



Ashbourne Landcare Group

Autumn 2024

Committee Meetings for 2024

Next meeting 29th May 2024

President: Matthew Grant-Allen
Vice President: Lisa Fowler

Secretary: Marcus Smith
Treasurer: Matthew Grant-Allen

President's Update

Dear Members,

It's been a while since you've heard from us, but rest assured, we've been hard at work behind the scenes. Firstly, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new members, Emily Gloyns and Nick Gillies. We're thrilled to have you join our group and look forward to your contributions.

I'm also pleased to announce that Emily has taken an active role within the committee. However, as many of us juggle full-time jobs, family responsibilities, and property management, we're always on the lookout for new committee members to join us. If you're interested in getting more involved, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Now, onto some exciting news about our upcoming projects. Thanks to a grant from the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA), we'll soon be acquiring a greenhouse for our 'Seeds to Trees' initiative. This greenhouse will enable us to propagate our own seedlings from endemic seeds collected right here in our area.

In addition, we're thrilled to share that we've been awarded a grant from the Macedon Ranges Shire Council (MRSC). We'll be unveiling the details of this exciting opportunity in an upcoming article in the newsletter, so keep an eye out for more information. Rest assured, it's a project that aligns perfectly with our mission to preserve and enhance the natural environment of our region.

Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of our Weed Action Group (WAG). They're currently in the midst of another round of gorse control on members' properties. Their dedication to preserving our natural environment is truly commendable, and we're grateful for their ongoing efforts.

And remember, if you know a neighbour or someone new to the area who shares our passion for environmental conservation, we're always on the lookout for new members. Encourage them to reach out and join our community of like-minded individuals dedicated to making a positive impact on our local environment. The more hands we have on deck, the greater our collective impact will be. As always, if you have any questions, suggestions, or would like to get involved in any of our projects, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your continued support,
Matthew Grant-Allen

President, Ashbourne Landcare Group

COMING EVENTS

- **Biolink Event – Project Koala**
(date to be advised)
- **AGM 28th July including workshop**
- **Seed Collection Workshop**
(date to be advised)

Seeds to Trees Fostering Biodiversity

With the generous support of the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA), we've acquired a greenhouse to kickstart our 'Seeds to Trees' project. This greenhouse will serve as the nucleus of our seedling propagation efforts, allowing us to cultivate native plants from locally collected endemic seeds. By harnessing the genetic diversity of our region, we aim to create resilient ecosystems suited to our unique environmental conditions.

As a committee member, I'm offering my place to house the greenhouse. While our facilities are currently limited due to ongoing construction, we're open to other location suggestions. If you know of a suitable space, please reach out to me directly.

Keep an eye out for updates on our progress, including planting schedules and volunteer opportunities. We're also forming a dedicated working group for this project, so if you're eager to get involved, please don't hesitate to contact me for more information.

We urge our members to join us in this vital effort. If you've had an ecologist report identifying significant trees on your property, please consider collecting seeds. Your contributions will be instrumental in preserving our region's biodiversity. Additionally, we've applied for a 24/25 NCCMA grant to acquire essential resources for our project, including guards, stakes, and seed collection tools.

Together, let's transform seeds into flourishing trees and cultivate positive change in our local environment.

GET INVOLVED

As members of the Ashbourne Landcare Group, you are already dedicated to the care of our unique landscape. However, we invite you to extend your impact even further by inviting your neighbours and local people to become members too.

As a group, we aim to foster sustainability and promote ecologically sustainable land management practices in Ashbourne. We prioritise the restoration and maintenance of native habitat and the eradication of woody weeds to support native flora and fauna along the Campaspe and its slopes.

So, how can you encourage others to join? The easiest way is to direct them to the Join Us button on our Website:

<https://www.ashbournelandcare.com/join-us>.

But, if you want to go the extra mile, here are some other ideas:

- Attend local events and talk about the work that we do at Ashbourne Landcare Group. This will give you the opportunity to share your passion for environmental sustainability and invite others to get involved.
- Reach out to your neighbours directly. You can send them an email or letter that explains what the group does and how they can join. You can also invite them to attend one of our meetings or events.
- Use social media to spread the word. Share "Join Us" there!

By inviting your neighbours and local people to join the Ashbourne Landcare Group, you can help make a bigger impact in caring for our environment. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to sustainability!

ASSET PROCUREMENT

The committee has made the decision to purchase a terrific asset for our group.

Our investment will be into two wildlife cameras that we intend to lend out to members for use on private property and also to gather video footage of wildlife that can be distributed on our social media pages and website. Stay tuned for further information.



Echidna crossing the river



Buff-banded Rail, a secretive bird of wetlands and river margins.

Photos courtesy of Ian Temby.

VGT Community Gorse Grant

You might have noticed a sign on some local fences saying Do Your Part- Control Gorse Annually. The landholder behind this sign has most likely been part of a Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) community grant project.

