

MALLEE CATCHMENT

news



Students encouraged to share their hidden treasures



Above: Entries for the enviro-stories competition close September 23, 2011.

The Mallee's Hidden Treasures Primary schools across the region are being encouraged to get involved in the Mallee CMA's Mallee's Hidden Treasures Enviro-Stories Competition.

This involves schools in an environmental education competition with a focus on science, literacy and establishing a "sense of place" within the local environment.

Mallee's Hidden Treasures celebrates the unique biodiversity of the region, while raising awareness for its threatened species.

Students are being asked to write a 15 page illustrated story about biodiversity or threatened species. These stories can be about anything to do with the Mallee's Hidden Treasures theme and can range

from personal experiences to fictional interactions of the plants and animals living there.

Winning entries will then have their stories published and distributed to schools across the Mallee area.

All you need to know about the competition is available in the Getting Started Pack and the Education Kit, available on the Mallee CMA website at www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

See what other students have achieved by reading the e-books online at the Enviro-Stories website: www.envirostories.com.au

To register your involvement in the "Mallee's Hidden Treasures" Enviro-Stories Competition, contact: Peter Coleman, PeeKdesigns
Phone: 0411 729 444
Email: admin@envirostories.com.au

For local advice and support, or to arrange someone to talk to the students about biodiversity and threatened species, contact:
Lauren Murphy, Mallee CMA
Phone: 03 5051 4331
Email: lauren.murphy@dpi.vic.gov.au

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Sharyon Peart welcomed as the new chairperson of the Mallee CMA

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has welcomed the appointment of Sharyon Peart as the new Chairperson of the Board.

"While I am thrilled and excited to be appointed Chair of the Mallee CMA, I acknowledge the enormous challenges that lie ahead," Ms Peart said.

"My vast experience in small business management, local government, community consultation, governance and people management, I believe will be of great benefit."

"I have been keen to become involved in this area for sometime and I was excited to have the opportunity to apply for the role when it became available six months ago."

"My family has always been concerned with Environmental issues. My uncle was Minister for the Environment in a previous state Labor Government, my brother is an Environmental Engineer and our family has a long history in farming. This has provided me a broad understanding of the issues facing farmers and how we must integrate farming and environmental practices to ensure sustainability into the future."

"The Mallee CMA has achieved much under the fine leadership of Joan Burns and leaves an organisation in good stead. I wish Joan every success for the future.



Above: Newly appointed Mallee CMA chairperson Sharyon Peart.

"CEO Jenny Collins leads a committed team and I very much look forward to joining them. I am certainly committed to building relationships based on trust and respect"

"The Mallee CMA has a key role to play in finding the balance around, living, working and caring for the environment. The CMA team will continue to have productive interactions delivering positive outcomes."

Mallee CMA Chief Executive Officer Jennifer Collins said Ms Peart's experience in local government, small business and various important local issues would ensure she was a strong leader of the Authority's Board.

"The Board, management and staff at the Mallee CMA are excited about Sharyon's appointment and we are looking forward to working with her," she said.

"With Sharyon's leadership and guidance, the Authority remains committed to continuing the partnership between community and government in the management of natural resources across our region."

Ms Peart will remain in the role until 2013.

New incentives for farmers to protect Mallee soils



Above: Dune reclamation work undertaken with funding through LPIS. Photo: Mallee CMA.

Farmers can now apply for funding to tackle environmental issues on their properties under the 2011-12 Mallee Land Protection Incentive Scheme (LPIS).

The incentive scheme is available to Victorian Mallee dryland farmers who want to undertake on-ground works such as salinity control measures, building stock containment areas or dune reclamation works.

The 2011-12 LPIS is offered by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), with funding provided by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and the Victorian Government.

Mallee CMA chairperson Sharyon Peart said the scheme is beneficial to farmers and assists them to improve and protect our environment.

"The funding landholders will receive under this scheme encourages the on-ground works on private land to promote the protection and rehabilitation of our region," Ms Peart said.

"The eligible activities to receive funding through this important incentive program will help to reduce soil loss and improve soil health, manage soil salinity, control grazing pressures to protect vegetation cover and restore the productive capacity of soil."

