



Autumn has seen us continue to provide educational workshops on marine and terrestrial lifeforms and deliver an extended course in birdwatching. Renovations have continued at the Support Centre kitchen, and whilst seed collecting has finished for the season, various weekly SOLN excursions are planned, including returning our attention to fungi and other great decomposers in the landscape. If you're looking for ways to spend the next six months, you could get involved in surveying, species monitoring, assessing native vegetation, propagating native plants, making collections, restoring habitat, or attending a raft of workshops to increase your understanding of the biodiversity that surrounds us. Keep your eyes and ears on SOLN as we share how you can landcare and oceancare in the Southern Otways.



COMMUNITY GROUPS

Shrub Club Community Nursery (SCCN)

SCCN Market at the Apollo Bay Show

A windy start to the Apollo Bay Show Day provided a somewhat challenging set up for the Landcare Plant stall, but nevertheless tables were set up with plants and posters and when the weather improved so did the crowds and sales.



The shearing demonstration by Tony Webber proved very popular and was a great draw card along with the interactive exhibition of old style 2-man cross-cut sawing by unsuspecting volunteers.

Tall Tree Walk

On Monday morning March 6, a group of



about nearly twenty Landcare volunteers headed up Killala Road, Apollo Bay, to walk and visit the big mountain ash trees

in some nearby remnant rainforest. The area is one of only four places in the Otways with no record of burning or logging since white settlement. The walk was incredibly beautiful, quite slippery and steep in parts, with the expected leeches. The following word list records snap word-impressions of their walk.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Bright yellow fungi | Last step – for Chris |
| Green | I'll never do it again |
| Huge | Good fun |
| Before time | Mystery |
| Jurassic | Ankle breakers |
| Myrtle Beech | Go with it. |
| Verdant | Somewhat exceptional |
| Slippery | Unique and amazing |
| It's slippery and seductive. | |

Joy Whitton



Special Effects and Kui Nursery Visits

The Shrub Club entourage headed up, in mid-May, to Barongarook and Colac to check out



two other nurseries growing local native plants. First up was Special

Effects Nursery, a business owned and run by Mike and Mandy Edwards, who have been growing local and non-local Australian native plants in the Otways for decades. They took us around their impressive nursery, food forest and agroforestry set up, and kindly endowed us with a few secrets along the way.

Next, we headed to Kui Nursery in Colac, a community nursery which employs people with a range of disabilities in supported positions. Kui has recently made the transition to growing solely local-native plants and Nursery Coordinator Liz was happy to show us around their continually developing site and share some of her learnings from the job.



Both visits left us inspired to get back to Shrub Club and get growing. If you missed out, don't worry, more visits to other nurseries are being planned for winter and spring!

-Seamus Fillmore

Otway Ocean Care (OOC)

Fish ID workshop



My best friend and I attended the fish ID workshop with Jono.

We started the morning at Wildlife Wonders in Apollo Bay. After an informative PowerPoint

presentation on the common fishes in the Otway region, we went outside to have some morning tea.

During this time, we had a look at and feel of the specimens, including shark egg cases, preserved stingarees and a marlin skull! Jono ran us through some websites to use for fish ID and we had a flip through some textbooks too.

Despite the chilly weather, a few of us headed down to Marengo reef and had a go identifying the fish species we'd just learnt about.



Absolutely surreal experience, snorkelling with a brand-new appreciation for the fish we share our reefs with. What a great community in the Otways and such a lovely organisation to organise these workshops!"

- Addi, 24, from Geelong



Echinoderm workshop



The Echinoderm workshop was held at the Apollo Bay Senior Citizens Centre, followed by a low-tide exploration of the shore platform at Marengo.

Guest speaker, Kate Naughton, was greeted by a group of passionate local marine enthusiasts, young and old!

In her distinctive light-hearted style, Kate engaged the audience with her experiences collecting Echinoderms during deep-sea research expeditions around Australia. Her role on board was to help separate the collections and to identify species, many new to science.

Kate pointed out how Echinoderms have a unique water vascular system, which affects fluid content of the body parts and provides the ability to move and feed. With sea cucumbers, the body shape collapses with a change in water pressure, often making identification of species, most challenging.

Many questions were asked and answered and after a cuppa and cake, the group visited the Marengo shore platform to look for critters.

We found Eight-armed Sea Stars with variable colour patterns in the shallow rock pools.

There were also Little Green Sea Stars (with five arms and a pentagonal shape) with



distinctive crimson spots on the upper body. On the (oral) underside of sea stars we could see the (ambulacral) groove leading from the central mouth to the end of each arm. Inside the grooves were numerous waving white tubed feet to provide suction and locomotion. We also saw sea urchins and many other animals besides...

Thank you, Ocean Care, for organising this fun-filled day.

-Tim Godfrey

Mollusc workshop

It was full a full house at Wildlife Wonders for the free Mollusc Workshop that was facilitated by Otway Ocean Care, a subgroup of Southern Otways Landcare Network. A presentation by Michael Lyons, an expert in the field, was followed by a beach/rock ledge



walk.

I do not recall the word 'mollusc' being used in the presentation, but the words

gastropod and *shells* or *mantles* were, so I guess they are the same things. It turns out the shells that we see, and maybe collect, at the seaside are the least interesting part of the organisms - gastropods - that used to live in them.

