



Photo by Sean Betts

Paying tribute to our amazing staff and volunteers, our End of Year party celebrated a year overflowing with making a difference to and supporting healthy environments and community-so glad you are along for the ride!



Photo by David Simmonds



SOLN COMMUNITY

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

It's always great to wrap up the year with a celebration. This year, it was a celebration of 'thank you's'.

Thank you to Sandra and David and to Kim and Kel for organising our celebration event. Superb food, a delightfully decorated space, and a very warm welcome for everyone who arrived.

Thank you to the musicians Sarah, Phil, Sandra (and the impromptu piano visits from Darcy and Taz). Thanks also to the wonderful choral rendition from the 50+ guests of Kim's recently penned, aquatically themed 'The 12 months of Puerulus...'.

Thank you to the cascading myriad of volunteers who are the energetic drive to everything SOLN creates, supports and facilitates. Your names and faces and the love that you bring are scattered throughout these pages and is present in the smiles you bring whenever we gather. Difficult to cherry pick names because everyone contributes (here's a few though: Ian, Kim, Nigel, Tony, Chris, Colin, Liz, Nick and the SOLN CoM).

Thank you to great financial and operational support we receive from our key partners – the Corangamite Catchment Authority, Barwon Water, Colac Otway Shire Council, Landcare Victoria, Victorian Fisheries Authority, DEECA and a legion of grant providers.

And, of course, the interlacing threads which link and bind and give shape to all of this.... Thank you to the SOLN Facilitators – Andrea, Olly, Seamus, Clem, Joy, Darcy and Geoff. A beautiful blend of energies – strong, delicate, sharp, dynamic.

Collectively, all this support is fundamental to enabling us to be who we are and to do what we do – the living act of creating community. *SOLN Committee*

COMMUNITY GROUPS

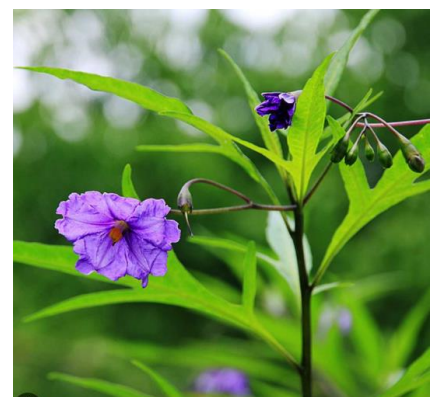
Shrub Club Community Nursery (SCCN)

News from the Nursery



Spring is an exciting time for those of us who have an eye on the plants around us, with beautiful colours emerging throughout the Otways as many of our favourite species come into flower. This year I was struck by

the creamy white of the Milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*) at Marengo Reserve and the pale purples of the Kangaroo



Apple's (*Solanum aviculare*) which were just about everywhere I looked!



As always, things have been busy down at Shrub Club, as we continue to develop the nursery space and get prepared for a big summer of growing. We've upgraded our irrigation system so our taller plants are getting well-watered from overhead, and separated each bench to a different 'zone' using a new irrigation controller, allowing us to deliver the right amount of water to the different species and plants at different stages of growth. It was a big job with lots of fiddling (and some unexpected helpers... see koala) but it came together thanks to the



hard work and out-of-hours help of Kel, Nigel, Hughy and Carradin.

The kitchen shed is looking great with red-ochre around the walls, a black floor and yellow windows – these colours paying respect

to the Aboriginal flag. On top of the red-ochre Richard Collopy directed local kids and the Shrub Club regulars in the creation of a hand-print mural which represents the hills behind Apollo Bay and the connections between the nursery and its people. Endless thanks to Nigel for his constant work there (and of course his apprentice Kel).

Shrub Club is always open to new faces... Come down any Wednesday morning over summer (excluding the last two weeks of December and the first week of Jan) to get involved at the nursery, our excellent team of regulars will be sowing seed, striking cuttings, 'pricking out' seedlings and cuttings, weeding and eating delicious food.

We'll also be heading out on Plant Walks to different locations throughout the Otways most Tuesdays, looking for seed, taking cuttings and building up our plant knowledge together, keep an eye on your emails for dates and locations!

Seamus Fillmore

Children's Morning at Shrub Club

As part of National Children's Week, we invited local kids and their families down to Shrub Club for a sunny Sunday morning of nature-based fun. Local Gadubanud, Gulidjan and Kirrae-wurrung man Richard Collopy opened the proceedings with a smoking ceremony and some words before inviting the kids to put some leaves, sticks and branches on the fire and receive and ochre dot on their forehead. We then began walking and singing our way down to the creek, across the recently opened Clarke's Crossing and into the bush. There we sang



and danced, the kids (and some parents) hopping around like roos, slithering like snakes, putting up spikes like echidnas and waving like trees in the wind (and talking to each other through their roots/feet). We headed back up to the nursery for morning tea, free play, face-painting with bush-fairy Raelene Hyatt and mural painting Richard. Eventually everyone headed home with a smile and some native plants of their choice.



Mum and daughter Shelly and Lily Pascoe said this of the day...

"Thank you SOLN for the wonderful Children's Week event at Shrub Club, we had a fabulous time. We enjoyed connecting with the other families and the morning activities, especially the smoking ceremony, dancing & art with Richard. The gift of a native plant from the nursery, was greatly appreciated and was planted enthusiastically in our orchard that afternoon. Shrub Club is an inspiring and relaxing place, and we look forward to joining you all for more events in the future."

Bonsai Workshop with Barry Woods



On Saturday 14th October I attended a native bonsai workshop hosted by the Southern Otway Landcare Network (SOLN) held at the Shrub Club Community Nursery in Apollo Bay. It was a jam-packed morning learning all about bonsai from local bonsai master Barry Woods.

This was followed by demonstrations of how to create a bonsai and finally starting two of our own. Some attendees were quick enough to create 3 but I was not one of them! Being let loose in the nursery to choose our specimens to work with put paid to that possibility. Each of the 10 participants vied for Barry's expert guidance as he calmly stepped in and saved our trees

from potential disaster. As Barry showed us many beautiful specimens he had collected or grown over his 25 year obsession with bonsai I suspect the seeds of addiction were sown in several attendees. I might be one of them! Barry suggested a follow-up workshop in 6 months to review the progress of our baby bonsai. As we desperately tried to protect them from the fierce winds as we left I couldn't help thinking of the Tamagotchi rage in the 1990's and wondered how many of our baby Bonsai would still be alive in 6 months time. I'll keep you posted :)

Kim Parry

Bonsai Workshop with Indigenous Plants

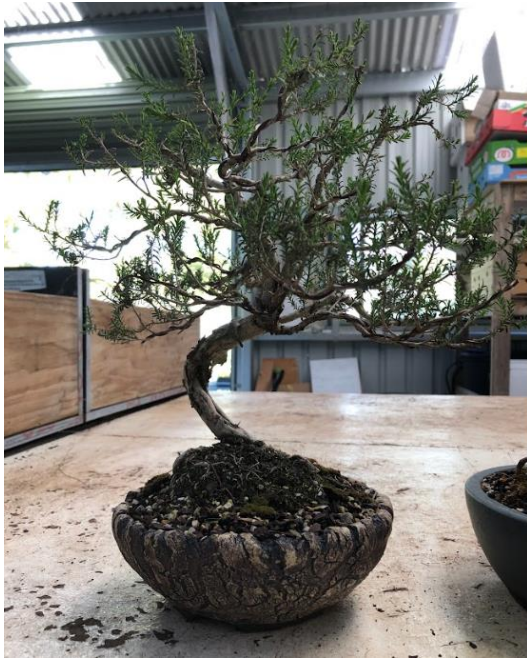
I love bonsais and have tried to grow them many times, but never really succeeded. So I was really excited to hear that Landcare were holding a bonsai workshop to teach people about growing and caring for tiny trees. Barry told us about different types of bonsais and showed us examples of what he'd created. I have always thought of a bonsai as a European or Asian tree species, but Barry makes bonsais out of Australian natives! At the moment, he is very interested in experimenting with species from the Southern Otways.



