

# Beechworth Landcare

## ◆ THE CYPRESS EXPRESS ◆



No. 40 August 2010

### Dear Landcare Lovers

*When the wattles bloom again,  
Then it's time for us to go  
To the old Monaro country  
At the melting of the snow...*

'Banjo' Paterson

'At the melting of the snow'

The mid-storey wattles on our block are about to burst; but it seems there is more snow *falling* than melting at the moment. Our winter residents (shrike-thrushes, wrens, yellow robins) are busy, and I noticed a kookaburra checking out a hollow branch yesterday. Could the hounds of spring be upon winter's traces?

A couple of grevilleas (*grevillea alpina* or cat's claw grevillea), in our cultivated garden are loaded with flowers. These were planted by Landcarers a couple of years ago, and are making their presence felt after surviving the drought and heat waves. They are providing habitat now for honeyeaters and wrens. Hardenbergia, climbing over rocky ground and shrubs in the bush is flowering too, and poas, wallaby grasses and sedges are thriving. And for the first time in three years, Three Mile Creek is running! You can imagine the froggy din emanating from the bush.

### Note the dates for events in August and September

Back to Jack's Creek: Sunday 15 August 10am-1pm

National Tree Day planting: Sunday 29 August 10am-12noon

Orchid walk at Ingram's Rock: Saturday 11 September 10am-12noon

Beechworth Landcare AGM: Wednesday 22 September (to be confirmed)

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## **National Tree Day**

Due to bad weather on our planned Tree Day please note that we have a new date for planting:

**Sunday 29 August 2010 10am -12 pm**

Spring Creek (behind the swimming pool)

Come and join other volunteers and plant a tree or two! The planet will love you for it.

BYO Gardening Gloves and trowel. Morning tea provided.

## ***Combined Landcare and Sustainability August event Return to Jack's Creek***

### ***Back to Jacks Creek - Winter Soup Day***

**Sunday 15 August 10am - 1pm**

Join us at Jack's Creek, (the creek between Ali and Barney Foran's and Reinhart and Annette Beissbarth's properties) to see the progress of a very successful, sustainable biodiversity project. These landholders have restored a blackberry infested, almost invisible creek to a beautiful watercourse, where clear water flows over boulders and into deep pools. This is the result of a lot of hard work, by the landholders and Landcare volunteers, with the assistance of an Envirofund grant. But much roadside planting and further work down the creek are testament to the Foran's and Beissbarth's personal interest in and commitment to biodiversity and the restoration of public land for everyone's enjoyment and benefit.

After a walk, stay to catch up over a bowl of hearty home-made soup.  
Park at Ali and Barney's, 32 Jack's Creek Road.

## Orchid Walk at Ingrams Rock 10am-12noon.

**Saturday 11 September - please note change of date from Sunday 12 to Saturday 11 September**

Join local orchid expert John Hawker for a leisurely walk and talk to discover some of our hidden botanical treasures.

Meet at the Ingrams Rock carpark. Follow old Chiltern Rd until you come to a sign on the left hand side for Ingrams rock where parking is available.

Wear sturdy shoes! All Welcome.

(Please note we have changed the date so that anyone hosting an international student from La Trobe uni can bring their guest along as part of the 'rural' experience.)

## In the vegie patch in August

It's your very last chance to put bare rooted trees in!

There's still time to plant spinach, broad beans, Jerusalem artichokes (put them in a pot or they can take over!!) peas, onions, parsley, cabbage, broccoli, rocket, silverbeet, and asian greens. It's also a good time to plant strawberries.

Green manure crops (like faba beans or field peas) are good to improve dormant vegie beds, ready for your summer vegetables. At the school vegie patch at Benalla 31 Primary School we are trialling four different types of green manure. One patch is planted with broad beans, the second with peas, the third with mustard greens and the fourth with a mix of all of the above with the addition of mung beans. These will all be dug back into the soil when they reach about 30 cms.

Top up mulch on your vegie patches, herb gardens and ornamental beds. Choose a sustainable, low environmental impact mulch, one that will enrich your soil as it breaks down. Lucerne and pea straw are great for this.

Happy gardening from Donna

*Donna Page*

Beechworth Landcare Project Manager

## Seeking Hosts for International Rural Weekend Break

**La Trobe University is seeking local people to host international students for the weekend of Friday, 10 - Sunday, 12 September.**

Each year students from overseas come to study at La Trobe University campuses. Students from the Bundoora Campus, Melbourne often ask to learn about rural and family life in Australia. Many are interested in the environment and farms. To give these metropolitan students opportunity to widen their understanding the International Student Office runs a *Weekend Break* program - about 20 students come up to Albury-Wodonga and stay with local people in their homes, sharing in their weekend activities. Students who have visited for a weekend in the past have often said that they learned a lot and, for some, their stay with local families was their best experience during their time in Australia.

