

Our Activities

The Landcare Irrigation Area Collective

The issue

In the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) there are a number of people employed within different organisations as natural resource management officers. Within their portfolio these people have worked on individual projects and achieved small, though important, outcomes. However, much of this work has gone unnoticed. There has never been a process or system in place for these organisations to share information, resources and planning to maximise natural resource management outcomes.

The solution

The Landcare Irrigation Area Collective was formulated to promote and build community partnerships and to ensure effective and collaborative Natural Resource Management planning and education. The aim was to use the group's collective skills and knowledge to help each other with regional NRM activities to restore a strong and vibrant Landcare community, and promote sustainable agriculture and natural resource management through on-ground works, education and best practice.

The Landcare Irrigation Area Collective now has representatives from Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Riverina Local Land Services, Leeton Shire Council, Ricegrowers' Association, CottonInfo, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's Office, Griffith Shire Council, the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists, the Department of Primary Industries, the Bitterns in Rice Project, and National Parks and Wildlife.

The impact

The group meets on a regular basis and keeps in contact through email. The network provides the perfect mechanism for the promotion of NRM events, such as workshops and field days. Guest speakers are invited if the group determines they have a particular need.

So far the group has been instrumental in organising a Threatened Species Tour in February 2016 where the Threatened Species Commissioner, Mr Gregory Andrews, visited the region. The itinerary included visits to the habitats of the area's threatened bird species such as the Australasian Bittern, Plains Wanderer, Superb Parrot and Painted Honey Eater at Barren Box Storage and the RAMSAR listed wetland - Fivebough.

Key facts

- ◆ Total membership has increased from 11 to 20.
- ◆ 1,000 trees planted at a Fivebough Wetlands Community Planting day
- ◆ Identification of the need for a NRM regional planning day to plan for 2017



A meeting of the Landcare Irrigation Area Collective



Gregory Andrews, Threatened Species Commissioner, with tadpoles of an endangered frog species



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Slow the Flow

The issue

Gully and streambank erosion is a serious issue in the Kyeamba Creek catchment. Our land has been altered for agriculture and with an increase in heavy rainfalls in the last few years, unnatural erosion of the banks and gullies of the upper catchment has intensified with significantly more sediment being transported downstream.

This impacts on the water quality, nutrient load and turbidity of connecting streams, creeks and rivers and destabilises riverine habitats for fish, frogs and macroinvertebrates. Inaction will result in these gullies continuing to erode, resulting in soil losses far exceeding soil formation, loss of nutrients in the landscape and an increase of sedimentation and nutrients into our rivers.



Rocks being used to slow the flow

The solution

The Kyeamba Valley Landcare Group (KVLG) has been working with Cam Wilson, qualified consultant from Earth Integral, to implement low-cost erosion solutions across the catchment. Cam Wilson conducted three practical field days to demonstrate different techniques on how to apply low-cost erosion control solutions.

Cam taught 53 landholders that expensive earthworks are not necessary to prevent or remedy erosion problems but rather the clever use of local materials can be just as effective.

Landholders left with a better understanding of erosion processes, how to build a structure and where and how they should be placed for maximum success. So far, eight low cost erosion control and sediment control works have been implemented. The KVLG plans to roll out many more works throughout 2016-2017.

The impact

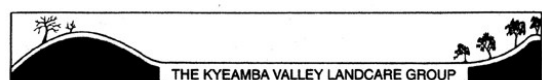
Low-cost erosion control works have helped to slow down active erosion, kick start natural repair processes in gullies and begin the rehydration of the landscape surrounding the Kyeamba Creek. More importantly though, field days have equipped landholders with the required skills to control erosion as a community before it becomes irreparable and/or expensive.



Tree branches being used to good effect in a gully

Key facts

- ◆ 53 participants attended 3 field days
- ◆ Landholders empowered to apply low cost solutions on their own property
- ◆ Erosion control can be low cost and effective.