In the workshop, Barry chose a selection of species from the Landcare nursery for us to experiment with. He showed us how to tease out their roots and plant them (often



on a slight angle), and then gently shape them with wire. Before leaving, he explained how to care for them, hoping next year we might return with 6- 12-month-old survivors to do a second workshop on pruning.



I loved learning about the different forms a bonsai can take and what materials and tools are handy to have. It was a great experience that I shared with my mum, and hopefully my bonsais will return next year for workshop 2, now that I know how to care for them!

Helena Boyd, aged 11

Planting Days

Cape Patton

A morning planting with Landcare at Apollo Bay

We were determined to get to Apollo Bay for an Art Exhibition—an exciting event involving two friends Helen and Kim (and one other) who were exhibiting their artwork for the first time. After a fun and successful opening on Friday night, Kim said she was attending a Landcare planting on Saturday – did

anyone want to join? What a bonus -- not only a free weekend away but a morning planting! Although members of Landcare in the Phillip Island area we have only attended a few plantings recently and were thrilled to be invited to join the Apollo Bay group to get a sense of what is going on in a different place. It was an opportunity to spend the morning outside in a most spectacular location, on the hillside overlooking the ocean – birds everywhere, very large kangaroos passing by and the odd leech reaching out of the grass swaying in the air, (I could have sworn it could smell my blood) – I guess you'd be hard pressed to not have a wonderful view in the Apollo Bay area.



It was great to see the planting work already achieved and growing healthily on the property. The morning was perfect for the quite vigorous work of digging, planting and placing the protective guards around the new plants. Not too cold and not too hot. 600 plants was a significant amount of plants, and the group wasn't ready to stop till all the guards were used – a very enthusiastic, friendly and co-operative group. We managed to cheerfully share hammers and diggers when needed and enjoyed conversations with the other volunteers.

It was fun to compare the plants that are common to the different areas. Phillip Island is far sandier however there are many



similar seaside shrubs and grasses. Thank you to the organizers for a wonderful morning and good luck in all your great work.

Toni Lechte

What a beautiful day, what a view!

After a clear and precise demonstration of planting and placing the tree guard, we were free to go ahead. The warm air between the small established trees offered a good environment and protection to the new plants. Some plants were suitable for exposed areas, others for wet areas. By placing a small plant together with a larger one we gained good use of each tree guard. It was our first time lending a hand to Landcare and was really worthwhile.

Margaret Parker

Habitat for Wildlife

Apollo Bay P12 College Wildlife Garden



Early in Term 4, Seamus, Kim, Ollie and Andrea from Landcare came to Apollo Bay P12 College to teach us about native plants and help create a native wildlife garden. With the Year 9's, we learnt how to plant trees, the names of different native plants, how to use tree planters, and that plants are awesome. We hope that the plants all grow big and healthy so that they attract lots of

native animals such as koalas, kookaburras, possums, butterflies, honey eaters, wrens, yellow chested robins and bees. We will be watching and studying the garden as it grows for the rest of our school years! Thank you, Seamus, Ollie, Kim and Andrea from Landcare, for helping us plant a new garden for our school, and to Woolworths for the grant money!

Written by the Apollo Bay P12 College Year 4 Students with help from Mr Wight.

Apollo Bay Kindergarten's Butterfly Garden Project Blossoms with Community Support

A Thriving Haven for Local Butterflies in Gadubanud Country



Apollo Bay Kindergarten's dedication to environmental education and conservation has taken flight with the establishment of our Butterfly Garden project. This initiative, aimed at raising awareness of the critical role butterfly species play in sustaining a healthy local ecosystem in Gadubanud country, is buzzing with success.

Thanks to the 2023 Woolworths Junior Landcare Grant, the kindergarten was able to embark on this exciting journey. On the 17th of October, the kindergarten hosted a special Learning and Discovery Day with a distinguished lineup of experts, including Oliver Kerr, Landcare Facilitator, Seamus



Fillmore from the Southern Otway Landcare Network, and Georgie Custance, Ecologist (Flora and Fauna) from the Threatened Species Conservancy.

Children eagerly participated in planting endemic plants, specially selected to attract native butterflies. They delighted in matching the plants with the butterflies featured on provided signs, broadening their



knowledge, and kindling their interest in the local flora and fauna.

In addition to planting, the young environmentalists also contributed to beautifying their surroundings by assisting in raking and smoothing out a dry river bed. This project masterfully blends education with hands-on experience, instilling in the children a profound appreciation for environmental conservation and the delicate balance of our ecosystem.

The Butterfly Garden project not only enhances the beauty of the kindergarten but also serves as a valuable learning tool for the children, promoting a love for nature and a sense of stewardship. It's an inspiring example of how a community can come together to nurture a brighter, more sustainable future.

Oliver Kerr

Jevons Tree Planting

I was drawn to visit Colin and Margie Jevons at the Bay recently for work reasons but happened to be around for a scheduled Landcare



planting session. I am certainly not a city-goer and don't mind getting my hands dirty (I have always lived in the outer south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne), but my horticultural experience involves creating gardens from scratch for my own residential front and back yards. Needless to say, the environment was considerably different at Colin and Margie's where the team managed to plant around 600 seedlings during the three-hour session!

I am always ready to accept new challenges with enthusiasm, though I was a little weary having just arrived after a three-and-a-half-hour drive from home! The Landcare team





welcomed me warmly, giving me a few instructions and a quick lesson in planting. I began by working alongside Seamus before planting some vegetation on my own, quickly feeling like part of the team. Chatting casually with the crew opened my eyes to many aspects of the natural landscape that I had never had the need to consider, but which has sparked my curiosity to learn more about. It was like being in another world and so different from the environment in which I have spent my life (especially having to be alert for leeches – thankfully only two took a liking to me!). Afterwards, we enjoyed a casual dinner together where I was able to learn more about Landcare and the environment from Olly, Seamus, Ian, Kel, Kath and Colin, along with magnificent hospitality from Margie. It was a truly rewarding experience and I hope I can find an opportunity to be involved again.

Dr Elli Allen

SOLN Support Centre

Nigel's kitchen



"Well done and a huge thank you to Nigel Senior for his work for the last 12 months, transforming a draughty, dank shed into a place of delight and comfort for the SOLN community. Thanks also to Kel Needham, David Simmonds, Ian Clarke, Richard

Collopy, Nev & Chris Raymant, Ken Forrester, Georgie Custance, Geoff Schmidt, Doug McNaughton and Kevin O'Connell."

Pottery Club at SOLN Support Centre



It's not a match made in heaven, we get it, but the Apollo Bay Pottery Club is most grateful to SOLN for kindly providing us with a temporary home. Initially battling to find space for our boxes of work and

equipment, in what is designed for Nursery work, whilst constantly trying to keep the soil out of our glazes, we have gradually improved our situation: first with a second-hand shed, then recently with some shelves for that shed.

Olly, Georgie Tessa and Suzette were the driving forces getting the Club off the ground and now we have more than 40 active potters with a range of experience from novice level upwards. In this our first year, we've created a variety of work, and brought our works together for our first end of year group



Totem created for Landcare by Apollo Bay Pottery Club



show, 'SUBMERGED', which was held at the Apollo Bay Arts Gallery, 15th to 18th December.

