Koala conservation and ecology. While CSIRO representatives will be present to discuss the monitoring techniques employed in the National Koala Monitoring Program.

Friday March 4th from 5PM at Bostock Reservoir Picnic Ground. You can register for the event here.

You can find more information about the project here. If you have any questions please contact the MCLG Coordinator.

In our Regular News……

Weeds Website

Weeds Australia website is designed to connect you with knowledge to make informed decisions about managing invasive weeds within Australia. The site includes an extensive list of 398 weeds profiles to help you better identify, plan and manage your weed problem.
https://weeds.org.au/

BRLG Weed Sprayer

Available for use by BRLG members. Please contact Chris Winfield on 0429 484 644 to discuss your spraying needs.

Landcare Resources

I want to know about…	Here is a good place to start…
Aboriginal cultural heritage location mapping	https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/heritage-tools-and-publications/heritage-tools.html then select "online map tool"
Biodiversity mapping and recording	http://maps.biodiversity.vic.gov.au/viewer/?viewer=NatureKit http://natureshare.org.au/ http://avh.chah.org.au/
Boxthorn	http://weeds.ala.org.au/WoNS/africanboxthorn/docs/African_boxthorn-national_best_practice_manual.pdf
Chilean needle grass	https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/n-neesiana.pdf
Feral goat control	https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/feral-goat/
Fox control	https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/european-fox/
Gorse	https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/u-europaeus.pdf
Landcare networks	Moorabool Landcare Network Geelong Landcare Network
Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grants	https://www.melbournewater.com.au/community-and-education/apply-funding/stream-frontage-management-program
Rabbit management	http://www.mln.org.au/images/PDFS/rabbitactionguide.pdf https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/european-rabbit/
Serrated tussock	https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/n-trichotoma.pdf
Weeds - identification and control	http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/a-z-of-weeds
Weed status in Victoria	http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/invasive-plant-classifications http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/protecting-victoria-from-pest-animals-and-weeds/legislation-policy-and-permits/declared-noxious-weeds-and-pest-animals-in-victoria