The weekend's itinerary is:

- Friday, 10 September, 6pm at La Trobe, Albury-Wodonga campus *Get-to-know-you Dinner* for students and Hosts. Hosts will be introduced to their student(s) and will take them home for the weekend. Students join in with normal family activities. They are likely to be interested in cooking, sport, collecting wood, photo albums and family life.
- Saturday possible Landcare orchid walk at Ingram's Rock. Often Hosts join up with others to do an activity or share a meal.
- Sunday, 12 September about 2pm (time to be confirmed) Host takes the student(s) to either Albury Railway Station, or Yackandandah Post Office for bus pick up, to return to Melbourne by train.

This is an opportunity to make international contacts and to share Australian culture and rural life with young people from other cultures. The International students are university students from overseas countries studying at La Trobe's Bundoora campus, Melbourne. They are all over 18 years and many will be older postgraduates.

**To register as a Host or to ask for further information please contact Clare Cunnington, Co-ordinator: International Student Support Services, La Trobe University, Albury-Wodonga Campus. Phone: 0260 249774, Mobile 0417 386 515 or email [iso.aw@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:iso.aw@latrobe.edu.au)**

## Bird surveys

Kate Hill, Native Vegetation/Biodiversity Project Officer at DSE, has notified us of several bird surveys in our region. You may wish to become a volunteer in one of the projects, or simply keep an eye on the survey results.

### Swiftly-Regents

The Swift Parrot-Regent Honeyeater winter survey was to be held on 7-8 August. This is part of the Woodland Birds for Biodiversity Project run by Birds Australia. If you would like to participate in the survey (or future surveys), receive further information, or report sightings please contact

Chris Tzaros (Swift Parrots) [c.tzaros@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:c.tzaros@birdsaustralia.com.au) or

Dean Ingwersen (Regent Honeyeaters) [d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au)

or phone 03 9347 0757.

Results of the May survey can found at

[www.birdsaustralia.com.au/images/stories/current-projects/wbc/Swifty-Regent-surveynews-Jul10.pdf](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/images/stories/current-projects/wbc/Swifty-Regent-surveynews-Jul10.pdf)

### Grey-crowned Babblers

A new study of Grey-crowned Babblers is being undertaken by Deakin University PhD candidate Kate Stephens to uncover the impacts of habitat fragmentation on population and family-group dynamics of our gregarious feathered friends. Kate is working at a large regional scale, and plans to gather data across the species' southern-most distribution in Victoria (from Boort and Kerang in the west to Violet Town, Lurg and Rutherglen in the east). If you are interested in helping Kate in her field work, which will involve netting and observation of the birds, and assessment of habitat, over the next 18 months, please contact her by email: [kpst@deakin.edu.au](mailto:kpst@deakin.edu.au), phone 0429 800 518.

### Feral cats abound at babbler sites!

One of the potential causes of babbler decline in some districts is excessive predation by cats or other predators. To date, however, there has not been any data to establish how important predation may be as a cause of decline. DSE has just provided funding to do some preliminary surveys of feral predator abundance in different districts. This information may then be used to consider more detailed research into potential predation impacts.

### Help Bush Stone-curlew research

The Bush Stone-curlew is declining in southern Australia due to fox predation and past habitat fragmentation. The Australian Museum is conducting a genetics analysis of Bush Stone-curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*) populations from across Australia in collaboration with Bush Stone-curlew conservationists. It is important to examine Bush Stone-curlew genetic samples to uncover information that will help the conservation management of this species. The Australian Museum is seeking samples of shredded feathers, tissues or feathers from road kills, or any bones of decomposed birds that may be found by bird enthusiasts.

If any of this material is discovered it can be sent by post, enclosed in a sealed plastic bag (freeze before sending if possible) to  
The DNA Laboratory, Australian Museum, 6 College St, Sydney 2010 NSW.

Include the locality (a description and map coordinates if available), the date of the collection, and name of collector.

For more information contact Robert Mason ([rob.mason@austmus.gov.au](mailto:rob.mason@austmus.gov.au)) or phone 02 9320 6488.

*This bird may not be a local identity around Beechworth, but who knows what we might find on our travels and road trips?*

#### **Plus...Platypus in Wodonga!**

The Australian Platypus Conservancy will present an illustrated talk about the amazing platypus and the new Platypus Count community-based monitoring program in the Albury-Wodonga region.

**Wednesday 11 August at 7pm**

**City of Wodonga council chamber (enter by Hovell St ramp).**

**For more information and bookings:**

**Email [gdatson@wodonga.vic.gov.au](mailto:gdatson@wodonga.vic.gov.au)**

**Concern over burning off by DSE in April/May 2010 along the edge of Beechworth Gorge: a letter from Geoff Galbraith, Beechworth Landcare member and Old Chiltern Rd resident**

Having lived in Beechworth for 40 years in Old Chiltern Road adjoining Ingram's Rock Reserve (Beechworth Historic Park), I was naturally interested in the controlled burning done by the DSE (in April/May). I am aware that there has been considerable public pressure for reduction burning to occur. I am not necessarily against such burning.