We are most proud of our inclusive and supportive founding members of the Apollo Bay Pottery Club. Being able to make things with our hands while talking about life's challenges in our pottery club provides our community with another positive and supportive space to relax, enjoy company and create.

“When I am 'submerged' in creatively making art; I don't think about anything else, it is a free feeling that allows me to switch off and enjoy a project that is just for me.” *Jo Robertson*



a future for themselves that was fulfilling and rewarding.



Study Tour: Monash University Business students

In my day job I work in the business school at Monash University. They asked me to run a study tour for final-year students to help them apply their classroom learning to the practicalities of the real world before they hit the graduate job market, so naturally I

planned it for the Great Ocean Road, centred on Apollo Bay. My colleague Elli Allen and I developed a theme of sustainability for the tour, not purely environmental sustainability but broadening the focus to sustainability of careers – how these budding business leaders could create

Naturally we looked at successful businesses like Rip Curl in Torquay and the Great Ocean Road Brewhouse in the Bay, but we also went outside the conventional box and talked to a couple of people who had chosen to move to the region after highly successful international business careers; Isla Woods (Southern Waters Farm, and secretary of the Apollo Bay Landcare Group) and SOLN chair Kevin O'Connell. Kevin hosted us at the Landcare Support Centre, which impressed them with the amount and quality of infrastructure and also allowed them to do some planting of seedlings, which got their hands delightfully dirty!

In their post-tour reflection and feedback, every single one of the students mentioned



how much they valued these two discussions and how the real, practical experiences that Kevin and Isla described gave them new insights into what they should think of as important.

Isla's decision making as she progressed in her corporate career and then left it captured their imaginations, and how Kevin's management style of doing what's needed to enable people to



perform at their best that he developed in multinational businesses and now applies to community organisations showed how broadly generalisable leadership skills can really be.

Most of the students had considered success to be measured purely in dollars before then; Kevin and Isla's generous sharing of some very deep thinking made them re-evaluate their plans and they were very grateful to have their eyes opened in this new way. Thank you to both of you for your expertise and generosity in sharing your high-level business experience so frankly and openly!

Colin Jevons

Plant Walks

Plant walks resumed in November starting with Cape Otway Light station on the 7th and continuing until 12th December, when a 6km walk set out from the top of Old Ocean Road, Johanna. Different areas of Cape Patton

were visited, as well as the Marengo floral reserve. Whilst finished for the year, the walks will resume on 9th January, and happen every Tuesday afternoon. Refer to the calendar of events on page 31, and for the most up-to-date information, check the [online calendar](#) on the newly refurbished [SOLN website](#)

Otway Ocean Care (OOC)

Seaweed Matters

Beginning in the Theatre Room at Wildlife Wonders, a small gathering gained great insights from Dr. Prue Francis of Deakin University, Marine Research and Innovation Centre Queenscliff.

I've got everything to learn about the world of seaweed. Greens, Reds, Browns, near surface, intertidal, subtidal, deep. Some of what stood out to me from the presentation, were the threats and the opportunities.

Under severe threat, the Great Southern Reef is host to high percentages of endemic seaweeds of all 'colours'. The simple takeaway: we had better look after it as a whole, and thereby save most of the species dependent upon it.



Compounds in red asparagopsis seaweed have been found to reduce methane emissions from livestock by at least 80 percent

Yet, seaweed opportunities abound: methane-reducing bromoform (think cows);



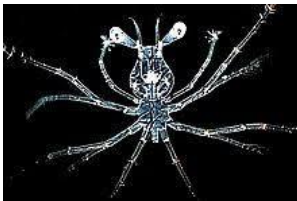
fertilizers; fibres; food sources; carbon capture..... the list goes on.

A little conversation and book borrowing (thanks Darcy) and we headed down to the shore at Marengo to spot a few species of seaweed (and animals) and tap Prue and Darcy's mind just a little more.

A big thank you to both.

Richard White

Life stages of the Southern Rock Lobster



Which sea creature looks like a cross between E.T. and a translucent spider, and spends its first 18

months floating on the ocean currents going who knows where?

Continue reading to find out.

As many of you already know, the Otway Ocean Care group gather on the full moon to monitor puerulus, young southern rock lobster, on behalf of the Victorian Fisheries Authority. There are twelve baskets permanently moored to one of the pontoons in the Harbour. These baskets are emptied into plastic tubs and the contents eagerly assessed. The puerulus are classified and recorded. There is a variety of other sea life which are examined, identified, photographed and posted on Facebook. All specimens are then returned to the water, away from the resident seal.

On Monday 27th November, Dave Reilly from the Victorian Fisheries Authority gave a fascinating talk about the life stages of the southern rock lobster and the science and history of puerulus monitoring.

Life stages

Eggs are lovingly released into the currents by the female lobster (well it looked lovingly on the video). There can be up to a million

eggs, carried under the tail. They hatch and are called naupliosoma, but only for a few hours.

Metamorphose into phyllosoma which float on the ocean currents for 1-2 years. This is the E.T./translucent spider stage. It is thought that they travel mainly east to west in southern Australia and also off the east coast of New Zealand, but little is known for sure.



Moult and become puerulus, and look like tiny rock lobsters. This is the stage we monitor in the Harbour.

Keep moulting annually and after 4-5 years become mature southern rock lobster and are the minimum size for harvesting. Tagging shows that 90% stay within a 1 km radius once mature but a few really like to walk. That's right WALK. One adventurous lobster walked from near Ocean Grove to way out in Bass Strait off Apollo Bay.

So come and lend a hand at the next puerulus monitoring, keep an eye on your inbox.

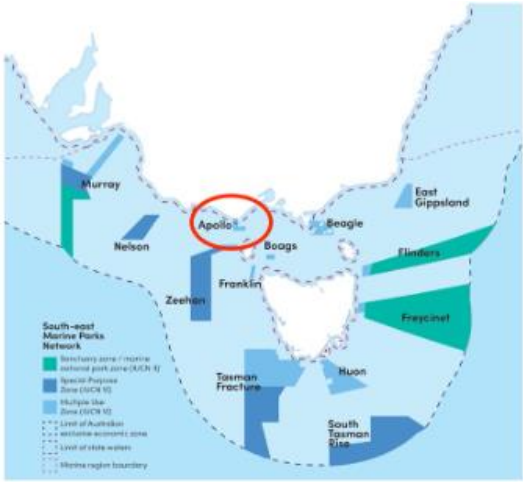
Chris Prewer

Stepping closer with interpretive signage for Marengo to Apollo Bay coastal walk

Our Australian Marine Parks project developing signage for an interpretive coastal walk between Marengo and Apollo Bay about the wonders



beneath the waves, particularly those found within the Apollo Marine Park, is well underway. Working with Adam Cardalini from Daniel Ierodiaconou’s marine research team at Deakin University, Jan Lewis from the Apollo Bay Historical Society, and the Vic Fisheries team, the written information for the signage is now complete and awaiting approvals.



Envisaged as a series of subtle walking trail signs, the information on the signage is an invitation to learn more, and QR codes will take people to the Otway Ocean Care website where they can read more detailed information and find images of key species and ecosystems within the Apollo Marine Park. The website content is also being developed as part of this project.

I’m excited to announce here that Keeray Woorroong artist Dr. Vicki Couzens of the

Eastern Maar nations coalition will be creating the artistic design for the signage and associated website. I’m really looking forward to seeing this project come together in 2024, and raising awareness and interest in the incredibly special salt-watery world that lies beyond our shores.

