

NESSI NEWSLETTER

Providing land management
information to the community.



Autumn 2008

EDITION 35

Welcome to the autumn edition of NESSI newsletter. Autumn is a good time to start site preparation for any tree planting projects that you might be considering undertaking in winter. Trees that are planted in to sites that are well prepared and have good weed control have a much better chance of success. So don't wait until its time to plant to start preparing your site.

Don't forget a wide range of staff are available to assist you in the planning and implementation of tree planting and erosion control projects. Landholders who undertake works with the assistance of DPI staff can receive a free aerial photo of their property. If you would like help with planning or implementing a project, or just some advice, contact any of the staff listed on the back page.

Editor: Kylie Macreadie

Reflections - Why I do What I do.

In the last two years I have been working with landholders in the area of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park to improve wildlife habitat surrounding the park. As my job involves working with landholders to establish new tree corridors I mostly see bare paddocks ready for planting or trees that are less than 30cm tall. It's not very often that I get a chance to visit areas with mature trees or appreciate the hollow dependent fauna that rely on the replacement of these large trees.

That was until recently when I spent a morning with Jerry Alexander, Senior Biodiversity Planning Officer from DSE, while he undertook the annual monitoring of the nocturnal Brush-tailed Phascogale in Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park. The trapping is undertaken in March using live capture traps, and while the Phascogale, a small marsupial, is the target species, other species are also caught. On the morning that I participated in checking the 80 traps, five Yellow-footed Antechinus were caught, (4 males and 1 female). A phascogale was caught the day after I was there. The Yellow-footed Antechinus is a small marsupial with a body length of just 93-165mm, which forage for food in the leaf litter and fallen tree branches for insects, vertebrates including skinks and nesting birds.

Trapping these small animals was a memorable experience and highlighted the reasons why I do the work that I do. It

also reminded me that it's very rare to see such animals and that many landholders would not know if they had such species on their property. In those situations it may be difficult to see the benefits of protecting remnants for wildlife habitat and establishing new plantings. So I urge landholders to leave the dog tied up, take the spotlight, (as many animals are nocturnal) and go out to your back paddock and spend time in areas you have planted, or even isolated paddock trees and see what you might find.



Photo: Captured Yellow-footed Antechinus.

Kylie Macreadie

The Do's and Don't of Erosion Control

The storm events earlier this year across the North East highlighted the importance of maintaining your existing soil erosion control structures and good land management practices to prevent erosion.

Many people have seen the effects of sudden rainfall events and the damage they can do across the landscape. In some areas in the North East landholders have reported significant sediment loss and gullies becoming active again. Landholders need to become more proactive, as early intervention is a lot less costly than dealing with the results that can follow.

In many cases erosion can be prevented or halted by excluding stock by fencing. Identifying areas at risk or effected by erosion and fencing them early is more cost effective and prevents the loss of soils, and in the long term large areas of farming land. Maintaining good pasture cover and controlling rabbits are also important. DO NOT place old car bodies, fencing wire, concrete or rubbish in gullies in an attempt to halt erosion. They often divert water causing further erosion and provide a harbour for rabbits.



Continued.....

Continued.....Remember that maintaining existing soil erosion control structures on your property is an ongoing task. Structures should be checked regularly, particularly before and after major storm events. Look for any areas that may need repairing as a result of stock movement, ponding or tunnelling. Clear debris away from trickle pipes, ensure spillways are working properly and maintain good grazing management practices. Landholders are encourage to get out in the paddock during a rain event to see if your structures are working. So be proactive about soil conservation and the maintenance of existing structures.



Financial and technical assistance may be available to individuals or Landcare groups with gully erosion problems. If you have any gully erosion that you would like advice on please don't hesitate to contact Kristy Youman 02 6043 7968 based in Wodonga or Craig Turton 03 5723 8682 based in Wangaratta. For more information refer to DPI Landcare Notes 'Gully Erosion' at www.dpi.vic.gov.au.



Establishing Stock Containment Areas

Stock containment areas are used to assist with stock management during adverse climatic conditions, prolonged drought and in times of emergency such as fire. Confining stock can protect paddocks from overgrazing by retaining sufficient groundcover to minimise wind and water erosion. Stock containment can make feeding, managing and monitoring of stock easier and more effective while reducing their energy requirements.

Stock containment areas are to be set up as permanent facilities with strong stock proof fencing, adequate gates and feed troughs and a reliable water supply on a carefully selected part of the property.