My concern is for the manner of the burning that occurred and the lack of public information & consultation provided by the DSE for local residents in close vicinity to the areas burnt.

#### **Manner of Burning**

The DSE used a dry fire method where no water was used and once lit the fire was left to burn. This allowed large trees to ignite and in many cases fall. Any tracks or roads blocked were cleared at another time.

While this method might be appropriate for some vegetation cover it was disastrous for some large species of eucalypts especially the **Blakely's Red Gum** (*Eucalyptus blakelyi* Maiden) found in the Ingram's Rock area.

Almost all the DSE workers who conducted the burn were unfamiliar with our vegetation. (I believe one out of about ten was.) When I spoke to them at the end of the day they complained that there was so little litter on the ground that the fires they lit kept going out.

On examining the area, especially around Ingram's Rock, this was plainly seen. However **Blakely's Red Gum**, unlike other trees in the area, shed their bark and so one of the places where the fire burnt well was at the foot of these trees. As they often grow in clumps this meant that those which were ignited burnt well into the old base of the trees causing them to fall (See photos).

As **Blakely's Red Gum** grow best at the base of large granite outcrops like Ingram's Rock this has meant that many of the oldest and most beautiful trees were destroyed, with their only hope of rejuvenation being to sprout from the stumps. ALMOST HALF THE BIG CLUMPS AT THE BASE OF INGRAM'S ROCK WERE DESTROYED. (See photos.) Only rain a few days after the burn saved others.

These trees are extremely slow growing in this climate and soil. I remember my grandfather, lifting me up on one of the low branches of one of the trees now destroyed. This was over 60 years ago!

What sticks in my throat is that last spring I had an interview with the local DSE officers and expressed my fears that just such destruction would occur if the burns they planned were not done with care and a knowledge of local flora. I even mention the Blakely's Red Gums and fire. THEY ASSURED ME THAT ANY BURN WOULD BE DONE WITH INFORMED CARE! I now realize that I was simply being 'fobbed off.' Of course I should have expressed my concerns in writing.

While it is too late for many of the **Blakely's Red Gums**, a bit of sensible raking and or use of water could save them in future burns. However from my experience I have little belief that the DSE has any real care for this unique environment.

#### **Public information and consultation**

While a few notices were nailed to trees in the area being burnt, to my knowledge residents close to the area that was burnt (mainly being Old Chiltern Road residents) were not notified.

This resulted in one mother at home with two young children waking at 2 am to see a blazing tree from her window. In a panic she rang neighbours as her husband was away. The result was that the neighbour had to head off into the bush to investigate, satisfy herself that it was safe and calm the mother.

A single phone call by DSE on the day they burned could have prevented this as Old Chiltern Road in conjunction with CFA have a sophisticated TELEPHONE TREE which would have alerted all residents, thus saving much distress. Old Chiltern Road residents are highly conscious of fire and to find blazing trees throughout the burnt area and no DSE presence was a shock to us. A simple leaflet explaining the burn methods could have been distributed.

However I believe the present method to be highly inappropriate to this area. Some way of burning areas with low ground litter needs to be used. If the aim is to target the **Fringe Myrtle** which is the main shrubby type undergrowth in the area then the method used was unsuccessful.

Finally I am unaware that the DSE has ever tried to tap the local residents' good will and concern as a resource to help protect and care for the surrounding DSE land. It would be worth a try!

*Geoff Galbraith*

*Eucalyptus blakelyi* Maiden

Family Myrtaceae

Common name: Blakely's Red Gum

*Eucalyptus blakelyi* Maiden APNI\*

**Description:** Tree to 20 m high; bark smooth, patchy white, grey to brown or red, shedding in large plates or flakes.

Juvenile leaves disjunct, ovate to orbiculate, dull grey-green.

Adult leaves disjunct, lanceolate or broad-lanceolate, 8-16 cm long, 1-2 cm wide, green or grey-green, dull, concolorous. Umbellasters 7-flowered (rarely 11-flowered); peduncle terete or angular, 7-19 mm long; pedicels terete, 1-9 mm long. Buds fusiform, 8-14 mm long, 3-6 mm diam., scar present; calyptra conical or elongate acute, longer than and as wide as hypanthium.

Fruit globose or ovoid, 4-7 mm long, 4-8 mm diam.; disc raised; valves exserted.

*Many thanks to Geoff for his letter and the information about Blakely's Red Gum. Geoff provided numerous photographs, showing the burnt stumps of the Blakely's Red Gum, which unfortunately we haven't been able to reproduce for the newsletter.*

Hope to see you at a Beechworth Landcare event or meeting soon! The BL committee meets every third Wednesday of the month at 33 Last St (Donna's place) at 7pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

*Joy Phillips*

Secretary Beechworth Landcare 5728 1413