This, Our Marine Parks Grants project, is funded by the Australian Government.

Andrea de Kauwe, SOLN Facilitator & Science Communicator

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 Ocean Care Snorkel Guides
“Another highlight was perusing through the fantastic Otway Ocean Care Snorkel Guide produced by Darcy Nugent”
Shaya Kaartinen-Price.



See Landcare staff or visit Wildlife Wonders to purchase.



Otway Mushroom and Fungi Group (OMFG)

The group had our final fungi foray at Mait's Rest in the Great Otway National Park in October and saw turkey tail from the *Trametes* genus, and weird and wonderful woody pore fungi from the *Ganoderma* genus – we're pretty sure. Also, eyelash cups (Genus *Scutellinia*) and a few fleshy agarics too that had survived the heatwave. For hundreds of millions of years fungi have been finding ways to



decompose the debris left behind by other organisms, and species take over where another has left off – they colonise in waves.

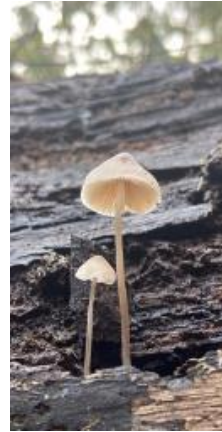
You can look forward to a Week of Fungi in the week of 8 April 2024 when we welcome Alison Pouliot back and will get into a whole lot of fungi surveying. Get in touch if you'd like to get on our mailing list.

For those of you who might be interested, the **Moorabool Mushroom Festival 2024 will be held on the weekend of May 23-24 in Bacchus Marsh**. Put on by MYCommunity Applied Mycology, Early Bird tickets are available now. Speakers, tickets, and participation opportunities are available [here](#).



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!

See Landcare staff or visit Wildlife Wonders to purchase.

Otway Bird Observers (OBO)

Otway Bird Observers Bird Walk

The Otway Bird Observers recently hosted a very successful first 'Meet and Tweet' event at Barham Estuary on Saturday, November 4, 2023.



Photo: Amber Nosedo - Superb Fairy Wren

The day featured a gentle stroll along the river, exploring the diverse birdlife that hang out in the river and in the riverside vegetation. Attendees ranged from seasoned birdwatchers to novices, which created a pleasant atmosphere of sharing and learning about the birds spotted.



Photo: Amber Noseda – Buff Banded Rail

A highlight was the fortunate sighting of a Buff-banded Rail and a Spotted Crake side by side, along with the echoing song of a reed warbler and magpie-larks caring for their chicks in a mud-made nest. To build its nest, the Magpie-lark gathers plant fibres and uses mud like mortar to plaster everything together.

The event concluded with a delightful lunch, during which plans for future bird-related activities were discussed.

The Otway Bird Observers are grateful to everyone who joined and look forward to future gatherings celebrating the shared joy of birdwatching and group learning.

OBO is eager to kick off some field trips, regular bird walks, local Birddata surveys, a school visit, a Gang-Gang Cockatoo Awareness Project, and a Seabird & Shorebird Identification Course in late Jan/Feb 2024. Keep an eye out to grab a spot as they will fill fast!

Some amazing photos were skilfully taken by Amber Noseda during the walk, who brought along her mighty lens to capture fantastic shots of the birds we encountered. Amber has also just finished a 'Birds of the Otways' calendar for 2024 which looks incredible. Get in touch with her at Great Ocean Road Photography to purchase.

To keep in the loop about what is happening with OBO contact clem.landcare@soln.org to join our mailing list or join our group on Facebook! All birding levels welcome.

Cheers, Georgie Custance

FYI: Australasian Bittern sighted!

An Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) has been sighted at Wild Dog creek in late November by Michael McKenzie of Parks Victoria, Colac, just upstream of the bridge.



This is very exciting as it is critically endangered in this area, and very rarely seen, and this suggests that the work done to restore the estuary is working as reed beds have been established over a larger area, surrounded by trees and shrubs.

The bittern is part of the heron family, large, 660- 760mm, brown with barred and mottled markings, some darker some lighter. Juveniles are lighter brown, with stocky build and thick necks. It is semi-nocturnal but can be seen occasionally in the daytime. It fishes in shallow water beside reed beds on frogs, small fish and insects etc, and makes a feeding platform. The *B. poiciloptilus* is very shy and expert at standing still with its protective camouflage. It is known to be at the Princetown wetlands, with sightings at Hordern Vale and, rarely, Marengo. It has a very distinctive call that early settlers mistook for the



'bunyip', being a repeated 'Boom boom boom'. The nest is a platform of reeds, flat and interlaced. Its flight is similar to a heron.



At dusk Ken and I saw a bird, that may have been it, walk then fly from the edge of the road over Wild Dog creek,

about 300 m upstream: light brown, very different from an owl.

(A young cormorant was found near there recently, with a broken wing and it had to be euthanized, probably hit by a car, so take care even at night!)

Little is known of the Australasian Bittern population, but it is declining in all areas due to clearing of wetlands and marshes and other threats. For example, the development of an ecotourism venture adjacent to the wetland at Princetown, which was vigorously opposed by locals.

Birdlife Australia have established a 'Bittern Project' to collect data (eg. from tracking four birds) and raise the profile of this interesting and cryptic bird.

Judi Forrester

Edible Gardens Group

Cracking the EGG with Paul West

One Sunday morning in October, a group of 40 local green thumbs headed to the Apollo Bay Community Garden hoping to find celebrity chef and edible garden maestro Paul West waiting amongst the veggie beds. Instead, they found SOLN Chair Kevin O'Connell standing upright in sideways spring rain (and a drizabone), pointing them towards the Community Hall.

Following this last-minute change of location, the group found themselves seated in the hall, warm and dry with cups of tea in hand, engaged in a roundtable discussion of their experiences, successes and challenges around growing food. Led by the enthusiastic, knowledgeable and ever-funny Paul, we chatted about why we garden, the



amazing things already happening in our edible gardening community, ideas for future events and workshops, and of course many gardening secrets and tricks.

Although we didn't get to stick our hands in the soil or pinch any beans straight off the stem, the event was a great success, and an awesome reboot for Apollo Bay's Edible Gardens Group (EGG - formerly known as the Edible Gardens Trail) who have recently come under the SOLN umbrella.

Apollo Bay and the Otways have a formidable edible gardening culture, with our beautiful community and school gardens, a community composting machine, a local permaculture group, and a heap of experienced green thumbs willing to share their time and knowledge. EGG hopes to bring together these gardeners to facilitate connection and knowledge sharing, bring experts into the area to run workshops, and help facilitate and build our community's ability to grow our own delicious food. We have many plans forming for summer and the new year, starting with some garden



visits around the Otways, keep your eyes peeled and get involved!

And just a side note, when you get 40 gardeners to bring a dish for lunch, the results are spectacular...

Seamus Fillmore



Shelly Pascoe, Seamus Fillmore, Andrea de Kauwe, Paul West, Kevin O'Connell

How does your edible garden grow?

On Sunday 26th November, over 20 people gathered at Apollo Bay Community Garden to carpool for a tour of two productive gardens in town, to peek at how other people do it, and what they've learnt along the journey of growing food.



Fiona Davidson showed us around her patch first. A smaller 'town' garden in a residential Marengo street, Fiona's husband, Adrian,

has created a number of raised garden beds in a fully netted space that is easy on the back and eye. Fiona's passion for the space he has created for her was evident as she talked about her herbs, tomatoes, leafy greens, cucurbits and berries. Complete with watering system and a view of the Southern Otways, we all marvelled at this productive corner of her garden. There is much to learn from Fiona's 'just get in there and do it, or Google it' attitude. Fiona's garden produces all her vegetable and herb needs, and enough for herself, Adrian and grown daughters to share with their friends.