The herbivorous gastropods have remarkable rough tongues and feed off the algae on the rocks. The carnivorous gastropods live off the herbivorous gastropods and have nasty ways to circumvent the protective shells. Some drill holes in mussel shells and suck out the contents. Others cover the shell entrances



with their bodies and suffocate the creatures inside. Still others exude a substance that eats away at the shell. It's a jungle out there.

So next time you see an advertisement for a mollusc/shell/gastropod workshop sign up early and be amazed by the lives and colours of these creatures.

-Elisabeth Gliszczynski

Crustaceans workshop

We loved attending the workshop about Crustaceans. We were lucky to have Gary Poore come and give us an awesome talk before taking us down to the Marengo rock pools. Gary was the Principal Curator for marine biology at Museum Victoria, and he has written several books on crustaceans. We learnt lots of facts about crustaceans like how to tell the difference between a male and female crab, how to tell the difference between Apollo Bay's Southern Rock Lobster and a true lobster (hint: the claws) and much more.



My favourite of all crustaceans was the barnacle, which starts out swimming in its larval stage, and then glues itself to a rock by its head and grows a hard shell around its body. Here it spends the rest of its days, waving its legs in the air to catch food. Cool!

Gary brought his field microscope to the rock pools and we got to look at many different tiny crustaceans, and learnt how to recognise them. We all found lots of crabs. It was awesome.

- Lizzi and Alyssa Gage

Otway Ocean Care Hoodies

Support OOC with a hoodie purchase: profits made from sales will go directly back into OOC to run more workshops and activities.

Text Georgie for details on 0488 508 91

Otway Ocean Care Library

Ocean Care has put together a small library of reference books about all things ocean, as well as selected equipment such as underwater cameras and viewers for borrowing; conditions apply.

Contact Vicky for details 0417 127 401.

Otway Mushroom and Fungi Group (OMFG)

Alison Pouliot Fungi Workshops



Upon entering the Senior Citizen's Hall we were met by an impressive table display decorated with hundreds of fungi and their associated plants they form connections with.

This is all part of author and ecologist Alison Pouliot's fungi workshop. An enthusiastic and captivating speaker Alison shared her infectious passion for fungi with us throughout the day. The workshop surprised



me, teaching me the intricate underground connections between mycorrhizal fungi and trees and their crucial role in the ecosystem. We also explored the topics of foraging for edible mushrooms, and their potential medicinal uses. and became familiar with the morphology of groups in the fungi Kingdom. Alison invited us to interact with the array of fungi before us using our senses to differentiate edible fungi from their lookalikes by touching and handling them as well as smelling and picking apart their scents. After time in the classroom, a field trip to the local Elliot River track helped us to consolidate our newfound knowledge. Within a short

distance, we were greeted with many varieties growing from soil, on fallen logs and in living trees.

As an amateur fungi identifier, this workshop

certainly opened my eyes to the curiosities of fungi and their role in the natural world, but also their potential functions for humans as well!

Thank you, Alison, for sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm!

-Louisa Bartels



My Experience of the Fungi Workshop with Alison Pouliot



My senses were already singing after the drive along the Great Ocean Rd from Lorne - surely one of the most beautiful drives in the world. However, even that sensory treat couldn't prepare me for

the overwhelming adventure awaiting me inside the Apollo Bay Senior Citizens Centre that evening. There, Alison Pouliot had laid out hundreds of foraged mushrooms. The sight of this was glorious and unlike anything I'd seen before, I felt I was entering a secret forest. But the smell! Earthy, musty, funky, perfumey, woody and sweet. It was like going into another sensory world, an underworld wonderland, I'd never experienced the likes of before, I was transported. The talk that night was thoughtful, aesthetic and educational, rich with laughter and new knowledge. The next day, two field trips, two different ecosystems, cool rainforest and sandy coastal teatree forest, and so many mushrooms! I was the 'scribe', noting down only the positively identified mushrooms, although we really only walked a few metres at both sites, I wrote down a total of nearly 50 different mushrooms, none of which I'd ever heard of or seen before. I felt as though I'd been walking around blind my whole life, here was an entire world at our feet, literally all around us, unnoticed. Alison, the consummate educator, provided us all with an astonishing and, in my case at least, life-changing experience. It's one that I'll never forget, and I'm so grateful to Alison and SOLN for providing the opportunity.

-Adam Nash



Updated Southern Otways Fungi Guide



With brighter, clearer images and new classifications and nomenclature by Alison Pouliot, the 2023 update to SOLN's 'Fungi Guide' is your best companion on your fungi explorations.

And it's now fully waterproof!

Available at Shrub Club on

Wednesdays, at SOLN's Nelson St. office on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or Wildlife Wonders all week. Price: \$8.

LANDCARE GROUPS

Apollo Bay (AB LG)

Treatment of Gorse on Great Ocean Road, Apollo Bay

Dear SOLN members,

Thank you for the opportunity to receive support for the treatment of gorse on our land, along the Great Ocean Road, Apollo Bay. Gorse is a weed of national significance, and we are doing our best to contain it and stop the spread.