Ashbourne Landcare Group is again managing the VGT Community Grant for Gorse control '23-'24. Eight local landholders have entered into 3-year Gorse control agreements. Under the agreements the landholders engage a contractor to kill certain areas of gorse and agree to follow up by eradicating any regrowth over the subsequent years. Participants are allocated a certain proportion of the grant total of \$8,000 according to the area and average height of the gorse infestation being treated up to a maximum of \$1500. The total area covered under the current program is around 12 Ha.



(Area 1 Before)



(Area 1 After)

Over the past several months the Project coordinator, Brendan Martin, has been making site visits, collecting photos of works completed, and tax invoices against which the allotted reimbursements can be made.

Ashbourne Landcare Group has now successfully implemented quite a number of these VGT community grants and hopes to do so again in future. Perhaps you could benefit from joining a future gorse control project? Keep an eye out for an invitation to express your interest coming from Ashbourne Landcare and/or a letter from the Shire Council.

Inspections of gorse eradication works completed and payment of reimbursements to participants is continuing. The project will be completed by end of June including submitting a final report to the Victorian Gorse Taskforce. Landholders are being given a VGT sign saying 'Do Your Part - Control Gorse Annually to display on their boundary fence.



(Area 2 Before)



(Area 2 After)

Area 1 and Area 2 were thick forest of 2 metre+ gorse bushes along a bank of the Upper Campaspe, now completely dead and lying flat after being cut and painted as part of the Gorse control program.

Newsletter Articles

A shout out to all members and our local community! We would love to hear from you if you have any news items or articles that would be great content for our newsletter.

Trailer for Sale

The committee has decided to sell one of our two spray units. The larger unit has become a liability as it is not being used by our membership. It is a 600-litre spray unit with three hoses and Honda engine in good working order. Offers over \$800 considered.

Contact Michiel Mees 0438 267 467

MRSC Biolink Grant - Project Koala

We are thrilled to announce that the Ashbourne Landcare Group has been awarded a \$5,800 grant for our 'Koala Hope' project, aimed at enhancing biolinks to support the Koala population in our area. Sponsored by Macedon Ranges Community Enterprises Limited and Bendigo Bank, this grant will enable us to improve wildlife corridors, give back to our dedicated members, and aid in the recovery from the devastating storms of June 21st, which affected many of our properties.

With the support of this grant, we've purchased 1,500 plants from Jeremy at Wombat Native Plants in Bullarto. These plants, sourced from endemic seed collections, will help support Koalas and other fauna in our region. The selection includes 500 eucalyptus trees, 500 shrubs and small trees, 100 ground covers (all in tube stock), as well as 400 grasses, sedges, and lilies in hiko cells. To protect these plants as they grow, we've also acquired reusable corflute guards and stakes from Arborgreen.

We're excited to offer these plants for FREE to our financial ALG members, as a way of supporting their efforts in creating, extending, or enhancing biolinks on their own properties. To be eligible, members must be current financial members, have an area on their own land they wish to revegetate, and demonstrate a plan for the correct planting and management of the seedlings. Preference will be given to areas in close proximity to water sources.

To register your interest, simply email us at info@ashbournelandcare.com, providing a couple of photos of the area you wish to revegetate and a brief description of your plans. The committee will review each submission and advise on the success of each application. This is also a fantastic opportunity to attract new members, so if you know someone who might be interested, encourage them to sign up and get involved.

We're planning to host a late Sunday morning event on the 2nd of June, where Jeremy from Wombat Native Plants will give a talk, and plants will be distributed to participating members. Keep an eye out for more details coming soon! Together, we can make a real difference in supporting our local wildlife and preserving our natural environment.

Tawny Frogmouth Rescue

Walking the dog one recent morning up to the end of a quiet dead-end gravel road he and I found a Tawny Frogmouth suspended from the top barbed wire strand of a neighbour's fence. We'd already walked past that way so I presume we'd missed seeing her the first time because, being an active nocturnal feeder, she (let's call her a 'she') had surely already been there as the morning was half gone.

Her lower right wing had caught one of the barbs and her momentum, or subsequent struggle to free herself, had brought her fully around the wire, twisting the wing onto the barb. I wasn't skilful or game enough to undo the tangle, but luckily I had my Leatherman on my belt, and was wearing a polar fleece jacket, so I was able to cut a short section of the wire out, and holding this small piece of wire, lower her into a soft, dark protective covering. She registered her protest on the way down with some slow, raspy squawks from her leathery yellow throat, then went quiet for the walk down to the car and the short drive to the Woodend Vets in Brooke St.

Many thanks to the vets there who took her in for an x-ray and reported a week later she had been released after making a good recovery! I'd pinged a What3Words reference, so they were able to return to the same 3metre by 3metre location for the release. A nice outcome!

(A proviso to consider...note - It is recommended to call a wildlife rescue service or Wildlife Victoria if you find a trapped animal, especially a larger one such as a kangaroo, which can do further serious damage to itself by either struggling against a wire entrapment or bounding off with an injury)

Brendan Martin

A Good News Story from ABC Landline

Cattle farmer sells land to Trust for Nature to help save helmeted honeyeater, Leadbeater's possum

By Tim Lee

The state of Victoria has two faunal emblems: a small bird, the helmeted honeyeater, and a tiny marsupial, the Leadbeater's possum.