We then drove out along the Barham River to Shelly's bushland home of many acres. Shelly is growing with the aim of feeding her family and eventually the broader community. Hers is an extensive garden, surrounded by forest, with the cultivated portions given predominantly to food production. Shelly and Jack have just completed a large, netted orchard and Shelly proudly showed us her selection of young fruit trees, some grafted in Tony Webber's workshops. Wildlife coming out of the forest to share Shelly's food is an ongoing challenge, as is her hungry pony, so the enclosed orchard should ensure there's food for the humans. She recommended co-planting with borage and calendula, for bees and as an ample ready-placed compost crop. She is also an enthusiastic advocate for making your own compost and took us



through her system for doing it. Stay tuned for some composting workshops in 2024.

My biggest lesson from Shelly's garden (having a steep block that can exhaust you from one trip up and down), is to create efficiencies that make gardening easy - having tools and compost where you need them, and produce beds close to the house so you can see them every day and nip outside in the Otways weather to collect a bit of this or that for your pot. I think these are all key permaculture principles, and they invite 30 mins spent in the garden here and there, accommodating competing life needs with your gardening.

We returned to the Community Garden around midday for a cuppa and some delicious baked goods, as well as some swapping or gifting of excess produce. Such a lovely way to spend a moody Sunday morning in late Spring!

The next open gardens event is scheduled for 20th December. Contact Andrea or Seamus if you're keen to join the mailing list.

Andrea de Kauwe

Apollo Bay (AB LG)

Notice: Apollo Bay Landcare Group AGM to be held in in January 2024

The Committee of Management resolved at the last AGM to schedule future AGM's in January when more members are likely to be in the Bay. Our AGM will be held on the Australia Day Weekend and the time and venue will be circulated in December.

We welcome any expressions of interest from Members to nominate for the Committee and there are a number of ways to contribute. Mark Gordon will not be seeking re-election and so we are on the lookout for a Newsletter Editor and Treasurer for next year."

Wild Dog Creek Working Bee

RIP Cape Wattle Weeds!

I really enjoyed getting dirty with the Landcare working Bee folks by Wild Dog Creek. I learned how to identify baby Blackwood Trees and differentiate them from the South African Cape Wattles.



Juvenile Blackwood

Cape wattle

We made quick progress cutting back a solid thicket of Cape Wattle in a short amount of time with our group of volunteers.

I heard one volunteer singing 'I hate trees!' as he hacked joyfully and added to the mountain of Cape Wattle cut offs. The cut and paste job was meticulous, so hopefully the regrowth in future sees more Blackwoods grow to maturity.

It was good for the Soul to meet lovely locals and to talk about both the killing and the growing of trees; the cycle of life which ultimately nourishes us all. This working bee was funded through Coastcare Victoria and will be followed up by an autumn revegetation day.

Joey Remenyi

Skenes Creek Working bee

On November 11th a group from Apollo Bay Landcare Group tackled the weeds of the Skenes Creek estuary. Olly described Skenes



Creek as the ‘cess pit’ of Otway weeds and after removing and poisoning numerous weeds for three hours I have to agree with him. Four of us tackled the Skenes Creek Roadside of the creek, while the other groups headed south and west, where we cut down and poisoned a large stand of *Genista monspessulana* or Montpellier Broom.



The area looked great afterwards as it opened up the view to the creek from the road. Other weeds in the estuary that were cut down and poisoned by the rest of the group included *Psoralea pinnata* (Blue Psoralea), *Ilex aquifolium* (European Holly) and *Paraserianthes lophantha* (Cape Wattle).

After the hard work a much-appreciated BBQ was provided, many thanks to the chef!

This was my first weeding working bee with SOLN and I was impressed at how well organised it was with all the tools and gloves provided. Having samples of the weeds we were to target was very useful too. It was a great way to meet a few Skenes Creek locals and I look forward to the next one.

Michael Walker

Lighthouse to Lavers (L2L LG)

FARM AND PLANT DISEASE - BIOSECURITY – LANDCARE WORKSHOP

A small crowd gathered on a sunny morning in the chilly Lavers Hill Hall recently for the biosecurity workshop, to kick off the series ‘Understanding our Land - From Hordern

Vale to Yuulong’, part of the CCMA-funded Landcare grant.



In our community there are a small number of primary producers including regenerative farmers who raise alpacas, sheep, cows, bees, grow trees, flowers, and many more growing edible foods. A number of us are walkers too, who hike and walk the Great Ocean Walk and elsewhere exploring our beautiful forests and heathlands – what risk do we pose to the plants and animals on our route? So we gathered to have questions answered like: What are our responsibilities as farmers/ as walkers, as bike riders or off-road drivers? What are the risks of disease? How are they transmitted? What can I do to help manage or avoid those risks? If I’m the neighbour of a primary producer and am visiting them, what should I NOT do? (if I want to help the situation).

Dr. Hannah Wigg from Agriculture Victoria was a great presenter. A veterinarian by trade, she grew up on a beef farm and pitched her talk well to the people present.

We learned about a bunch of things: the risks that feral cats, deer and pigs pose as they range over the landscape and onto private property; the value of having a Property ID code so that you’re contactable should an outbreak occur and the department want to contact you to mitigate risks and help you; mosquito borne diseases and the increasing risks as the climate warms; all the hay and other feed that come onto the property for your animals; what



can happen if feeding pigs human scraps particularly imported salami; awareness of farm animals having access to dog or cat food; tapeworms and hydatid disease; toxoplasma parasite in cat faeces and the risks to pregnant sheep (and humans); Johnes disease (OJD) which causes wasting. After the workshop and warming up outside the Hall in the sun, we headed out to 'Warakeela', Sue and Harry's alpaca farm in Wyalangta. We were all impressed by their persistence and work on developing their biosecurity management plan – which they shared with us all - the practices they've implemented, and we talked over the danger points and risk spots. We realized it would never be perfect; that it's a balance between what you're prepared to risk and the particular risks that you have on your property.



We also learned about plant hygiene, most particularly phytophthora and the 400 species it attacks in Australia. The talk focused on what we can do to prevent the destruction of grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) and banksias by phytophthora dieback in our Otways heathlands and coastland. Those strange and wonderful spraying trees can be 150-200 years old.

When thriving in a grove they are a haven for small vulnerable mammals, the endangered southern brown bandicoot, bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*), pygmy possum, several species of antechinus and dunnart, who hide under



their skirts as safe harbour from foxes and feral cats. But once infected by the phytophthora, which attacks the roots, impeding the uptake of water and nutrients, the plant quickly goes brown and disintegrates in weeks or months.

Soon there's nowhere for the mammals to hide. Studies in the Carlisle Heath



have shown exactly no surviving mammals in infected areas. So we felt motivated to practice boot and tool and car hygiene care to remove dry caked mud which holds the phytophthora spores, by brushing, and cleaning with a 70% methylated spirit (30% water) dunking with a wash or spray. If you want to know more, check out this great 8-minute CCMA video: <https://youtu.be/MXodxk3Kyrk>

Overall, a great learning session which we all wished more of the community could have attended to raise awareness of the issues.

Joy Whitton



Lighthouse to Lavers (Hordern Vale Glenaire) Landcare Group

Biosecurity Workshop

Under the Biosecurity Act 2015, there is a general obligation on people to be aware of their surroundings and take action to prevent the introduction and spread of pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants. Biosecurity is not a dirty word, and awareness of your own agricultural or environmental risks pertinent to your own business operation will help protect agricultural, forestry and fisheries production systems, and our own indigenous plants and animals.