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



Local Land Services

The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



National Tree Day - Humula, Wagga Wagga and Tarcutta

Three fantastic events were organised at Humula, Wagga Wagga and Tarcutta for National Tree Day to promote planting and caring for native trees and plants.

Planting for Generations

Three excellent Landcare events were held over two days in July for National Tree Day. Humula Public School and Tarcutta Public School had a great day of fun, laughter and, most importantly, planting of native trees, shrubs and grasses. There were kids running everywhere, shovels lifted, dirt being flung, weeds being pulled, gloves taken off and with muddy hands and knees, trees being safely planted.

After the hard yakka was done and the kids were sufficiently muddy from head to toe, both schools treated the kids to a video - "Champions of Change - Farmers and their paddock trees". The video provided information on the importance of paddock trees in our landscape and how they can be protected. It is worth a look!

The following day, on East Bomen Road at Wagga Wagga families all pitched in to plant natives on what was formerly a grazing site. The natives planted will soon form a nature corridor between paddocks and improve biodiversity. It was a great day out for families and friends.

Over the three events, more than 2,000 seedlings were planted. What an achievement! It was a wonderful opportunity to get kids into nature and instil in them a love for the great outdoors, as well as teach them the importance of environmental stewardship and taking care of the planet. Can't wait to see these sites in a few years!



Local Landcare Coordinator, Maddy Gorham, gets into the swing of things with some young Landcarers

Key achievements from the events

- ◆ 105 attendees
- ◆ 3 events
- ◆ 2,000 seedlings planted

Comments from participants

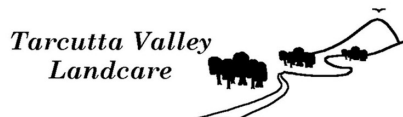
"I can't wait to see my tree fully grown"

"It's linking areas of vegetation so that birds and mammals can move safely through the site"

"It has been a great day out with my kids - I even had a good time"



Julie Gooding from Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare Group with her son, Jarrah



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



Local Land Services

The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Picturing the Rangelands Plants

The issue

A number of paddock walks have been conducted in the Rangelands areas in recent months covering various topics, including plant identification. A need was identified for some form of plant identification guide that could be distributed at events and easily carried on paddock walks.

The solution

The Local Landcare Coordinator (Rangelands) is an avid photographer and has used her skills to great effect at many events. She took photographs of the many plant species found in the Rangelands at the different stages of their lifecycle, then liaised with the Project Manager of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation to identify the various species.

Her next step was to develop a photographic plant identification booklet of the local flora, which can be added to as necessary and distributed at paddock walks, field days and workshops.



The Plant Photo ID Guide

The impact

The booklet has proven especially useful for farmers wishing to identify plant species on their farm, and they can then source further information from the technical resources available. It has also received a very positive response at farm walks and field days.

Learnings

It is necessary to rely on technical experts to ensure correct and accurate identification of subspecies. The feedback received to date is that there should be large, clear writing with minimal words, an A5 booklet would be the best size, thicker paper is more durable for paddock walks, and clear and colourful images are necessary for accurate identification.

Key Facts

- ◆ 38 Rangeland plant species photos identified
- ◆ Booklet distributed to approximately 30 people
- ◆ 94 Photos taken of plant species
- ◆ 608 Photo reference points of plant species to date
- ◆ 9 site visits across Hay Rangelands



A Landcarer making use of the Plant Photo ID Guide



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Saving a Pleistocene Relic

The issue

The *Riverine Plain Inland River Red Gums* (RPIRRG) of the Riverina bioregion are small, resilient remnants still persisting after prior stream depositions thought to have ceased under arid conditions during the Pleistocene age.

Stands of RPIRRG are generally less than 5ha in size, randomly and widely scattered along prior streams on the extensive grasslands of the Hay Plains. These stands have been gradually declining over the years, possibly due to drought and grazing pressure, and to date no efforts have been made to identify, assess, monitor and map these uniquely adapted trees.