North east livestock producers are being encouraged to apply for financial assistance to help with the establishment of stock containment areas. The funding is part of the Victorian Government Drought Package with the project being delivered by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

It is vital for interested landholders to submit their applications quickly, to qualify for this funding assistance, as all works required in establishing stock containment areas must be completed by the end of May 2008.

This funding is worth up to \$1,600 for each stock containment area established. The funding is to be used to purchase items such as fencing, gates, troughs, piping & tanks, pumps and stock feeders.

Landholders within the North East Catchment Management Authority region should direct all their stock containment area enquiries and requests for funding to Ian Gamble, DPI Wangaratta. Ph:(03) 57238671.

Environmental Roadshow

On Wednesday the 5th of March grade 5 and 6 students from schools around the Bright area attended an Environmental Roadshow. Approximately 150 students were exposed to presentations on the topics of waterwatch, stormwater, fish awareness, energy use, salinity and indigenous culture. The presentations were both informative and interactive. The day also included a rubbish free lunch challenge.

The presentation on salinity was delivered by Kristy Youman and Kylie Macreadie and allowed students to look at the impact of salinity on plant growth and the impacts on the way they use water. Students also had the chance to taste different concentrations of salty water and learn how to use electrical conductivity meters to test water samples for salinity.



Environmental Roadshows will be held in a number of locations throughout the North East Region over the year. They include Wangaratta on 5th June, Chiltern on 23rd July and Tallangatta on 22nd October. The days are organised by Jessica Aiken from North East Water (ph 0260220555) and Carolyn Humby from Waterwatch (ph 0260437622).

Photo: Kylie Macreadie explains the groundwater table to students. Photo by Kristy Youman.

May is Saltwatch

Saltwatch week is May 5th to the 11th and landholders are encouraged to have salinity levels of bores, dams and waterways tested. By monitoring salinity levels in your water supplies it is possible to identify any potential limitations for water use. So bring in your water samples to the DPI locations listed on the back of this newsletter for testing. For more information contact Kylie Macreadie on 0260437922.

Schools can also be involved in a range of activities during Saltwatch week. So if your school is interested in participating contact Emma Russell at Watchwatch on 0260437616.

Act now! Incentives still available to protect native vegetation on your property

The Care of Remnants Incentive Scheme (CORIS) assists landholders to protect and enhance areas of native vegetation on their properties by providing incentives for fencing and revegetation. Protection of remnants is often achieved by fencing to enable management of grazing, but we can also provide support for expanding or creating links between existing native vegetation.



CORIS fencing and revegetation incentives are still available to landholders throughout the North East catchment for this financial year. If you have native vegetation remnants you'd like to protect, enhance, connect or expand contact Sarah Kelly, DSE Wangaratta on (03) 5723 8659 for more information. Standard rates are \$2.50/m for fencing (up to \$3.50 for priority vegetation types such as Box-Gum Grassy Woodland).



Example of remnant vegetation that has been fenced through the CORIS program.

Regent Honeyeater News



The Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team is undertaking an exciting project in north east Victoria this year. As part of the overall recovery program for the Regent Honeyeater, a trial is to be undertaken on the release of captive-bred birds in to the wild. All of the released birds will be fitted with a unique combination of coloured leg bands which enable the identification of individuals when seen, and a number of the birds will also be fitted with transmitters to enable radio-tracking.

Community and volunteer involvement will be vital to ensure the best outcomes from this project, particularly with regards to monitoring. There will be an extra incentive to undertake monitoring for Regent Honeyeaters in your local area as we aim to keep track of the birds when they disperse and the annual national surveys will again take place on the third weekend in May, and first weekend in August.

There will also be the opportunity for direct involvement in post-release monitoring. Training will be provided in skills required to assist with tasks such as radio tracking, and there'll be other support roles for volunteers. For further information, to receive regular updates, or to find out how you could be involved, please contact: Sarah Kelly, Dept of Sustainability and Environment, Sarah.kelly@dse.vic.gov.au or (03) 5723 8659. Photo by Glen Johnson DSE Wodonga

New Extension Officer

Hello to all readers of NESSI. My name is Craig Turton and I have recently started with the DPI based in Wangaratta. I grew up on a sheep/cattle farm on the Monaro Plains of South Eastern NSW and have worked in NSW as a Noxious Plants Officer and in WA as a Landcare Coordinator and Natural Resource Management Project Manager. My areas of experience include Landcare extension, soil conservation, surface water management, whole farm planning, farm water planning and salinity management.