Applications for the 2011-12 LPIS close on Wednesday, August 31st 2011.

Field days will be conducted by DPI during August at Carwarp, Underbool and Waitchie, providing further information

about the on-ground works local farmers can complete through the LPIS, such as stock containment areas, salinity control works, dune reclamation.

Farmers will also have the chance to hear from one of Australia's top sheep nutritionists, San Jolly, who will speak about how to manage a saline area and the benefits of stock containment areas.

To receive an expression of interest form or for further information about the field days, contact Jodie Price on 03 5051 4359; via email to jodie.price@dpi.vic.gov.au or by visiting the website at www.malleecma.vic.gov.au



Above: On-ground works underway including stock containment areas and salinity control. Mallee CMA.

Volunteers encouraged to take part in community grants

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has received a \$307,000 share of the Victorian Governments \$3.5 million Victorian Landcare grants for this financial year.

The Victorian Government has provided the funding for local community groups to finance projects that will benefit the health of the region's land, water and biodiversity.

Recipients must be incorporated, insured and not-for-profit Landcare groups, networks or friends of groups.

The grants program aims to provide funding for these groups to undertake on-ground works that contribute to the improvement and protection of the region's natural resources.

Eligible projects include revegetation, riparian and wetland restoration, salinity plantings, remnant protection works and invasive plant and animal control.

The program has now also introduced grants to encourage innovation and experimental trials integrated with on-ground works linked to resource management.

"Volunteers play a vital role in improving the health of our local environment and these grants aim to support community groups to ensure this continues."

Mallee CMA chairperson Sharyon Peart has urged local community groups to take advantage of the funding opportunities available to them.



Above: Students from the Lake Primary School do their bit to help out by planting trees. Photo: Mallee CMA.

"The funding encourages and assists groups to conduct capacity-building activities and on-ground works, ranging from salinity plantings to workshops and field days." Ms Peart said.

Bids for the Mallee region will be assessed against state and regional priorities by a technical panel for eligibility. An independent assessment panel will then rank projects and make recommendations to the Mallee CMA board for approval.

Applications must be received by the Mallee CMA by close of business on Friday September 2, 2011.

Further information and application forms can be obtained by contacting Kevin Chaplin, Regional Landcare Coordinator at the Mallee CMA on 5051 4377 or downloaded from the Mallee CMA website at: www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

In brief

After years of dedication, the Sunraysia Field Naturalists Club (SFNC) have called it a day on their hard work as volunteers for the Mallee Waterwatch community monitoring program.

To show their appreciation, Mallee Waterwatch will be hosting a barbeque to thank SFNC for their contribution and expertise following the Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QAQC) session at the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) offices on Wednesday 31st of August.

QAQC is held each year by Victoria Waterwatch to bring monitors from across the state together and this year is to be hosted by Mallee Waterwatch.

Any media that wish to speak with members of SFNC or monitors about QAQC is invited to attend.

NAIDOC scholarships give local schools a funding injection



Left: The HOPE project dancers provided entertainment for guests at the scholarship presentation at Kings Billabong.

Above: Johnny cakes, cooked by DSE Indigenous Trainees.

Photos: Mallee CMA.

Six local schools have received a \$1000 scholarship to help support Indigenous education activities.

The scholarships were awarded to the HOPE Project at Mildura Primary School, Nyah District Primary School, Underbool Primary School, Cardross Primary School, St Mary's P-8 in Robinvale and the Koorlong Primary School as part of local NAIDOC celebrations.

The NAIDOC scholarship program has delivered \$33,000 to schools across the Victorian Mallee since it began in 2006.

The scholarships are awarded by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and the regional offices of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Parks Victoria and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

Speaking at the scholarship presentation at Kings Billabong, Mallee CMA

chairperson Sharyon Peart said schools receiving the scholarships could use the money to either support Indigenous students or improve students' knowledge of Indigenous culture.

"We are proud to support the NAIDOC scholarships because we see it as a valuable and meaningful way of sustaining Indigenous education in our local community," she said.

NAIDOC Week was celebrated from July 3 to 10 this year, however the NAIDOC scholarships were presented on July 19 to allow students to return from school holidays.