In September 2019 we became the happy owners of this land here in Apollo Bay. In November of that year, after joining our local landcare group, with the great help of Tony Webber, the gorse was sprayed for the first time while under our care.

Every year since, we have had several different contractors spray the gorse. Because of the very difficult access, the spraying was done yearly, on foot with a backpack of spray and about 40-60L of product (Grazon Extra).

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This method is time consuming and not the most efficient; it needs multiple rounds of the men going up a steep hill to get a small coverage.

This year we hired Chris Callahan, who used a 4WD ute to get close to the gorse through our cooperative neighbour's paddock. The ute access meant more than 500L of spray was carefully applied which allowed to cover more area. Chris had already sprayed at this location before our time, in April 2018.

According to Chris, there were considerably less live plants than when he first sprayed in 2018, meaning the smaller on foot backpack spraying had a positive effect, too.

We would like to thank SOLN for helping us partly cover the cost of this big one-off spray.

For the next couple of years, we will continue the yearly sprays with backpacks for very localised treatment of specific plants and young shoots.

April 2018





Please see photos that show some evolution over time. The photos have been taken by different people at different times.

Thanks again, Warm regards,
- Lili & Xavier

CCMA: Celebration: 30 years of waterway citizen science



The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) held a volunteer appreciation day at Wildlife Wonders on 17th of May, celebrating 30 years of waterway citizen science. Thanks to citizen science managers Kristen Lees and Deirdre Murphy for organizing the event as well as Justine Holmes, Jake van Dam and Rachel Limb who also attended from the CCMA.

As Helen Cocks and I have recently taken on the role of Estuary Watch for Wild Dog and Skenes Creek (mouth condition monitoring), we attended and met many other volunteers, and past volunteers travelling here from Birregurra, Torquay, Anglesea, Colac, etc. Many waterway volunteers, like us, started out as Landcare volunteers, which makes perfect sense!

To underline the usefulness that 'citizen science' can serve, it was highlighted that the wealth of Waterwatch data collected by Wye River volunteers over the last 30 years was extremely useful to professional scientists and government agencies when assessing the

health of the Wye River following the fires of 2015.

A highlight of our visit was to see a lone bandicoot come out in broad daylight, foraging in the lawn near the research centre (missing a tail, it seems, but oblivious to daylight dangers in the safe harbour of Wildlife Wonders?)

We were fed well and sent home with a lunch box, warm hats and keep-cups for our winter surveys! Helen and I hope to begin water measurements at Skenes Creek soon and were encouraged to seek other interested citizen scientists to reinstate monitoring of the Barham River... (if my source is correct, good on you Hughie and Vicki T!)

If you're interested to see what data has been collected over the years check out

<https://www.estuarywatch.org.au/>

<https://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/>

If you are interested in getting involved yourself fill out the form on the following page:

<https://ccma.vic.gov.au/get-involved/citizen-science/>

And, if you see us with our fuzzy hats and clipboards, give us a wave!

-Kim Stevenson

Lighthouse to Lavers (L2L LG)

Wild Otways Initiative

As part of the Wild Otways grant, exclusion fencing was executed, as was spot spraying in the biolinks, and a quantity of 1,953 coastal species were planted at Ros Denney's the Glenaire property. Not only did these plants go into the newly formed biolink extension, but they have also been selectively put into



the existing two autumn 2022 biolinks where germination rates were more patchy.

The Johanna site has a flourishing revegetation site beside the Ford River, see picture below.



The L2L (**Light House to Lavers**) Landcare Group is applying for a grant to coordinate and deliver a foundational knowledge workshop series aimed at empowering local members, landholders, farmers, conservationists, and other interested community members with some of the key basic knowledge required for successful land management in the Southern Otways. Designed to meet the needs and interests of seasoned residents and new arrivals, the workshops will include: Gadubanud knowledge sharing on Country, understanding hydrology in the Southern Otways, understanding soil health (incl. landslide and erosion prevention), biosecurity on our farms and in our parks, weed management and prioritisation (from the landscape level to the

garden), and an introduction to native pollinators. The six workshops will be held during late spring 2023 through to early summer 2024 and will be in the format of a morning educational session/presentation held in a community hall, followed by an afternoon site visit to a Landcare members property for a practical demonstration and hands-on observation and learning. The workshops will be shared evenly across the Hordern Vale, Lavers Hill and Yuulong community halls to provide more opportunities for small communities to attend an event in their local area. Each workshop will aim to accommodate a maximum of 30 attendees from our Landcare group, the local community and from neighbouring Landcare groups.

-Kel Needham

Cool Burn at Otway Park

Under the guidance of Jack Pascoe, residents at Otway Park participated in a small/cool burn on the weekend of 13-14 May - the weather was dry and calm. This burn was to provide an exemplar for Lot owners to learn how this practice works in providing management and renewal to the ecosystem, as well for them to become more confident in undertaking similar burns in the future.

Jack registered the intention to light a fire with the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) to ensure that the fire services are aware of the burn.

This area of land where the burn took place had been mulched 6 years ago (rather than burned) and was then re-planted with local tree species. The regrowth in this area was a little different than where we've done the larger planned burns and revegetation in Otway Park. In preparation some brush-cutting was done under and around trees, as well as creating a mini firebreak to help



control boundaries of the fire. We had 5 people in attendance to help control the fire and observe the process.