Both are strikingly beautiful. And sadly, both are critically endangered. There are just 200 helmeted honeyeaters and 40 known lowland Leadbeater's possums still in existence. But their chances of survival have just improved thanks to an unlikely conservationist.

Bruce Logan, who raises cattle at Yellingbo, about an hour north-east of Melbourne, has sold 40 hectares of remnant bushland on his property to the Trust for Nature.



Ben Cullen (right) first asked Bruce Logan (left) if he'd consider selling more land for conservation almost a decade ago. (Landline: Tim Lee)

"My son and family, they're not interested in it. Why not give it to somebody who'll appreciate it and the land? And I think that Trust For Nature will enjoy it," said Mr Logan, 77. "I'm hoping that they'll ring me up and tell me in two years' time that the bird numbers are up to 500 — and that would certainly please me."

The new land adjoins the Yellingbo Nature Reserve, which is less than 6 square kilometres in size. Ben Cullen from Trust for Nature is ecstatic. "It's kind of a sedgy woodland is probably the best way to describe it," Mr Cullen said.



The yellow ear tufts are where the species gets its name the helmeted honeyeater. (Landline: Tim Lee)

"We've got a sparse sort of eucalypt canopy around us, but there are tall sedges, and they help form like a mid-storey that's really good habitat for the species."

The very same land, fertile river flats, is also the best farmland. Since European settlement, clearing for agriculture has removed more than 95 per cent of the original vegetation. And it has almost obliterated both the helmeted honeyeater and the lowland Leadbeater's possum. A new seven-wire fence will keep Mr Logan's cattle from straying into the new reserve, which will hopefully entice the Leadbeater, honeyeaters and other creatures to expand their range.



There are only 40 known lowland Leadbeater's possums in Australia. (Landline)

The highland Leadbeater's possum, believed extinct for decades, was rediscovered in 1961. Its lowland relation, a separate sub-species, wasn't even known of until the mid-80s. "There was actually a colony that had built a nest inside an old bird hide and they were rediscovered in the reserve then," said Arabella Eyre, a field officer with Zoos Victoria. Arabella Eyre says the bushland is perfect because it has the right trees and dense swamp. (Landline)

She's involved in releasing captive-bred Leadbeater's possums into suitable bushland, and habitat for the lowland Leadbeater isn't easy to find. Its range once extended southwards to Westernport Bay, through Koo Wee Rup, now prime horticultural land. It's why the Yellingbo Reserve is paramount. Sign up for Rural Round Up: Stories from rural and regional Australia, in your inbox every Friday, or for Rural news daily.

"It's essential because it's got the right trees. Swamp gum and mountain swamp gum for lowland Leadbeater's and particularly it's got this dense swamp forest. So, it's that ti-tree, that paperbark that Leadbeater's can run through and forage at night," Ms Eyre said. With fewer than 50 of the possums in existence, the species' future still hangs in the balance.

"We're pulling out all stops really to conserve this species. Conservation takes time, and it's uncertain," Ms Eyre said. Trust for Nature, one of Australia's oldest conservation

organisations, hopes to improve Leadbeater possum numbers. (Landline)

The outlook for the helmeted honeyeater is slightly better. The wild population, all of the birds within a small area at Yellingbo, is gradually rising.

Bruce Quin of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has spent 29 years devotedly tending to them, including putting out nutrient-rich nectar in special feed cages to ensure the birds' optimal health. "It has helped to increase survivorship of fledglings and also just maintain the health of the population where the habitat is not optimal for whatever reason," Mr Quin said.



There are approximately 200 helmeted honeyeaters left in Australia. (Landline: Tim Lee) "The numbers were as low as 60 individuals when the recovery program began in 1989," he explained. "Now we've got over 200 individuals, so it's looking much, much brighter, but there's still a lot of work to do." Inbreeding and bushfires represent major threats to both species.

The 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires wiped out two of the three helmeted honeyeater colonies. The 2009 Black Saturday bushfires killed half the population of the alpine Leadbeater's possum. Even a good season, when the bush is abundant with flowers and fruit, is no guarantee of better survival rates. There are also more predators such as currawongs, kookaburras and owls.

Bruce Logan's precious bush also survived by chance. Years ago, his father lacked the funds to clear it.

Bruce Logan's father planned to clear the bushland but decided against it due to finances. (Landline) "You could only spend so much on clearing and putting it into production and he believed that if you cleared land you had to do it properly. If you didn't do it properly you may as well leave it as it is," Mr Logan said.

Ben Cullen broke into a wide smile as he walked through the Trust for Nature's new land and saw the flash of a yellow and black helmeted honeyeater as it flitted through the bush. It's confirmation the conservation work of so many is paying off. "It's been absolutely huge. I mean, you've got two of the most threatened species in Australia and we've got an outcome for them that could help pave the way for a brighter future."

ALG FACEBOOK PAGE

The ALG Facebook page is constantly being updated with interesting information, videos and photos.

To access ALG Facebook, type in Ashbourne Landcare Facebook in your Web browser



ASHBOURNE LANDCARE DETAILS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

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