The scholarship presentation included cultural dancing by the HOPE Project dancers, as well as a morning tea of johnny cakes and jam, which was cooked on an open fire by the DSE Indigenous Trainees.

"The theme for NAIDOC Week this year was 'Change – the next step is ours', so we felt the scholarship program supported that very well."

"We don't place strict guidelines on how the schools spend the scholarship and we've found this really allows each school to direct it to where it is needed most," said Ms Peart.

"For example, the HOPE Project plans to use the scholarship funds to support students in the transition to secondary school, while Underbool Primary School may use it to run Indigenous cultural activities for students."

Sea Lake landholders deliver major protection works along Dunmunkle Creek

Sea Lake landholders have joined forces to protect almost 250 hectares of important remnant vegetation along Dunmunkle Creek.

The project was developed by the Sea Lake Landcare Group with the intention of protecting a stretch of habitat along the northern section of the Dunmunkle Creek, connecting Green Lake to Lake Tyrell.

The group engaged multiple landholders to participate in fencing off the Dunmunkle Creek frontage that runs through their individual properties.

The positive response resulted in the construction of eight kilometres (kms) of fencing and the protection of 40 hectares (ha) of remnant vegetation. This area of the creek was previously un-fenced and degraded by grazing. It runs south-west from the edge of the Sea Lake township towards Green Lake.

The Landcare group's vice-president Paul Allen said the project has proven landholders are keen to work together to protect threatened flora and fauna.

"As people saw the results and benefits of this project, others put up their hand to participate" he said.

"After such a prolonged drought, this program has been timed perfectly."

"We have had above average rainfall for the year and the amount of vegetation growth is incredible."

"Keeping stock out of these areas will assist the natural regeneration processes immensely."

The success of the project inspired a second group of farmers south of Green Lake to fence off 15kms of creek line, protecting 191ha of critical habitat south of Green Lake to Blysthman's Swamp.



Above: Remnant vegetation site at Dunmunkle Creek. Photo: Mallee CMA.

This section of the creek previously had some existing fences that had been funded by landholders and/or Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) initiatives, but the sections of fences were not continuously joined.

Mallee CMA Board chairperson Sharyon Peart said work on the second section of fencing from Green Lake to Blysthman's Swamp provided an almost continuous exclusion zone along the remaining exposed creek frontage.

"Following on from the success of this project, further funding has been sourced to support the remaining landholders to complete the fencing along the sections of their creek frontage," she said.

"The fencing delivered through the Dunmunkle Creek project now excludes domestic stock from grazing along the creek corridor and is allowing the re-establishment of depleted and threatened flora; and will provide critical habitat for fauna by providing shelter, food and roosting sites."

Ms Peart said the participating farmers recognise that keeping rabbit and weed numbers down is essential to the projects long term success, and will continue to undertake control programs on their individual properties.

"The Sea Lake Landcare Group and all the landholders involved in the Dunmunkle Creek project must be congratulated for the impressive outcome," she said.

"The Landcare group has been actively working towards the goal of protecting the entire length of the Dunmunkle Creek for a number years and, together with the help of local landholders, they have achieved a significant landscape scale bio-linkage project connecting Green Lake to Lake Tyrell to the north and Blysthman's Swamp to the south."

Ms Peart said that by being pro-active and through forward planning, the Sea Lake Landcare Group was well positioned to expand on the Dunmunkle Creek works and further develop what has the potential to be a major bio-linkage corridor that will retain natural habitat creek for future generations.

The Dunmunkle Creek project was supported by the Mallee CMA, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.

Survey finds White-bellied Sea-Eagles in the desert



Above: The White-bellied Sea-Eagle has been seen on several occasions within the Mallee CMA region.
Photo: Chris Field.

A recent online community survey has confirmed White-bellied Sea-Eagles can still be found along the Murray River and associated creeks and billabongs.

As part of an online survey conducted by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA), people recorded sightings of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

While the White-bellied Sea-Eagle is known to live on the coast and in the semi-arid zone along the Murray River, the survey helped gather more information on where the species was currently being seen in the Victorian Mallee.

A total of 64 percent of the reported sightings were located along the Murray River.