A stand of Riverine Plain Inland River Red Gums

The solution

Funding was received to employ a project officer, and a technical expert was engaged to create a matrix for unbiased, uniform assessment of each identified stand. Since many of these stands exist on private property, it was first necessary to establish their whereabouts through members of the public volunteering information. A newspaper article and an email mail-out resulted in nine landholders volunteering sites for assessment.

On a visit to one of the sites, an expert in Eucalyptus trees identified long-standing hybrids mixed in amongst the RPIRRGs. Riverina Local Land Services have agreed to provide in-kind support on the project to map the GPS coordinates of the sites recorded during the assessments.

The impact

The project is due to be completed in April 2017. At the culmination of the project, it is anticipated that there will be a uniform assessment of the identified stands of RPIRRG, together with a collated map to provide unbiased data of the sites. History recording and seed collection will also be carried out, and fact sheets produced to aid in identification of the trees. Landholders will also be provided with a management plan to enable them to protect and care for the trees.



An aboriginal scar tree

Key facts

- ◆ In-kind support has been provided through three partnerships
- ◆ To date at least nine property locations have been identified.



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Landcare: It's for the Birds

The issue

Lachlan Fold Wildlife Action Group (LFWAG) received a grant from the NSW Environmental Trust in 2013 to provide habitat for Glossy Black Cockatoos, which are a threatened species.

An extension had been granted for completion of the project but the group needed assistance not only with allocating, prioritising and planning the project, but also in ensuring the continuation of the group.

The solution

The Local Landcare Coordinator (Irrigation) organised a meeting to review the group's administration processes, check previous spending and discuss future proposed actions. She then met with Riverina Local Land Services to discuss and plan for vegetation mapping in the area.

Links were forged between the Group and the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists, an avid bird-watching group based in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, with a view to creating a visual database for Glossy Black Cockatoo.



Rodney Guest, Chair of LFWAG, constructing nesting boxes for Glossy Black Cockatoos

Links were also established with other organisations in the area to enable a number of field days to be conducted. The final task was to organise an Annual General Meeting to ensure continuation of the group into the future.

The impact

Due to the efforts of the LLC (Irrigation), a priority plan of action has been established for the Group, the NSW Environmental Trust funding report has been completed, drones have been used to photograph a small selection of the habitat, and the Annual General Meeting has been conducted.

Bird boxes are also being built and installed, and the Group intends to apply for a community grant for the purchase of some sets of binoculars so they can monitor the Glossy Black Cockatoo population in the area.

Key facts

- ◆ A number of bird boxes are being built and installed
- ◆ A small community grant has been submitted for the purchase of some binoculars for the group



Glossy Black Cockatoos in flight



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



Local Land Services

The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Revegetating a Community

The issue

Coolamon Shire is home to some rare stands of remnant Grassy Box Woodland communities on both private and public land. Species studies have indicated the presence of some rare and beautiful plants such as the Chocolate Lily (*Dichopogon strictum*) which, when in flower, smells like a chocolate milkshake!

The Kindra State Forest also provides important habitat for threatened species including the Superb Parrot, Swift Parrot, Red Capped Robin and vulnerable Grey Crowned Babbler.

The landscape, although modified heavily by grazing and bike riders, retains some ecosystem and species diversity through hosting a variety of habitats, ecological communities and ecological processes. These remnant refuges are now under threat from dieback, grazing and fragmentation.



