



Autumn Cultural Burns on Wadawurrung Country

The Linear Reserves team has been supporting the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) to conduct cultural burning on Country through the Protecting the Victorian Volcanic Plains Project.

The project, in partnership with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA), includes a pre-burn and post-burn vegetation monitoring program, and educational videos of the burns.

Through the project the Wadawurrung led a cultural burn at the You Yangs Regional Park, with Parks Victoria, DELWP, Forest Fire Management Vic and CFA in attendance. Members of the Firestick Alliance, including Victor Steffensen, spoke to the group about their experiences with cultural burning (more information on the Firestick Alliance: <https://www.firesticks.org.au/>).

Another cultural burn was also held by Wadawurrung at Bakers Lane Reserve in Teesdale, with support from Golden Plains Shire Council and the CFA.

Both reserves have significant ecological values and cultural importance to the Wadawurrung, the Traditional Owners of the land. Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Michael Cook said the burns are about “healing Country, connecting with Country and with family...and refreshing the cycle”.

Each day started with a Welcome and Smoking ceremony, before the Wadawurrung started lighting up the grass using traditional methods. The fire was slow and cool enough for participants to safely stay and observe, and it was fascinating to watch spiders and insects able to escape before the flames reached them.

Ammie Jackson (Linear Reserves Project Officer, DELWP) said the day was significant for everyone involved.

“There was a lot of planning and preparation in the lead up to the burns, and we were delayed by weather conditions and COVID-19 restrictions a number of times,” Ammie said. “From an ecological, cultural, educational and social point of view, it’s been a huge success.”

The project plans to conduct further cultural burns on Wadawurrung Country over the next two years.

The project is supported by the CCMA through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.



Blair Gilson and Michael Cook (WTOAC) at Teesdale

Vegetation monitoring

An important component of the cultural burn project has been setting up vegetation monitoring which aims to measure the condition and cover of vegetation and the effectiveness of the burns. The monitoring also facilitates knowledge exchange between Western and Traditional views of natural resources management.

Dr Brad Farmilo from the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research (ARI) designed a monitoring framework and assisted the team to set up pre-burn vegetation monitoring to gather baseline data.

The monitoring team, with representatives from DELWP, WTOAC, CCMA and Golden Plains Shire returned in the weeks after the burns to carry out the first of several post-burn monitoring activities.



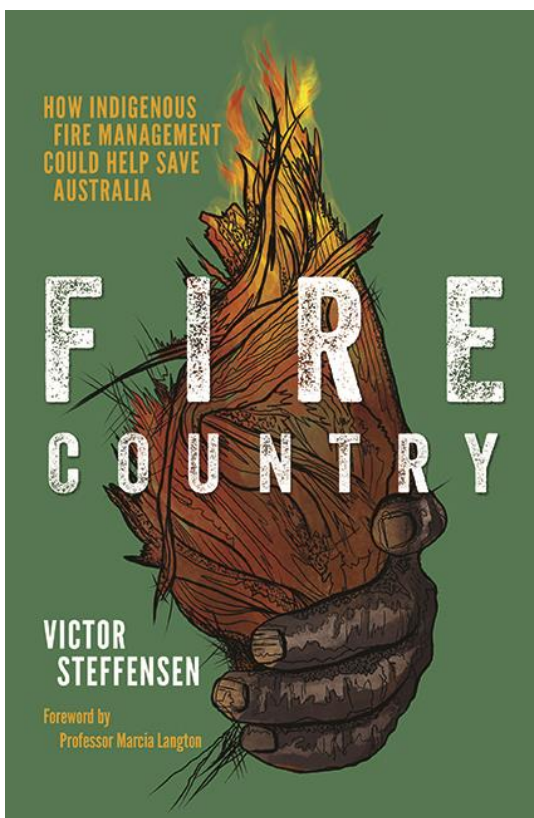
Traditional lighting methods



Dr Brad Farmilo training the monitoring team at Bakers Lane Reserve, Teesdale



Setting up pre-burn monitoring



Highly recommended, Victor Steffensen's book "Fire Country"

Roadside Burning

Last year Glenelg Hopkins CMA (GHCMA), in partnership with CFA and DELWP, developed a survey to get feedback directly from CFA brigade members on barriers to roadside burning. The survey looked at factors that motivating people to participate in roadside burning and their thoughts on why this might be in decline.

Most respondents were aware of the benefits that fuel reduction burning has on the ongoing persistence of native grasslands. There were a range of reasons why burns may not go ahead as planned, most notably, the lack of volunteer availability.

Ben Zeeman from GHCMA produced a report on the findings of the survey and included 11 recommendations based on the responses.

Here are a few recommendations that our group have been working on in the short-term to facilitate planned burns on native grassland roadsides:

- Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of brigade captains and CFA Vegetation Management Officers as opposed to those of the brigades, so that volunteers understand that the entire administrative burden isn't solely their responsibility.
- NRM agencies to take on more of the responsibility for gaining permits and approvals.
- Promote roadside burning as a training exercise and a way to encourage neighbouring brigades to assist with each other's burns.

You can follow this link to view the report.- [DRAFT GHCMA Roadside burning trends in SW Vic.pdf](#)



CFA burn on Pt Fairy-Hamilton Road

A perfect example of hands-on training was the planned burn conducted at Broadwater and attended by over 80 volunteer firefighters, as well as DELWP staff.