Mallee CMA Board chair Sharyon Peart said this survey has provided valuable information on the White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

“Historically, White-bellied Sea-Eagles have been seen near large water bodies such as lakes, but as the online survey was conducted during drought conditions, this was not replicated,” Mallee CMA board chairperson Sharyon Peart said.

“However, with the recent rainfall and flooding events across the landscape, it is likely there will be an increase in the number of birds observed at large water bodies in the area.”

The online survey, which was conducted during 2009 and 2010, attracted widespread interest from the community, with input from people in the Mallee CMA region and further a field.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle
(*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

Photo: Neil Filer

Adult

Juvenile

Description

The White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) is a large, white bird of prey with greyish wings and a short, rounded tail. Adults have a white head, breast and abdomen, and the tail is grey with a distinctive broad, white tip. The juveniles are speckled brown with a pale face. By their second year, they are whiter in colour, although still patchy; they do not acquire their full adult plumage until their fourth year.

Juvenile birds may sometimes be mistaken for Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Aquila audax*). The most distinctive features of the juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle is the pale head and short, rounded white tail, whereas the Wedge-tailed Eagle has a darker head, varying from brown to black and a longer, dark wedge-shaped tail.

The voice of White-bellied Sea-Eagle is very distinctive. Often adults will make a loud, deep goose-like honking or cackling; whereas begging juveniles will give a more prolonged yelping or wailing. The voice of a Wedge-tailed Eagle is more of a whistle or loud, shrill scream.

Photos by Chris Field unless stated otherwise

Wedge-tailed Eagle

Adult

Juvenile

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Above: Information/Identification card available from the Mallee CMA. Image: Mallee CMA.

There were 25 confirmed sightings of White-bellied Sea-Eagle, with 15 of these sightings within the Mallee CMA region.

The online survey resulted in several nest sites being located within Victoria and New South Wales. All were reported to be active.

Sightings of adult and juvenile birds were often observed in the same region, suggesting White-bellied Sea-Eagles may be successfully breeding and fledging young.

The online survey can still be accessed at www.malleecma.vic.gov.au and community members are encouraged to continue to register sightings of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

The online survey was made possible with funding from the Victorian Government.

Northern Victoria Grain & Graze program underway



Above: Summer cropping trial. Photo: Mallee CMA.

A major research and extension program to boost farm profitability while helping to protect the environment is underway in Northern Victoria.

Through the national Grain & Graze 2 initiative, \$1.9 million is being invested into the region to improve whole-farm profitability, sustainability and groundcover.

The program, which runs until December 2013, is hosted by the Birchip Cropping Group (BCG).

It will be undertaken in collaboration with Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc., Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council, Riverine Plains Inc., Vic No-Till Farmers Association, Department of Primary Industries and the region's Catchment Management Authorities (CMA).

The program seeks to achieve increased water use efficiency and regional profitability, and improved sustainability of mixed farming businesses through better soil cover, reducing erosion and improving non-arable native vegetation.

It also seeks to strengthen the resilience of mixed farming businesses by equipping

farmers to make complex decisions in relation to climate, market and natural resource management challenges.

One of the program's strengths is the direct involvement of farmers and farming groups in local trials and extension activities.

Some trials are already underway, including summer cropping trials. This involves researching potential crops that could be grown for forage or grain in a changed climate, where summer rainfall may be more regular.

The Northern Victoria Grain & Graze program extends across the mixed farming areas of the Victorian Mallee, Wimmera, North Central, Goulburn Broken and North East CMA regions. It is one of seven Grain & Graze program areas across Australia.

Funding is provided through the Grains Research & Development Corporation and the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.

For further information, contact Alison Frischke, Grain & Graze Systems Officer, on 0429 922 787. Information is also available at: www.bcg.org.au



Above: Demonstration site of a summer crop trial. Photo: Mallee CMA.

Upcoming events

August

- 21-27 Keep Australia Beautiful Week
- 26 Daffodil Day
- 31 Waterwatch QAQC at the DPI Complex, Irymple.

September

- 1-30 Biodiversity Month
- 4 Fathers Day
- 7 National Threatened Species Day

Project Partners



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

Mallee Catchment News

Editor: Lauren Murphy

Mallee Catchment Management Authority

Telephone: 03 5051 4377

PO Box 5017 Mildura Victoria 3502

www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

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