The Coolamon Wetlands

The solution

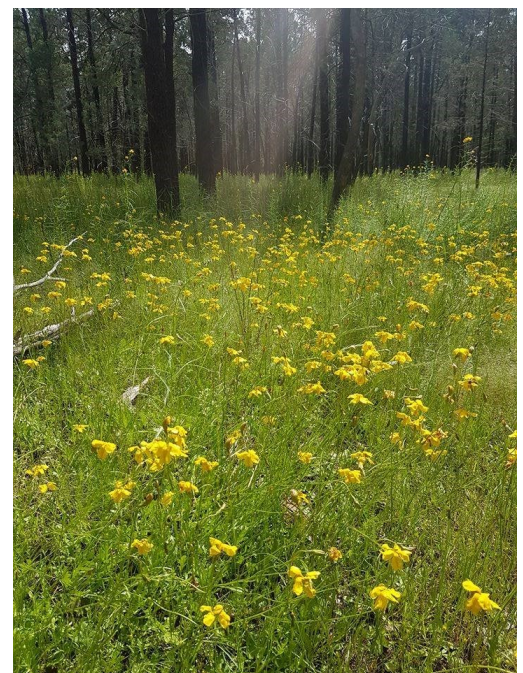
Coolamon Landcare is a small community based group that focuses on improving the natural environment and visual amenity of the local Coolamon area. The group has conducted numerous on-farm and public land revegetation projects such as the Wagga Road Rehabilitation project, the Kindra State Forest Revegetation project and the Coolamon Travelling Stock Route Revegetation project.

The impact

The connectivity created by the protection and revegetation of trees, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers will be of great importance in promoting the ongoing self-regeneration of natural ecosystems, and in allowing the movement of animals between patches for foraging and breeding at high conservation value sites.

Key facts

- ◆ Coolamon Landcare works to connect rare stands of remnant Grassy Box Woodland communities.
- ◆ Communities that interact with their environment will care for their environment



Wildflowers in Kindra State Forest



Coolamon Landcare Group
"Growing with our community"

This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Landcare is buzzing!

The issue

Honeybees are considered the most important insects in our ecosystem. They are integral to Australian agriculture because pollination from bees is required for nearly two-thirds of Australian food production and for increased plant biodiversity.

Plant biodiversity contributes to positive outcomes such as soil and water retention, local area cooling and carbon sinks, so bees provide a key ecosystem service and fall into the rare category of being an exotic species that provides significant benefits to their local environment.

But internationally, bees are in drastic decline, with whole populations being destroyed overnight as a result of introduced threats, such as pesticides.

The solution

Mike James from Wagga Wagga Amateur Beekeeping Group came to the Tarcutta RSL Club with a head full of information and a trolley full of beekeeping tools and equipment to raise awareness of the importance of honey bees.



Mike James from Wagga Wagga Amateur Beekeeping Group talks to Landcarers

Mike spoke about the life of the honey bee and their importance as pollinators for both agricultural and native plants.

The impact

The night generated 33 new Tarcutta Landcare members from Borambola to Humula to Tarcutta to Mates Gully. After the presentation, the Tarcutta RSL Club was an absolute buzz of activity with 66 people enjoying supper freshly baked by the Landcare committee. A great night for community—a great night for Landcare!

Key facts

- ◆ 66 attendees
- ◆ 33 new Landcare members generated
- ◆ 6 homemade cakes eaten
- ◆ Landcare is more than 'planting trees'



Landcarers are captivated by Mike James' presentation



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



Local Land Services

The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Tarcutta Landcare Rejuvenation

The issue

The Tarcutta Valley Landcare group was one of the first Landcare groups to establish in NSW. Despite its long history, in recent years the involvement of many landholders in Landcare had decreased to a level that led to concern for its future in the current form.

This was due in part to lack of support from a Landcare Coordinator and in part due to fatigue of long-serving committee members. At a Landcare meeting held in February 2016 a motion was moved to notify the community that the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group would fold at their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June, unless the group gained committed community support and an executive committee.

The solution

For the group to thrive, it needed to refresh its understanding of the common concerns held by the community and ask landholders what support they required from a Landcare group.



A Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group field day

Two things happened; first, it gained the support of key members of the community who rallied together to spread the word that the group was folding; and second, a Landcare think tank was conducted where farmers spoke openly with other farmers about shared issues, and through sharing ideas they developed solutions together. This effectively provided direction for the Landcare group.

The impact

Twenty people attended the AGM in June at the Humula Club. A new Executive was successfully appointed, with a surge of excitement for the prospect of future workshops and on-ground works. The Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group now has an active committee and a membership of around 38 rural landholders, and has already conducted a variety of workshops for the community. More projects and workshops are already being planned – ensuring that Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group is alive and active!



Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group looks to the future

Key facts

- ◆ One of the first Landcare groups established in NSW.
- ◆ Had decided to fold at its AGM in June 2016.
- ◆ Has been rejuvenated and now has 38 active members.
- ◆ With a little bit of support, Landcare is back and more active than ever



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Birds, Plants and Night Animals of Five Ways Reserve, Henty

In October, 2015, some 45 enthusiastic adults and children from the Henty district community participated in an evening of bird observation, native plant identification and night stalk spotlighting activities to identify and learn about local birds, plants and tree dwellings animals.

This was an educational opportunity building on the interest generated through the presence of Squirrel Gliders and Red Capped Robins in the vicinity of Five Ways Reserve, 12km west of Henty.

The main activities were conducted by local Landcarers, Mason Crane, Field Ecologist with the Australian National University, and Dick Green, Riverina Regional Landcare Facilitator.

Pre-sunset activities included bird watching/listening, looking for nesting tree hollows and identifying native plants, especially those in flower or with seeds developing. The group was encouraged by excitement shown by the children in finding clay markers made and placed for native trees planted in the reserve by school students in 2007 and 2010.

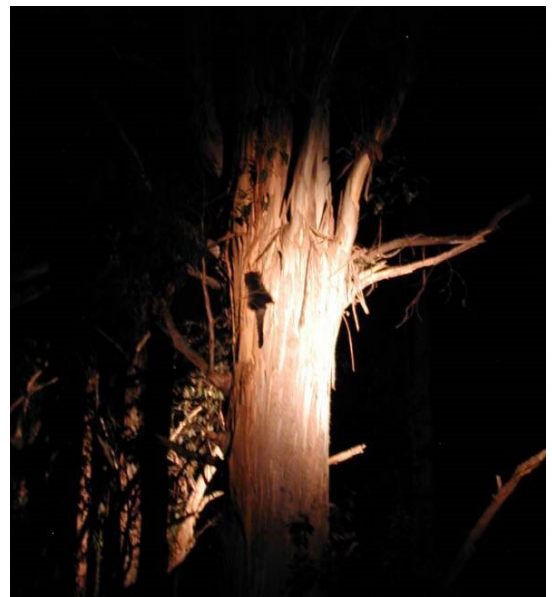


A student from Henty Primary School discovers the wonders of nature

After a community BBQ, a night stalk for possums, squirrel gliders and nocturnal birds was conducted. One highlight of the evening was the sighting of a ringtail possum with a baby on its back which, after some time, disappeared down a tree hollow, one of its residential dens.

These activities were part of the 'Sowing the Seeds of Connection' Project supported by local Henty Landcarers, Henty Primary School, Rotary Club of Henty, Lockhart Council, Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc., Riverina Local Land Services, Regional Landcare Facilitator and the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.

Future works to be conducted on the site include installation of nest boxes for squirrel gliders, rubbish removal and restoration of the site, and revegetation with native and endemic species.



A ringtail possum spotted during the night stalk

HENTY PUBLIC SCHOOL



Reviving Landcare on the Plains

The issue

The Hay Trees on Plains Landcare Group has been in existence for many years and has undertaken a number of substantial projects. These projects were largely managed by the Chair of the group, and he took care of most of the finances and paperwork for the group. When he suddenly became ill and passed away, the majority of the records and corporate knowledge of the group and the projects disappeared, as a result of which the group fell dormant.

The solution

Since the membership of the group was unknown, an Expression of Interest for membership was circulated via email and fliers, and distributed during events such as the Hay Show and meetings held by Riverina LLS and NSW Farmers. Membership forms were distributed to those who completed and returned the Expression of Interest form.

A meeting was held with the previous committee to determine the status of current and past projects, as far as they were known by the group.

An AGM was then held to elect committee and executive positions, and a formal membership fee was determined.

The impact

Seventeen people attended the AGM, while 20 apologies were received due to wet weather or time constraints. The group now has a functioning committee and membership base of fourteen families, with more likely in the near future.