My new job as Project Officer, Integrated Land Management, is to assist landholders in the North East with soil conservation, whole farm planning, soil health, salinity management, and farm water supply planning. My main focus area is the Mid Ovens catchment, for example the Burgoogee Creek, Gapstead, Mudgegongga, Stanley and Beechworth Landcare areas. I am also available to help landholders across the wider North East as required.

I can visit you on your farm and discuss a whole range of land management issues. So please don't hesitate to contact me and have a chat. My phone number is (03) 5723 8682, Mob 0409 564 870.



Weed Alert: Keep watch for new weeds emerging in feed areas

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has been inundated with landholder enquiries about numerous weed species emerging in feed-out areas on farms. With the large amount of fodder being brought in to the region, people have been reporting weeds that are new to their farm or even the region.

This season has provided some good summer rains in many areas of the north east which has given the common weeds a real kick-start, with many rapidly emerging and spreading. The rains have also helped the foreign weed seeds, often left on the ground after the imported fodder is eaten, to emerge and start competing with pastures.

It is important that people regularly monitor the sites where they feed out to stock, as early detection and eradication of any new weeds can save huge amounts of time and money down the track. The message is “act now before the weeds reproduce to prevent having to control these new weeds on your farm for many years to come.”

If you have found a new weed emerging on your property and would like to get it identified, DPI may be able to help. You can take fresh samples (sealed in a plastic bag) into your local Weed Alert Contact Officer (WACO), who will assist in identifying new high-risk species. You can also take good images of the weed on a digital camera and email pictures of the weed to your local WACO.

Your local WACOs are contactable at DPI Wodonga, or via: Stuart Roberton, WACO for Wodonga and Indigo Shires.
Email: stuart.roberton@dpi.vic.gov.au Ph: (02) 6043 7965

Target weed of this issue: Serrated tussock *Nassella trichotoma*

A Regionally Prohibited Weed to be on the look out for in the north east is serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) originally from South America. Early identification of outbreaks may help us to eradicate this species from the North East and prevent it from becoming the night-marish weed it has become in the Port Phillip and Corangamite catchments, where it currently affects some 82,000 ha.

In the North East and Goulburn Broken catchments there are isolated infestations close to the towns of Kilmore, Mangalore, Rutherglen and Chiltern. In the Rutherglen and Chiltern areas there are only 21 known infestations covering some 20 ha in total. Most of these are roadside infestations, a number of which have crept onto freehold land.

Recently, a local community group met to discuss the establishment and terms of reference for a Rutherglen Chiltern Serrated Tussock Steering Committee, to oversee the total eradication of serrated tussock from this local area. For this to be achieved, it is seen as vital that there is strong community involvement. Encouraging landowners to make themselves aware of the plant and help by reporting any suspected infestations is also essential for success.

Early identification and control of isolated infestations to prevent serrated tussock from becoming established is by far the most cost effective management approach. However, identification of this plant can be difficult, as it resembles a number of native grasses.

Serrated tussock leaves are needle-like and roll smoothly between your index finger and thumb, whereas native grasses feel as though they have flat edges. When the leaves of serrated tussock are drawn through your fingers, serrations can usually be felt in one direction. Also, the ligule (a small flap located at the junction of the leaf blade and the leaf sheath) is the key characteristic of serrated tussock. The ligule can be located by tracing a leaf down to where it joins the sheath and bending the leaf back at this point. Serrated tussock has a white, hairless ligule about 1 mm long, whereas other grasses have ligules with different colours or hairs, or do not possess them at all.



Figure 1. A mature serrated tussock with drooping seed heads (image: DPI)

For further information on serrated tussock identification or to report a suspected infestation in the North-East region please contact Greg Johnson, DPI Pest Management Officer/WACO, on (02) 6043 7900 greg.johnson@dpi.vic.gov.au or for the Goulburn Broken Region contact Terry Auton, DPI Pest Management Officer on (03) 5784 0611 terry.auton@dpi.vic.gov.au

More information on serrated tussock is also available on the DPI website: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/weeds or, see the Weeds CRC Fact Sheet available online: http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/documents/wmg_serrated_tussock.pdf

Steep Hills Management: A Field Day To Demonstrate Profitable and Sustainable Ways to Manage Steep Hill Country

Hosted by DPI and the Upper Murray Landcare Network

Where: Walwa Golf Club, CFA (1998) Map 232B 22A
4 kilometres west of Walwa township opposite the

Upper Murray Holiday Resort on the Murray River Road

When: Thursday 1st May 2008 from 9.30am to 3.00pm

Many Victorian farms have steep hills with native grass pastures. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and landholders have been working together to develop ways to better manage these pastures through research such as the Ararat Steep Hills Project and that from Rutherglen Research Institute.