Under Jack's leadership a fire was started and then controlled with participants beating out the flames on the edges (using switches/branches of the local *Leucopogon* shrub), around young trees, and against fallen logs. Jack explained how fire can move according to; the slope of the land, the types of fuel and condition (wet/dry), and the amount of wind. Jack also showed us how to use game trails (where the wallabies etc. travel) as controllable boundaries, as well as how to split a fire front (by beating a section out) to help control the fire.

The fire was never very big or intense, and at times we could just watch and anticipate it, rather than have to do anything much. Jack gave us four rules to remember;

1. Fire burns uphill,
2. Fire burns faster with the wind behind it,
3. It's always easier to add to a fire (rather than put out a big blaze),
4. Sometimes a burn can be boring (waiting for the fire to burn where you want it to).

Approximately 200 square meters was burnt in a number of patches in about 3 hours. It will be good to see how these areas revegetate.

It was a very informative day and sets us up to consider doing more of this ourselves at Otway Park. It showed us what is possible with only a few people, and those in attendance can feel more confident about doing this ourselves. The only water we needed was to put out a hollow burning log that had caught fire. Jack cut that up with a chainsaw, and then hosed it down with the pump on the Ultra-light ute. Jack did suggest that we should all consider having a fire

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fighter backpack in our bush fire kits and that they would be useful to have on-hand when burning.

If you'd like to know about this activity please contact Colin Warren, Chairman of the Otway Park Body Corporate - 0407688306





Marengo Barham Catchment (MBC LG)

The AGM of the Otway Barham Catchment Landcare Group was held in February.

By unanimous agreement the name of the group was changed to the **Marengo Barham Catchment Landcare Group**. The change was made because the original name did not make it obvious to the significant number of Marengo residents which group covered their area.

The control of emergent weeds along the Barham River Road continues with the treatment of willow species along the river completed. Tree dahlias and other weeds are also on the list and will continue to be eradicated when the weather is suitable.

We are looking at some particularly weedy species on public land in the Marengo area that we may be able to help residents control under the auspices of Landcare. So, keep your eye on your local newsletter and emails notifying you of activity in your area.

-Elisabeth Gliszczynski

Marengo works at Old Quarry site



The Marengo Barham Catchment Landcare Group, in conjunction with Southern Otway Landcare Network, has implemented the first stage of environmental restoration works at the old Marengo Quarry site next to the Marengo Family Caravan Park.

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You may have noticed that a section of entangled woody weeds has been removed,

including Coast

Tea-tree, Sweet Pittosporum, Giant Honey-myrtle, and Mirror Bush.

The area will now be assessed for natural regeneration, weed regrowth management and future replanting of indigenous species. We're also working with GORCAPA, EMAC and OOC to look at options including a board walk, a cultural walk including campsite and/or marine discovery centre, and will be undertaking community consultation in the coming months. Also, keep your eyes peeled for a community planting day as we edge closer to Spring!

Funding to complete the weed removal was provided through the Colac Otway Shire Council Community Grants Program.

-Oliver Kerr

Wye to Wongarra (W2W LG)

The [News and Information brochure Easter 2023](#) distributed by the Wye to Wongarra

Landcare Group provides information about the 'Trees for Tawnys' program, and sea spurge removal carried out at Kennett River.

Also included is advice for controlling the spread of Pampas Grass as well as a list of websites that may assist with landscape design and weed management for coastal gardens. '[Our Backyards are the Bush](#)', a YouTube prepared by W2WLG, provides further information for weed management.

The upcoming June long weekend will see guided fungi walks along the Wye to Jamieson Track for W2W members. Contact via email w2wlandcaregroup@gmail.com.

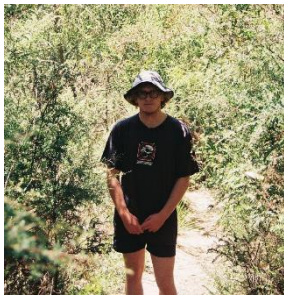


SOLN UPDATES

Facilitator's reports

Introducing SOLN's new Landcare Facilitators – don't forget to say hello if you see them around the range.

New Nursery Coordinator – Welcome Seamus!



SOLN are happy to announce the addition of Seamus Fillmore to our growing team. Seamus will be working alongside Olly, Andrea and our dedicated Shrub

Clubbers to continue developing our nursery space and plant-related activities, as well as assisting other SOLN projects.

Seamus grew up just outside of Apollo Bay amongst the tall gums of Elliot River, and spent his childhood exploring the bush, surfing, playing music and helping in his father's small business, Otway Native Nursery.

After a few years studying, working and playing music in between Melbourne and Apollo Bay, Seamus has returned to the Bay fulltime to work with SOLN, be closer to family and friends, spend more time in nature, and get more surf...

"I am so happy to be living back in the Otways after a few years in the big smoke, and stoked with the opportunity to work and learn alongside everyone at SOLN. The coast and hills of the Otways are really special to me, and I am excited to deepen my knowledge of the plants and ecosystems I grew up

exploring, and to help restore and conserve these amazing places".