Dr Hannah Wigg from Agriculture Victoria was the guest speaker. Hannah's professional knowledge on Biosecurity topics as the District Veterinary Officer was freely shared in an informal setting. From the implications of feeding swine to pigs through to JBAS Accreditation for beef producers, the main take home is the complexity of your own biosecurity plan will depend on your own appetite level for risk. My only disappointment was there were not more people in attendance to take home Hannah's critical knowledge base. It is one thing to enforce your own biosecurity plan within property boundaries, but single boundary fences remain a biosecurity risk if the management systems are not in place on the other side. The rubbing of animal noses over fence lines can spread Pestivirus,

Johnes disease and numerous other undesirable pathogens.

We made an afternoon farm visit to



Warrakeela Farm down the Wait-a-While road in Wyelangta, home to Onyx Alpacas, and Harry and Sue. What a beautiful spot!

Harry and Sue are very diligent on their own record keeping for their Biosecurity Plan. They share only boundaries with the National Park, but that also has various management issues for them. From livestock medication, NLIS registrations, Stock Feed compliance, the quarantine paddock for new arrivals or sick animals, vehicle and people farm access.....the list goes on. I absolutely applaud the technical data recording information and systems Harry and Sue have put in place for their own operation, coupled with exemplary alpaca management skills. Getting back to what Dr Hannah Wigg advised.....they obviously have very little tolerance for risk at Onyx Alpacas.

Ros Denney

Lavers to Lighthouse Edible Gardens Group

The new edible gardens group met for the first time at Erica and Leon's place in Johanna. Although almost at the top of a hill it feels tucked away, there is so much vegetation. Erica grows her herbs and



vegetables cheek-to-check with her many flowering, bird-attracting shrubs and trees, native and non-native, and we walked along the paths looking at them. She mostly uses wicking and raised garden beds for her vegetables, that she has made herself. Because she breeds chickens, she has a constant source of chicken manure which she allows to break down before applying it. The Russian garlic had beautiful curling stems and looked amazing, and this year she was giving Siberian cherry tomatoes a go hoping she'll have a crop as last year was not very successful. Bush rats are a frustration and recently ate her thriving – to that point - crop of silver beet.

I liked the way Erica's Garden had vegetables/herbs and trees and flowering plant side-by-side. We saw Golden Whistlers and Eastern Spinebills and bees and other insects were attracted to the close warmth and protection of the garden which is beautiful to be around. I enjoyed talking growing things and gained confidence and learned some new varieties that I hadn't heard of before. Doug gave us some beans which produce all year round and which I planted that afternoon. Erica gave us some of her chook's eggs.

This month we met at Gabrielle and Dean's at The Perch restaurant in Lavers Hill, where they walked around what is essentially the kitchen garden for the restaurant. They're growing many kinds of edible flowers, strawberries and other berries, and quite a few indigenous plants like strawberry gum, kind leaf, river mint, salt bush and midden berry, that they use or will use in the future, in the restaurant. They also collect the berries of mountain pepper. We finished the visit with a walk around the rainforest on the property which was incredibly beautiful. I like talking with others about growing things. It helps to grow confidence, and I get

inspired to try new vegetables and varieties. On both occasions, people have shared cuttings or plants or beans for planting immediately, or eggs.

Our local edible gardens group meets once a month. The intention is to visit each other's gardens, talk about techniques, and have an occasional specialist speaker. Come along, share any produce you have to spare. Learn, talk and join us for a cup of tea and a natter.

For any questions or to let me know you're interested and what day of the week would suit you, phone Joy 0434 405745 or email joy.landcare@soln.org

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.

Marengo Barham (MBLG)

On 3rd December the group commenced a weeding and revegetation project of the Marengo Tramway Reserve. The Reserve is a strip of public land that runs between the Cemetery and Panorama Crescent.



Our focus on the day was the removal of some of the environmental and noxious weeds. As usual in the Otways, blackberry bushes played a significant role in in this activity and 'ouch!' was heard many times. There were also at least 4 varieties of pittosporums from New Zealand which are a



popular garden hedging plant. We have observed that these plants have increasingly escaped gardens to become invaders of areas at least 100 metres from the parent plants. With all the rain that we have had many small saplings were easily pulled out of moist soil.

Bigger shrubs such as yellow broom and the ever-present agapanthus were cut as close to ground level as feasible, and the stumps painted with a herbicide gel. This method allows the targeting of specific weeds without effecting desirable plants and other problems of spray drift.

Ninety minutes of weeding was followed by a brief discussion of the potential of the site and lunch.

If you would like to be involved in this project send us a message on our new email address and we will let you know when our next weeding session will take place.:

MarengoOtwayCatchmentLandcare@gmail.com

Liz Gliszczynski

Wye to Wongarra (W2W LG)

WYE to WONGARRA LANDCARE wishes all a peaceful holiday time. We have 100 pairs of unopened Texas Clear Safety Glasse to give away if anyone can use them. Email w2wlandcaregroup@gmail.com .

Anne Newell

FROM SOLN'S FACILITATOR HOT DESK

Andrea de Kauwe

Biodiversity Storeys

The beginnings of the Southern Otway Landcare Network (SOLN) were very much about silviculture: the planting and growing of trees in a patchwork landscape of large-scale deforestation (for farming and industry) and pristine old growth forest thriving in the high rainfall environment of the Otways Ranges. These plantings of mostly eucalypts and blackwoods have helped stabilise soil and commence the journey of rehabilitation, but it's now time to focus on the other layers — or storeys — of our forests to create/ensure biodiverse landscapes and ecosystems.

Biodiversity is the variety of all living things: from different plants, animals and microorganisms to the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form. If we lose one species, we lose a substantial genetic resource and a component of a complex web of relationships that can have a cascading



effect on other ecosystem components and may ripple out to other ecosystems as well.

Australia is one of twelve megadiverse countries, which together contain 75% of the planet's total biodiversity. As one of the only countries in this group classed as a 'developed' nation with stable government, Australia has a special responsibility to lead the way on biodiversity conservation and management. However, our report card on biodiversity conservation isn't good. Over the last two centuries, we have lost more mammal species than any other continent on Earth and we continue to have one of the highest rates of species decline amongst countries of OECD. In our latest State of the Environment Report (2021), the two pressures that have caused the most extinction of Australian terrestrial species are introduced species and habitat loss/clearing.

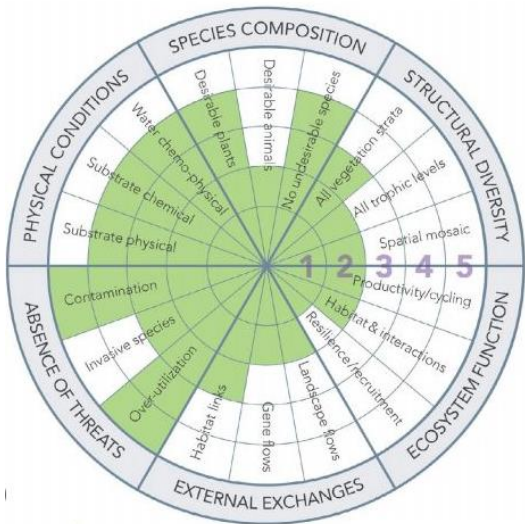
Ecologists have found that the best way to conserve biodiversity is to save habitats and ecosystems, rather than trying to save a single species. Conserving and restoring biodiversity is a Herculean task when we still

have quite a patchy understanding of all the components that make up an ecosystem, particularly when it comes to invertebrates, microscopic communities and life in the soil. However, what we can possibly do is address the known/presumed macroscopic absences in a landscape and add them back to the system in the hope that they encourage the micro-communities to re-establish or invigorate, thereby building up some semblance of the degraded ecosystem.