The field day will focus on native grasses in relation to identification; pasture management using deferred and rotational grazing, fertiliser rates and their impact on pasture composition, effects of ground cover on water and nutrient runoff, and the economic returns and biodiversity benefits of steep hill management. Also whole farm planning principles will be presented utilising aerial photography.

Speakers:

Meredith Mitchell, Native Grasses Research Scientist, DPI Rutherglen

Zhongnan Nie, Pastures Research Scientist, DPI Hamilton

Jim Crosthwaite, Manager of the Farm Business & Biodiversity Project, DSE Melbourne

Kristy Youman, Soil Health Officer, DPI Wodonga

Local Walwa farmers, to host the afternoon farm visits

Structure of Field Day

9.30 - 12.15 - Presentations at the Walwa Golf Club

12.15 - 1.00 - Lunch at the Walwa Golf Club

1.00 - 3.00 - Farm visits

Lunch provided free of charge - RSVP by Thurs 24th April 2008 to either Barton Roberts, Upper Murray Landcare Network. Ph: 0260727502 or Ian Gamble, DPI Wangaratta. Ph: 0357238671

Tallangatta Expo

Would you like to know more about whole farm planning, fire management or how to become a weed spotter?

Find out about beef programs available through DPI or how to improve your irrigation system?

All this and much more will be available at the DPI/DSE marquee at the Tallangatta Expo on 24th April. We will also have information on public land management, drought, native pasture management, biodiversity, animal health, rural finance advice and rural counsellors on hand.

So come along and drop into the DPI/DSE marquee. For further information contact Kristy Youman 02 6043 7968 or Kylie Scanlon 02 6071 5318.

Climate Change and the Future For The Forest Industry In North East Victoria

Wednesday 23rd April 2008

3.30pm to 7pm

The Quality Hotel Wangaratta Gateway

27 Ryley Street Wangaratta

Light Refreshments Available

This Forum Is Provided Free Of Charge

An Information Forum For The Forest Industry, Farmers, Foresters, And Landowners On The Impact Of Climate Change And The Role Of Trees As A Carbon Storage Option

Sessions:

Climate change and industry impacts, from 3.30pm

Refreshments: 5.30

Carbon storage and trees, from 6pm

Come for one session or come for both

* *Trees in a changing climate are a carbon storage option*

* *Trees use CO₂ and store carbon, and produce clean air, water, and wood and fibre products*

BOOKINGS: Email byoung@plantationsnortheast.com.au , or call (03) 5721 2859, or (03)5723 8686



Envirofund Fox Control Project – North East Fox Fighting Affiliate (NEFFA)

Seven Landcare Groups surrounding Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park have come together to help control foxes. The groups involved are Chiltern, Indigo, Wooragee, Burgoonie, Hodgson/Horseshoe, and Springhurst/Byawatha. Support is also being provided by the Ovens Landcare Network, DPI, DSE and Parks Victoria (Beechworth).

The Group, naming itself **NEFFA (North East Fox Fighting Affiliate)**, will be using a successful EnviroFund bid to help landholders carry out coordinated fox baiting to protect native wildlife and domestic animals. By coordinating baiting over a larger area, less baits may need to be used, baiting can occur simultaneously between groups and Parks Victoria, and more landholders can be involved, all leading to a better result in the control of foxes. Under the project baiting will occur in spring this year and autumn next year.

The project has over 80 signed up landholders and will be supporting at least 30 of these to complete Agricultural Chemical Users Permits (ACUP), ACUP refreshers and the recent 1080 endorsement, which enables landholders to bait for foxes.

The Group hopes the outcomes of this project will be a significant impact on fox numbers, an increased awareness of foxes by the community, and more landholders with the skills and training to carry out baiting into the future.

If you would like more information contact Mary Anderson on 03 5723 8655, or any of the above mentioned Landcare groups. For Landcare group details go to the Landcare Gateway www.landcarevic.net.au



If undeliverable please return to
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To The Landholder

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