Come down to Shrub Club on Wednesdays to meet Seamus and chat surfing, music and plants.

Landcare Facilitator-Joy Whitton



I have worked in professional roles in a university, as book publisher and secondary teacher. I have an enduring interest in

helping people to build knowledge, skills, and confidence in using knowledge to pursue their goals, starting with their strengths. My partner (who grew up on a farm in Dundonnell) and I moved to Johanna three years ago and we live on six acres of what used to be a dairy farm. We are planting trees for furniture (they won't be harvested in our lifetime) and revegetating a creek with indigenous plants – and learning heaps, as we watch the seasons, listen to others, attend workshops, inform ourselves by reading, try things out, find that deer rout our efforts, adapt again with different techniques ... and on it goes. I'm interested in the interaction and symbiosis of plants with animals and fungi and supporting ecosystems. I grew up on Port Phillip Bay over the road from the beach and, ranging over land and beach, I learned to love them.



Landcare Facilitator-Clem Wetherall



Hi everyone, I'm pretty fresh up here on the range, just one year in, but my interest in helping to restore and rejuvenate our precious ecosystems stretches way back... all the way back to pre-COVID times.

In a past life, I worked in media and comms roles with NGO's and small community organisations, but the bushfires of 2019 changed everything. I found myself sitting in an office in Melbourne, inhaling the thick smoke from the south-east and experiencing a deep grief in knowing the incredible landscapes, species and places were now burnt up and were drifting across the CBD.

So, I decided to change what I was doing with my life so I could contribute to ecological restoration and help heal Country in a hands-on way. I'm now studying a Diploma of Science and a Diploma of Conservation and Ecosystem Management.

I grew up in country SA, mostly in the Clare Valley, where the summers are hot and dry, and the winters are bloody freezing. I spent most of my life outside when I was young, picking fruit, pulling weeds, climbing trees and planting vegies, now, after a couple of decades of city life, it feels like I've come full circle, back to where I can soak up how wonderful it is to be outside, rain, hail, or clouds.

I've been very happy to make Lavers Hill my home and now I'm excited to be able to connect with friends, neighbours, and the community as a Landcare Facilitator - people

have already done so much great work up here looking after the environment, and I'm very grateful for how welcome everyone has made me feel.

Events/Features

Butterfly workshop with Georgie Custance



About 30 people of all ages attended a fabulous butterfly info/identification workshop hosted by SOLN and presented by Georgie Custance from the Threatened Species Conservancy.

In the first hour Georgie taught us about local butterfly species and their life cycles and behaviours; the symbiotic relationships certain butterflies have with ants... fascinating... and how human activities and climate change are contributing to declining butterfly population numbers. Butterflies are



important; as pollinators, a food source for other animals and the pleasure they bring as they flutter past.

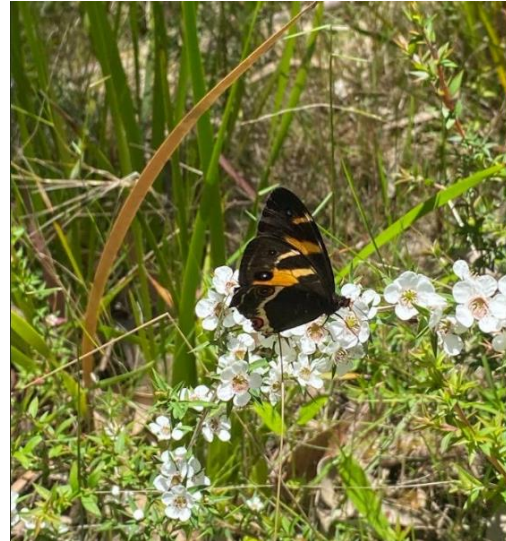
After morning tea we all went to Marengo Flora Reserve, catching, observing, identifying and releasing butterflies. It was quite comical watching Georgie and others charging off chasing butterflies with their nets – we had fun!

Some of the butterflies we identified were – sword grass brown (*butterflyius specius*) – its host plant being sword sedges (*Gahnia sp.*); common grass blue (*Zizinia otis*) which likes plants in the pea family; Jezabels (*Delias sp.*) which require presence of mistletoes along with several day moths.

I'd like to thank Georgie for such a great fun informative day. I'm looking forward to the proposed establishment of a butterfly garden outside the senior citizens centre – it will encourage everyone to plant butterfly attracting plants in their own gardens.

-Pam Dodsworth

Butterflies to find a home on Whelan Street!



SOLN is working together with the Threatened Species Conservancy to plant a garden for native butterflies at Apollo Bay's rebranded Community Hall (a.k.a. the Senior Citizens' Centre). The hall is a well-used space by the community and it is exciting to imagine what the entrance could look like when the garden is filled with native plants and little signs/labels for the community about how to attract butterflies. As part of our ongoing support for this project, SOLN together with the Apollo Bay Landcare group will arrange a working bee each year to ensure that the garden is maintained and remains fit for butterflies.

It is hoped that it will showcase the beauty and benefits of native vegetation to the Apollo Bay and broader community.