The current membership covers a number of areas around the Rangelands including Hay, Booorban, Booligal, Carrathool and Gunbar.

Minutes were taken at the projects meeting to record the status of past and current projects, as far as they were known by the group, and an action plan has been developed to resolve issues with current projects.

Key facts

- ◆ Fourteen families are members of the Hay Plains Landcare Group
- ◆ Hay Plains Landcare Group is spread out over more than 400,000ha across the Rangelands area
- ◆ The group is primarily farming families
- ◆ The group encompasses six towns



The Hay Plains Landcare Group AGM



Hay Plains Landcare Group stand at the Hay Show



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Caring for a RAMSAR site

The issue

Leeton Shire Council had worked with a number of organisations to continue work on the Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetland rehabilitation plan, which included the need to establish plantings in a large area of the Fivebough area. The Fivebough and Tuckerbil is a RAMSAR wetland with high cultural significance for the local Aboriginal community, as well as having prolific bird importance.

Leeton Shire Council wanted to highlight both the cultural and environmental importance of the area to the community and contacted Landcare to seek assistance with the organisation and event coordination of a Community Planting Day at the wetland.

The solution

A number of organisations were contacted that had shown previous interest, or have had input into the rehabilitation plan. Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists, Riverina Local Land Services, Leeton and District Local Aboriginal Land Council, local primary and secondary schools, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Crown Lands were asked to assist on the day.

Bush tucker was provided for the event, representatives from the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists spoke about threatened species, and representatives from the Department of Crown Lands spoke about their vision for the Fivebough Wetlands. Secondary and primary school students were involved in the tree planting.

The impact

The day began with a traditional Welcome to Country followed by Parkview Public School performing a traditional Wiradjuri dance and the Local Aboriginal Land Council performing a Smoking Ceremony. The community was informed of the significance of the wetland and expressed their pleasure in learning more about the cultural and environmental significance of the area. Over 250 students and 50 community members attended and over 1,000 trees were planted.

Key facts

- ◆ Over 1,000 trees planted
- ◆ Over 50 community members in attendance
- ◆ Over 250 school students
- ◆ Over six organisations collaborating to ensure the day was a success.



After the tree planting had been completed



Community members gather for the event



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Reinvigorating Landcare Groups

The issue

It is well supported by research that Landcare groups are vehicles for positive landscape-scale change. However, after years with little or no support and access to funding, Landcare groups have experienced a progressive decline in membership numbers, with the Tarcutta Landcare group at risk of folding and the Eastern Riverina and Junee Area networks forced into dormancy.

The 'health' of Landcare in 2006, as detailed in the Redefining Landcare report, was far from robust.

The report identified "internal problems," including lack of strategic planning, lack of focus, declining membership, poor succession planning, poor communication infrastructure and natural resource management fatigue (in the context of ongoing drought). These issues remain today.

The solution

To reinvigorate active and resilient Landcare groups that can be responsive to the shared issues of its members, Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc. facilitated targeted strategic planning sessions with the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group, Eastern Riverina Landcare and Junee Area Landcare Network.



Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group Think Tank

The impact

"Think tanks" both applauded the community's Landcare achievements to date, and provided a plan for future on-ground works. The three events facilitated farmers and townspeople talking to one another about shared issues and developing solutions collaboratively with agency experts and other producers.

Topics broadly covered pest management, weed management, habitat conservation on farms and alternative land management options. The intention will be to turn these shared issues into interesting on-ground works that spark community enthusiasm and encourage broad community participation.

Key facts

- ◆ 31 attendees over three events.
- ◆ >50 ideas for key projects or workshops generated
- ◆ A clear direction and purpose for the groups



Eastern Riverina Landcare Network Think Tank



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Signposting the Song Lines

The issue

The Wiradjuri Walking Track follows a 42km trail around the city of Wagga Wagga. Did you know that as you walk, ride or run this track you are following a traditional Aboriginal Song Line? No? Well, not many people do really.