Biodiversity Storeys is a project that seeks to understand the gaps that exist in SOLN's past revegetation work to determine what plant communities/species need to be added to Southern Otway landscapes to adequately restore biodiversity and flourishing ecosystems. I'm working together with Kim Stevenson to conduct a pilot study of a collection of properties that have undertaken Landcare revegetation works on over the years. Some of these properties were assessed back in 2017 by Mike Nurse and Libby Richies using Habitat Hectares to score revegetation success and cameras to look at wildlife usage; these properties were compared to reference sites of a similar EVC. With the assistance of Ken Forrester, we will employ Habitat Hectares to assess these properties again, as well as employing a new assessment method that is described as a better tool. In addition, now that Georgie Culance has trained up a fabulous group of bird observers, we'll be conducting bird surveys at these sites.

The pilot study will teach us what works and what needs to be recorded and how. The project's findings will be applied in our work going forward: understanding how to increase survival of seedlings, informing the necessity of re-visiting old SOLN plantings to undertake infill planting, establishing good process for recording and filing

information. If we can repeat these assessments over the longer term (1, 2, 5, 10 years), they will have much to contribute to our understanding of ecosystem restoration.



As well as Kim’s time and energy, the project is being supported by long-term SOLN members and Southern Otway landholders like Ken and Judy Forrester, Ian Clarke, Jane and Bill Gross, Colin Jevons, Kel Needham, Lizzie Corke and Shayne Neal, and Jack Pascoe. I thank them all for their input and ideas, and also the Colac Otway Shire and the Victorian government for funding this work. And I look forward to sharing more about the project with you all in the coming year.

Andrea

Joy Whitton and Clem Wetherall

Facilitating activities and workshops

This year I’ve been leading the Otway Mushroom Fungi Group (OMFG) and some walks and forays and a talk by Angair volunteer Neil Tucker. Early in the year I was interested to do some training at the Herbarium on how to collect fungi for their collection and have been trialling ways the group can record fungi in the Otways so that

it can be accessed and shared easily with scientists and other citizen specialists. Fungi has high and low seasons when mushrooms can still be seen but are less spectacular. It seems to me that if we are to come to understand it, we need to be observant all year.

With Clem Wetherall, I’m a Lighthouse to Lavers Landcare Facilitator and we ran a well-attended workshop to map out what the community is interested in learning more about and responding to that. Clem received a CCMA grant to deliver six workshops on some fundamental properties of land care, which we’ve started to deliver. Our first workshop was on biosecurity. I’m also starting up our new local Edible Gardens Group for this region. We walk around each other’s gardens and hear and see what each other are trying, and hopefully, gain confidence to spread our wings a bit more ourselves. We had our second meet in December at Gabrielle and Dean’s place at The Perch. Get in touch if you’d like to join us.

Recently I put together a fun program and grant application for National Science Week in 2024 – I really enjoyed hearing the speakers in the program SOLN delivered in 2022. If successful, we will run fascinating talks, walks and forays by Australian scientists that will inspire local community members and school students with the ‘mysteries of the land and sea’ in our Otways environment. Topics include the recent 2023 Otways earthquake, whales of the southern waters, Otways geology, and hidden creatures (glow worms, frogs - including the recently discovered Otways smooth frog, *Geocrinia sparsiflora*, humble invertebrates) and land mammals. There’ll be chances to learn more about how to participate as citizen scientists too.

Joy



Darcy Nugent

Over the summer Otway Ocean Care will be carrying out our Coastcare project involving, a series of invasive species education and management program, and workshops focusing on Fish and Shell identification (dates TBC).

We are also excited to welcome to the Ocean Care team, Alisa Ontikova a Deakin University student who successfully applied for our internship program in collaboration with the Threatened Species Conservancy. Among other things, Alisa will be assisting with the development of our website and the implementation of the Coastcare Project.

We'll be continuing our monthly Puerulus Monitoring (upcoming dates in Calendar, page 31) and have now got our Instagram



account up and running @otwayoceancare— so follow us there to stay in the loop and see all our best photos!

Darcy

Seamus Fillmore and Oliver Kerr



Planning a revegetation project? Order your plants now!

As you may know, undertaking a successful revegetation project requires some pre-planning smarts. The best time to plant is during the cooler, wetter months (allowing plants to develop their root system before the summer heat), which means your seedlings must be grown the summer/autumn before you plant. For anyone undertaking reveg work in the Otways, Shrub Club Community Nursery has a wide range of local native plants suited to the various ecosystems/EVC's of the area. If you'd like to get plants in the ground next year, now is the time to order, so we can collect the right seed and grow you the best plants for your job. We're happy to help you choose the right plants for the job too! Next year we will be raising our price to \$3 per plant (in a forestry tube), however all orders before the end of this year will only have to pay \$2.50 per plant, have we convinced you yet?

Get in contact with Seamus and Olly to chat about your project.

seamus.landcare@soln.org

oliver.landcare@soln.org.



EVENTS



Small Blocks Big Dreams: Bush Block Workshop Series

Small Blocks, Big Dreams Workshop 1

Having recently moved to a small block in the Otways, my partner and I jumped at the chance to be part of the Small Blocks, Big Dreams workshop series. We do have big dreams for our block but want to ensure we have some solid information on how to go about regenerating land in the local context, so the program has come at the right time for us.

The introductory session, held at Wildlife Wonders in October, was great way to kick off the series. After a powerful and moving welcome to country by Kirrae Whurrung man, Joey Chatfield-Berg, we heard from Wildlife Wonders co-founder, Lizzie Corke, about how the property was regenerated from a cleared dairy farm to the diverse, abundant, and beautiful landscape of eucalypt forest, wet gullies, and grasslands that it is today. Paul West was ever the entertaining host of the event. His rollicking tales of living on the land and infectious



passion for all things soil, trees and living in step with nature set the tone for the series.



At the first session of the series, held two weeks later, we were shown how to use the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority's NRM portal which allows property owners to find maps of their land and its various natural values, including soil types, water sources and vegetation classes. Ecologist Georgie Custance from the Threatened Species Conservancy ran a session on supporting biodiversity on our properties and introduced us to some of the amazing and unique fauna and fungi found in the Otways.

This was followed by a session out at the Landcare nursery with Mike Robinson-Koss from Otway Greening on the practicalities of regenerating land for biodiversity but also for managing fire in the landscape. It was interesting to hear how Mike's, and Landcare's, approach to regeneration has evolved over the past 30+ years, with a more complex and nuanced understanding of how we can design plantings and support biodiversity today.

A highlight of these sessions was meeting other custodians of small blocks in our local area and sharing all our 'big dreams' as well as the challenges to achieving them. I can see that this network of land stewards is going to be invaluable, particularly the opportunity to learn from those that have been on their land for some time.



Thank you SOLN and CCMA for putting together such a wonderful series. I look forward learning more over the coming weeks.

Abby Imhoff

Reflections on Bush Blocks Workshop II held Saturday November 25th at the Senior Citizens Hall, Apollo Bay

Perhaps one of the best aspects of the workshops that we have found special is the opportunity to meet other block owners and chat about our circumstance and the dreams we have for our own properties. To be able to do this over lunch and a cuppa was great and supports the sharing of information and certainly helps develop the Landcare community.