-Kevin O'Connell



Searching for our Snails - The Great Otway Snail Blazer

The Southern Otway Landcare Network has partnered up with the Threatened Species Conservancy for a one-of-a-kind project on native land snails!



You might have once noticed the Otway Black Snail on the sign out at Maits Rest - a carnivorous, spectacular species that we are lucky enough to call our own. The Otway Black Snail is endemic to the Otway ranges, meaning it is the only place in the world where this snail lives. But as it turns out, there are other species of native land snails living under our noses.

Land snails are a fantastic way to tell if our ecosystems and their invertebrates, the little things that hold our ecosystems together, are healthy.

The Threatened Species Conservancy organised Dr John Stanistic, aka 'The Snail Whisperer' to present 2 workshops where we learned all about snails and where to find them. The best

places to look are in wet areas tucked inside rolled up bark or under debris at the base of



trees. There are some species that are only

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around 3mm in length, these are called pinwheel snails and can be found with a keen eye and a head torch!

This project also involves surveying landcare members' properties to see what snails can be found right in their backyards.

The project also aims to generally encourage everyone to slow down the next time they are walking in the forest and have a little snail search, you never know what you might find. It could be one of the many threatened snail species of the Otways, or if you're lucky, an undescribed and new species to science!

Take a photo and put it on iNaturalist - there will be a prize for the most snail photos taken during the first ever 'Great Otway Snail Blazer' which will finish in a few weeks. Happy Snailing!

-Georgie Custance

Dark Sky



A good crowd attended the recent presentation about light pollution and the effects it has on wildlife and human welfare. The presentation by Marnie Ogg, Outreach Officer and founder of the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance, was hosted by the Southern Otway Landcare Network. Marnie is also involved in Dark Sky Traveller, a tour company that promotes dark skies tourism. Many of those who attended had stayed on at the Apollo Bay Elderly Citizens Centre after the inspiring session featuring 'BATOOR: A Refugee



Journey' and generous supper hosted by the AB Rural Australians for Refugees

With a very tough act to follow Marnie's presentation was entertaining, engaging and very educational. Marnie, previously the manager of the Sydney Observatory has been focussing her energies onto reducing the impacts of light pollution to preserve the darkness of our skies, and re-engaging people with the natural heritage of the night sky.

Protecting the night sky from light pollution is not only for astronomers and everyday stargazers, but it also has other significant benefits including reduced power consumption - good for both the environment and city budgets.

The presentation provided several examples of excessive and/or poorly located or directed light from communities and the impacts this can have on wildlife, and humans.

Impacts of light pollution on wildlife habitats and ecosystems, especially those of nocturnal and migrating animals, pose serious concerns for scientists as the level of bird, insect and animal fatalities increase. A prime example is that of sea turtle hatchlings moving toward artificial light rather than the sea and becoming easy prey for predators.

With regard to human health, disruption of circadian rhythms, poor immune health, sleep disorders, and a range of other mental and physical health conditions can be improved by a reduction in light pollution. This includes outdoor, and indoor lighting, as well as light emitted from electronic devices.

Marnie also provided some real-world case studies where local governments have taken actions to prevent some of the damage the poorly planned and excessive night lighting is having on our environment. And, as suggested, these steps resulted in significant

savings for the councils and wider communities.

The designation of the Warrumbungle National Park in 2016 as Australia's first Dark Sky Park, (largely due to Marnie's efforts), and the emergence of some local areas working towards becoming dark skies tourist destinations, highlighted the opportunities, (both commercial and environmental), that careful planning and implementation of lighting strategies can create for regional communities.



Milky Way over Apollo Bay photo by John Langmead

Marnie suggested that Apollo Bay, and the Otways in general, are great candidates for nominating as Dark Sky places, and that we should be advocating our local council to work towards this goal.

The Australasian Dark Sky Alliance (ADSA) is an independent non-profit organisation which aims to educate the public and policymakers about night sky conservation. Further information about the Australasian Dark Skies Alliance can be found at

<https://www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org/>

-Trevor Stevenson



Birdwatching Course with Georgie Custance



Living next to the Otway National Park, I am blessed with an ecosystem that is vibrant, plentiful, and visually and aurally spectacular at my doorstep (with the male koala call perhaps an exception). Hearing the morning chorus, watching the birds dip and weave filled my heart - but I knew nothing apart from that they were either small, medium or large birds!

I leapt at the opportunity to join the August Bird Course on offer run by the Threatened Species Conservancy and I am incredibly glad I did. The course was perfectly set up for a range of existing bird knowledge (from zero to pretty good) and was engaging, super informative and really fun!

Starting each week in 'the field' guided by the eyes and ears of Georgie and our volunteer experts, I immediately became more aware of movement, wing shape, feather structure, calls, and behaviour of the birds around us.

The classroom sessions gave context and were super interesting - the pattern of feather replacement is quite remarkable - nature is so smart!

I got so much out of this course, I am still a beginner and will remain so for the next 10 years I suspect, but what I have now is an

eagerness to identify, a sharper eye for the slight nuances in behaviour that distinguish one 'small' bird from another and a renewed vigour to ensure that all of us appreciate and protect our flying (and ground dwelling) birds to the absolute best of our abilities.