An Aboriginal Song Line is about the murru (journey) through the garray (land) and ngurambang (country). These song lines are something that allow Aboriginal people to connect to country, time and place. A song line can be a place, plant, artwork, people and more... However, these wonderful memories and artefacts of history, culture and heritage along the Wiradjuri Walking Track are not well signposted and often go unnoticed and forgotten.

The solution

The Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare Group (WWULG), in partnership with the Wagga Wagga City Council and Wiradjuri traditional owners, have helped to design and install interpretive signs along the track. The group now aims to develop a brochure relating to indigenous history along the track. Mark Saddler, proud Wiradjuri man, celebrated the newly signposted track by providing a fully guided tour of parts of the track highlighting Wiradjuri special cultural areas.

The impact

At least 25 adults and 11 children now have an understanding of Wiradjuri history, culture and heritage in the Wagga Wagga area. Many more people observe the interpretive signage along the track to help keep the Aboriginal Song Lines alive.

Key facts

- ◆ Song lines allow Aboriginal people to connect to country, time and place.
- ◆ Aboriginal Song Lines are often unnoticed or forgotten.
- ◆ Signage and cultural education tours help to keep the Song Lines alive.



Mark Saddler demonstrates some Wiradjuri culture



Mark Saddler plays the didgeridoo



BUNDI ABORIGINAL
CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



Local Land
Services

The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



Barb Busters save Squirrel Gliders

Young District Landcare teamed up with WIRES Weddin-Lachlan Branch to remove barbed wire from internal fences on a Young property. The property is owned by Jane Wilson, a member of Young District Landcare and WIRES Weddin-Lachlan Branch, where she specialises in the care of gliders and possums.

Some time ago Jane discovered an animal's tail hanging from a barbed wire fence on her property. The tail was later confirmed to be that of a Squirrel Glider, a nocturnal gliding possum listed as Vulnerable under the NSW Threatened Species Act. It is found throughout the Young district from Tubbul in the west to Koorawatha in the east.

Having rescued a number of Squirrel Gliders from barbed wire fences around the Young district and rehabilitated them back to health, Jane was horrified to think that one had met its demise on her property.

Where there's one glider there's likely to be more, as these animals live in family groups. To confirm the presence of others on her place, Jane set up an infrared camera on a large dead standing tree with numerous hollows. These dead trees are commonly referred to as 'stags' and are very valuable habitat for native wildlife. To her delight, when she checked the camera the next day, there was a Squirrel Glider at the entrance to a hollow. The squirrel-like tail was unmistakable.

Once she had confirmation of Squirrel Gliders on her property, Jane decided to improve the habitat for them by planting wattles and eucalypts and removing the barbed wire to prevent others getting caught. So a Barb Busters working bee was organised and over three kilometres of barbed wire was removed from all internal fences within a few hours by a team of enthusiastic volunteers.

"I feel very happy that there is a much safer environment now for the gliders on my property." Jane said after the working bee. "The removal of barbed wire and replacement with plain wire will provide adequate containment for the sheep."

It has been estimated that tens of millions of kilometres of fences now subdivide the Australian landscape, with sixty five percent of these having barbed wire on the top strand. Each year thousands of native animals face death or injury from entanglement on barbed wire fences. Nobody really knows the extent or how many. Many are removed by the landholder or eaten by foxes, cats and even birds of prey.

More than 75 wildlife species have been identified in Australia as occasional or regular victims of barbed wire fences.

Both mammals (25 species) and birds (50 species) are victims and most are nocturnal. The Squirrel Glider and its smaller cousin the Sugar Glider are particularly vulnerable. Other mammals such as flying-foxes and insectivorous microbats are also common victims, as are the macropods – wallabies and kangaroos. Nocturnal birds such as the insectivorous Tawny Frogmouth, as well as owls (some of which are listed as Threatened Species) are particularly vulnerable.



L-R Jane Wilson, Anne Lemon and Wayne Lavers 'busting the barb' from the top of an internal fence.



L-R Mikla Lewis, Anthony, Kevin and Marilyn Stemm, Anne Lemon and Jane Wilson and a lot of barbed wire!