The session on weeds with Neal Tucker from ANGAIR was very enlightening and useful. To be presented with information and great advice on what weeds are and how to deal with them was invaluable. We were also provided links to useful resources and reminded that when dealing with weeds - we need to follow up, follow up, follow up, follow up.....



James Templeton from the Conservation Ecology Centre (CEC) presented on the problem of invasive animals in the Otways. It was good to hear about the work being done on trying to reduce the number of feral pests like pigs, deer, cats and foxes. These animals are a threat to the land, wildlife and people and a huge challenge to control.

James talked about the complexities and sensitivities presented by the wide range of properties and natural bush classifications, not to mention the protection laws in need of change.



After lunch we headed to Cape Otway where Jack Pascoe and Shayne Neal (CEC) spoke to us about fire preparedness and explained how planned burns can help manage fuel loads. We were given practical advice regarding the things we could do to prepare properties against fire. We were shown an area of bush that had been previously burnt to see how the land responds to burning and the impact of removing 'the understory ladders' that can carry fire into the canopy. We felt encouraged to get to know our own bush as well as we could using the information and resources available. Again, each environment is unique but there are common principles that can help to protect our land and property.

Learning together is incredibly helpful and Landcare organisers have provided us with knowledgeable people, helpful resources and a community of likeminded people who are working hard to preserve and improve the land they are invested in. And delicious food as well!

Colin & Wendy Warren, Cape Otway



**SMALL BLOCKS
BIG DREAMS**
Corangamite CMA

The Corangamite CMA has received funding through DELWP's *Our Catchments Our Communities* and has partnered with several groups and organisations to plan, design, and deliver this program. SOLN is leading the Bush Blocks series delivery, organising locations and speakers for the workshops, as well as coordination of property assessments.

More information about this and other programs the CCMA delivered this year can be found [here](#).

2023 SOLN AGM

SOLN Report



Very busy year by our six facilitators and our legion of volunteers. We have built a very engaged and supportive culture within SOLN and helped create this within the nine groups we support. We have developed an approach which nourishes and sustains our on-ground projects and the natural history education program which we provide across the Southern Otways.

Motion without notice:

Moved, Andrea de Kauwe, seconded unanimously by all other attendees:

SOLN celebrates today, and always, the rich cultural history and traditions of Australia - forever mindful that this vast continent is

home to the oldest living cultures in the world.

We recognise today, and always, the value of the knowledge systems of First Nations peoples and strive to use these understandings and wisdom to guide our interactions with the land and sea.

As a grassroots community organisation, we will continue to work with First Nations peoples at the grassroots level and above, in order to create the best future for this country.

2023/24 SOLN Committee of Management Members

Apollo Bay Landcare Group

Ken Forrester, Colin Jevons, Kevin O'Connell.

Horden Vale to Glen Aire Landcare Group

Joy Whitton, Kel Needham, David Simmonds.

Otway Barham Landcare Group

Jeanette Carrington, Liz Gliszczynski, Tony Webber.

Wye to Wongara Landcare Group

Anne Newell.

2023/24 SOLN Office Bearers

Chair: Kevin O'Connell

Deputy chair: Tony Webber

Treasurer: Kel Needham

Secretary: Colin Jevons





The CCMA Quarterly Meeting comes to Apollo Bay

SOLN and Wildlife Wonders (WW) hosted the November 2023 CCMA (Corangamite Catchment Management Authority) Facilitators and Chair's meeting in Apollo Bay. These meetings are rotated by the CCMA across the region a few times each year and are a great way for each local landcare network to showcase their part of the region to other members of the CCMA Network.

After the traditional welcome Melanie Oke from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) provided us with a series of important updates including details of the Landcare Facilitator Review in March next year (post meeting note: a 12-month extension to the current Victorian Facilitator program has been put in place which is very good news for SOLN). This was followed up with a wonderful, guided walk through the sanctuary followed by a delicious lunch at the WW café (if you are looking for a treat in Apollo Bay during the holidays...). After a range of project updates and emerging topics of interest from Landcare Victoria, the CCMA and each of the Landcare networks, we went for an explore.

We went to the SOLN Nursery where people were impressed with the range of plants on display, the redeveloped community kitchen and the huge collection of plant posters which have been created by members of Shrub Club. Olly and Seamus provided a tour and an overview of the history of the nursery and how it has become central to SOLN's program of ecological restoration and active engagement with our local community. On the way home, a few folks stopped by to see the puerulus count which is an aquatic monitoring program held on the full moon

each month which SOLN undertakes for the VFA (Victorian Fisheries Authority).

Many thanks to the CCMA and the regional Landcare Networks for keeping this important program going. These gatherings are a very important way for us to support each other and to help us share best practice.

Kevin O'Connell

Working With Children

Interactions between the young and the elders of our community are vital for shaping understanding, compassion and open-mindedness. SOLN places great importance on bringing different generations of the community together to share knowledge and ideas in a safe space for all.

When organising events specifically for children, our Landcare Victoria obligations require us to ensure that all people involved in the event (including volunteers) hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC). For volunteers, these checks are FREE and very easy to [apply](https://service.vic.gov.au/services/working-with-children) for, it's an online process that takes about 15 minutes: <https://service.vic.gov.au/services/working-with-children>

And once you received your card, it applies for multiple volunteering opportunities (e.g. school activities, local festivals, etc.). If you'd like to help out with school planting days or other children's activities, please apply for a WWCC.

N.B: *There is no general requirement for people to hold a Working with Children check at events where children attend incidentally and are under the supervision of their parents/guardian. However, in all cases, SOLN works to ensure that events are conducted in a way that is safe for children. For more information, please refer to the Working with Children website: <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/>*

*** INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS:**

[SOLN Facebook](#)

[SOLN Instagram](#)

[Otway Ocean Care Facebook](#)

[Otway Ocean Care Instagram](#)

[Otway Mushroom and Fungi Facebook](#)

[Otway Bird Observers Facebook](#)



SOLN website: www.soln.org

Check out the newly updated SOLN website!

Bigger, Bolder and (even more) Beautiful....

Our SOLN website (soln.org) has been revamped to make it easier to find out what's on, what we've been up to and how you can get involved.

The design is a work in progress and some finishing touches and detail are still being added but we wanted to get it out to you all ahead of the holidays. As always, feedback is very welcome (info.landcare@soln.org)

Online Calendar:

Get all the latest up to date information about Landcare events from our online calendar.

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

[ONLINE CALENDAR](#) - *SEE WHAT'S NEW IN THE SOLN WEBSITE MENU!*

Event	Date	Time/Location
Shrub Club	Every Wednesday Resuming 10th January 2024	9.30am-12pm, followed by lunch @ SOLN Support Centre Piggery Lane
Puerulus monitoring	Thursday, 28 December Friday, 26th Jan Sunday, 25 Feb Tuesday, 26 March Thursday, 25 April Saturday, 25 May	11am Apollo Bay Harbour, last pontoon
Plant Walks/Seed Collections	Tuesdays Resuming 9th January 2024	2.30pm Landcare Office, Nelson St
Fungi Foray	Thursdays in Winter months	Details on OMFG Facebook page
EGG Open Garden-Wongarra	Wednesday, 20 Dec	4-6pm (Meet at Apollo Bay Community Garden, Costin St, Apollo Bay and carpool)
Charlie Corke AED demonstration	Wednesday, 17 January	11.30am-12.00pm @ SOLN Support Centre Piggery Lane
Wye to Wongarra Landcare Group	Details to be posted on Instagram: w2wlandcaregroup	TBA

Please note: online calendar, social media and email updates may provide more up to date information as events are added and details finalised throughout the year.*