I am grateful to Georgie and the team for this opportunity and highly recommend it to everyone. And for me, being a newbie back here, the course linked me with other people who now have shared this experience and together we can and will, continue to contribute to monitoring the health of our birds and supporting the work of grassroots orgs who deserve all our support.

-Melinda Lucas



The Threatened Species Conservancy funded a great course hosted by Georgie Custance. It was a 10-week course in Apollo Bay. I had completed the Australian Birdlife backyard bird count each year for a couple of years but apart from that was a complete novice in birdwatching.

This course presented us with much knowledge about birds and their biology including feather design and structure, throat structure (so that's how birds sing so incredibly!) habitat changes over time and so much more.



We learnt how to use binoculars and would have a short field expedition for one hour then a theory lesson for one hour. Georgie would present pictures of birds and we would have to identify them in

a short quiz at the end of the week's lesson. It was a great way to learn different birds' names and types.

We learnt how to do a scientific bird data survey and look forward to providing bird data in September for important bird species in the Otways as a way of trying to conserve species.

Thanks to Georgie and Nala for providing the knowledge and skills for us to be citizen scientists in the future!

-Denise Heathcote

Bryophytes Workshop with John Walter

Did you know? Bryophytes are plants that include mosses, liverworts and hornworts.



Did you know? Bryophytes are different to other plants, they do absorb water and nutrients through their surfaces.

And did you know? Liverworts have a sexual reproduction system! That got us curious!

At the SOLN Bryophyte workshop on May 6th with John Walter, a lifelong field naturalist, John shared his passion and knowledge for all things really, but in particular bryophytes. Attendees ranged from people who had no idea (me) to people wanting to extend their knowledge.

After giving us an experience on microscopes, helping us identify and differentiate the various types, we then visited the field. We wandered out of Mait's Rest car park (which kept John very entertained the day before) where using magnifying glasses we were able to identify features such as a costa, thalluses, sporophytes and gametophytes. John continued to gently question us 'is this a fern?', "how can you tell this is a moss?" etc to make our learning practical and engaging.

One thing I do know, it was a fun experience, I am unsure if the knowledge stayed with me, but I do know I will look out for the next SOLN workshop. Such a fun way to really stop and look at our beautiful area, I usually look at the majestic nature of our world, this took me into the miniscule with a group of people eager to share their learning and have a great experience.

It was a great session, cheers. Great too to visit the nursery!!

Did you know the next SOLN workshop is on...4 June (Marine Worms)

-Cindy Bohan



Andrew Skeoch Workshop, Walk and Book Launch



Andrew filled the room with his presentation of beautiful nature sound recordings.

Taking our listening to a deeper level, Andrew's

recordings were presented as spectrograms inviting us to notice, admire and chuckle at patterns, tones, and textures in bird song.

They really do express with their voices like we do! Their ability to communicate with calls, songs and trills enable birds to share habitat peacefully and successfully: something humans can be inspired by.

Andrew's take-home message to us was his strong belief that by deep listening we invite better understanding and then importantly, more empathy with the natural world.

Empathy is a powerful tool for addressing the global issue of climate change and Andrew certainly gave us all inspiration to share this idea.

-Jane Buckingham



See page 20 for details

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Grants and applications

Biodiversity Storeys-Habitat Hectares training day



The Ecological Consultants Association of Victoria held an 'Introduction to Habitat Hectares' training session on May 5th which I attended with Andrea de Kauwe at Currawong Bush Park in Doncaster East.

"The Habitat Hectares method is a site-based vegetation assessment method that measures the condition of native vegetation against a benchmark for the same vegetation type, or Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)"

Our interest in learning this method is to assess recent and historical Landcare revegetation projects and practices to not only measure the success or 'areas for improvement' of these projects, but also to remediate sites where possible, to improve our approaches in future revegetation work and to provide evidence to grant providers so that our likelihood of obtaining their support is enhanced. This is encapsulated in the current 'Biodiversity Storey's Project' being put forward by SOLN.

After a run-through of basic concepts our consultant, Yasmin, took us to an area of the

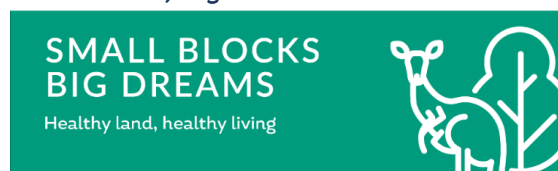


park for assessment. Our first decision was to nominate which Bioregion (Highlands-Southern Fall) and EVC (Valley Grassy Forest) we were standing in. Then we looked at tree canopy health, understory diversity and proportion of indigenous native versus weed plants, whether young trees and shrubs were present and in appropriate numbers, the amount of log and organic litter, and the context of the patch, or site, within the larger neighbourhood. Then we spent time using the information we collected to complete a variety of tables to obtain scores for each category, leading to a final 'Habitat Score'. The higher the score, the better the match to the nominated EVC.

I think I speak for both of us when I say that whilst the workshop certainly helped us to understand the size and scope of the task, we are looking at a steep learning curve to become familiar with the landscape features (topographical, geological, rainfall) and the plants, indigenous and weed species, of our local Bioregions, the Otway Plains and the Otway Ranges, and their composite EVCs. However, there are many in our Landcare network that have the expertise to support us, and we will be calling on them to ensure our project provides meaningful results that will best inform our future work.

-Kim Stevenson

Small Blocks, Big Dreams



Are you a small landholder with big dreams for your property? The Corangamite

Catchment Management Authority's Small Blocks, Big Dreams program is aimed at engaging and empowering small landholders to become environmentally-savvy land stewards by increasing their skills, knowledge and confidence in natural resource management.

Expressions of Interest (EOI) will open on 1 July 2023 for the Bush Blocks Workshop Series (Round 2), hosted by SOLN. Make sure you're on our mailing list, or following our social media, to find out more.

Grant applications submitted 2023

SOLN has been successful in their application for the following grant:

- *Woolworths Junior Landcare (with Apollo Bay P-12 College)*

...and awaits news on the following submitted grant applications:

- *Coastcare 2023 grants (State govt)*
- *Colac Otway Shire Community grants*
- *Bendigo Bank Community partnerships*
- *LVI Junior Landcare (with Apollo Bay P-12 College)*
- *Landcare Support grants*
- *Landcare Program grants*
- *Innovative Biodiversity Monitoring (Aus govt)*

Feral Pig Management Program (@ CEC) needs your Support.

For the last 3 years, SOLN has joined with Central Otway Landcare Network and Upper Barwon Landcare Network to help the Conservation Ecology Centre deliver their Feral Pig and Deer Program.

This program has been funded by the Australian government's *Wild Otways Initiative* and has seen a marked reduction in feral pig numbers throughout the Otways and



has received high praise from the Invasive Species Council as well as the Victorian Feral Pig Coordinator, Sam Armstrong. Monitoring and control of these animals is a huge task given the dense and rugged nature of these landscapes, not to mention the insidious and illegal *new releases* into the wild by recreational hunters.

Federal funding for the Otways program ends on 30 June 2023. To help contribute to keeping a monitoring and control program going in the Otways, please donate here:

www.conservationecologycentre.org/2023/05/25/feral-pigs-dont-belong-in-the-otways/

Cats, cats, and more cats

A few of our members have been quite concerned lately about the increase in feral cats' activity around their properties. The following links might be helpful in deciding how to best deal with this problem:

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/pest-animals/priority-pest-animals/cat-feral-or-wild>

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/pocta-act-1986/humane-vertebrate-pest-control/humane-cage-trapping-of-cats>

<https://pestsmart.org.au/?s=cats>

Have you seen feral pigs or deer in the Otways?

All pig and deer sightings (or damage) can be recorded on the **FeralScan**, an easy-to-use app that sends data to the agencies that monitor and control populations:

<https://www.feralscan.org.au/>

Seeking humane deer control on your property?

If you would like help controlling deer on your property, OR want to support deer control and purchase locally harvested free-range venison, we encourage you to visit [Dama Dama Free Range](#) or call Anthony Roe on 0412 403 221.

EMAIL REGISTER

SOLN's main means of communication is now through our mailings lists. If you haven't yet done so, please click on the link below and you can elect to find out more about land caring, ocean caring, educational workshops, tree planting and more. [Fill out our survey here](#)

If you're reading a hard copy, then go onto our website www.soln.org and go to newsletter to fill in the form.

Or contact us to discuss your interest.

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Thanks for reading & a big thank you to all our contributors!



2023 CALENDAR

Please note social media and email updates may provide more up to date information.*

Event	Date	Time/Location
Shrub Club	Every Wednesday	9.30am-12pm, followed by lunch @ SOLN Support Centre Piggery Lane
Puerulus monitoring	Sat. 3rd June, Sun. 2nd July, Tue. 1st August, Thu. 31st August, Sat 30th September	11am Apollo Bay Harbour, last pontoon
Plant Walks/Seed Collections	Tuesdays 6th June, 4th July, 1st August, 5th September	2.30pm Landcare Office, Nelson St
Otway Ocean Care Marine Worm Workshop	Sun. 4 June	10am-2pm AB Senior Citizens, 4 Whelan St
Sponge Workshop	Sat. 17 th June (tentative date)	TBA
Wye to Wongarra Landcare Group Guided Fungi walks	June Long weekend, free for members	Wye to Jamieson Walking Track
Farmers Market plant stall	Sun 18th June, Sun. 20 th August	8am-12pm Youth Club, Moore St
Tree Planting	Sat. 24 th June	10am, followed by lunch @ Colin Jevons'
Wild Otways Initiative (WOI)	30 June Funding from Aust Govt ceases	
Small Blocks Big Dreams	1 July, EOI open	
Foreshore Market plant stall	Sat. 29 th July	9am-1pm AB foreshore
National Tree Day	Sun. 30 th July	10am, followed by lunch Milford Creek
Small Blocks Big Dreams	1 August, EOI close	
Sea Slug Census=Winter	4-13 th August	
Small Blocks Big Dreams	21 August, successful applicants notified	
Quarterly Landcare Meeting	Thu. 7 th September	TBA

* INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS:

[SOLN facebook](#)

[SOLN instagram](#)

[Otway Ocean Care facebook](#)

[Otway Mushroom and Fungi facebook](#)

SOLN website: www.soln.org