The fuel reduction burn on the Port Fairy-Hamilton Road was also an opportunity for burn controllers in training to practice their skills.

Bandicoots released at Tiverton!

A native mammal that is extinct in the wild requires some pretty special conservation actions to ensure its survival. In November, many years of hard work and preparation culminated in the momentous occasion of captive-bred Eastern Barred Bandicoots being released to Tiverton. Tiverton is 1,000-hectare property turned predator-proof bandicoot reserve.

One of the biggest threats to the bandicoots are introduced predators such as foxes and cats. Eastern Barred Bandicoots only exist in predator-proof enclosures, such as the Tiverton property, Hamilton Parklands and Mt Rothwell or fox-free islands.

This achievement was made possible by the partnership between Tiverton Rothwell Partners, Odonata, DELWP, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Mount Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre, Zoos Victoria, Phillip Islands Nature Park, The University of Melbourne and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team, with support from funding via the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Since the release, the bandicoots continue to thrive with Tiverton staff and DELWP Natural Environment Program Officers regularly patrolling the enclosure to ensure no predators get access.

Several informative short videos have been produced by Glenelg Hopkins CMA to educate the public about Eastern Barred Bandicoots. They can be accessed from the CMA's Facebook page.

This clip talks about the Bandicoot's predators and how to manage them: <https://fb.watch/2hIKZn2Zyo/>



Eastern Barred Bandicoot, *Paramelotes gunnii*. Photo by Aggie Stevenson

Restoration on the Penshurst-Dunkeld Road

A new project to restore native grasslands on the Penshurst-Dunkeld Road is underway. Graders have commenced work to scalp targeted areas which are dominated by Phalaris.

The methods used are based on the Paul Gibson-Roy technique which has proven to be highly successful across the Victorian Volcanic Plain (VVP).

The pilot project, supported by Glenelg Hopkins CMA through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, is being completed in partnership with Regional Roads Victoria, South West Maintenance Alliance, and La Trobe University, and will reconnect high quality native grasslands using a scalping and direct seeding of native species.

"These high-quality areas are currently isolated by smaller Phalaris dominated sections of roadside," Aggie Stevenson, GHCMA, said. "These weedy areas not only pose a potential weed risk to the native grassland, but also stop species movement between each native grassland remnant."

Scalping began in early May with Regional Roads Victoria using graders and front-end loaders to remove the top portion of soil. "Scalping involves the removal of the top 150mm of soil, thereby removing almost all weed seed and soil nutrients, which aren't conducive to native grassland species.

"Following this process, when site conditions are suitable, it will be sown with a mix of native grassland species creating a habitat corridor, creating a link with adjoining high diversity grassland remnants along the roadside," she said.

Aggie said it was important to promote the native grassland development along the roadsides, which are one of the last remaining areas of remnant native grasslands on the VVP. "These grasslands are so special and so few remain, they are protected under both national and state environmental law," she said.

"Good quality linear patches are separated by degraded sections that are unmanaged and support a wide variety of pasture grasses and other invasive species, putting good quality patches at risk. There is a significant opportunity to restore these degraded areas, creating corridors to link the good patches and reducing invasion risk at the same time."

This project builds on similar works completed by the Woorndoo Chatsworth Landcare Group (formally Woorndoo Land Protection Group), which has been restoring and reconstructing native grasslands in the area for the last 10 years. Similar works have been

completed by Greening Australia and VicRoads, who undertook this concept with early reconstruction works on the Glenelg Highway at Wickliffe in the mid-2000s.

Along with flora and fauna monitoring, annual biomass monitoring will determine any change in fire behaviour on sites where sections dominated with high fuel loads - exotic grasses - are replaced with native species, which have far lower fuel loads.

This information will be used to determine the cost benefits of transitioning from exotic dominated systems to native dominated systems. Native grassland linear reserves are often (incorrectly) cited as being 'wicks' for wildfires, so it is important to gather scientific evidence to refute claims such as these.

For further information about this pilot project, please contact Aggie Stevenson on 0435 537 443 or a.stevenson@ghcma.vic.gov.au at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA.



Soil scalping on Penshurst-Dunkeld Road



Native seed supplied by David Franklin

Monitoring our Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands

The Corangamite CMA's Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Stewardship Program is supporting private land managers to further protect and enhance critically endangered Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands and Natural Temperate Grasslands on the VVP. This project is supported by Corangamite CMA, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Recently, the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Stewardship Program team has been working closely with private land managers and project partners to establish long-term monitoring programs in these critically endangered ecological communities.

Dr Brad Farmilo and a team of ecologists from ARI (<https://www.ari.vic.gov.au/>) have established the VVP Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Monitoring Program. The program will track the condition of sites supported by the program and follow any improvements over the next 10 years. The monitoring program is crucial to guide future investment and grassy eucalypt woodland management.

Trevor Pescott and the Geelong Field Naturalist Group (<https://www.gfnc.org.au/>) have also established a long-term fauna monitoring program at a number of the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Stewardship Program sites. The monitoring consists of tile grids (for reptiles and small mammals), Elliot traps (for small mammals), Harp traps (for bats) and bird surveys.

The fauna monitoring provides an exciting opportunity for private land managers to learn more about the fauna that live within the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands on their property. The records provide valuable information to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, contributing to vital public data records. Together, the vegetation condition monitoring and the fauna monitoring may provide important information on animal habitat requirements.

Expressions of Interest are still open for the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Stewardship Program <https://ccma.vic.gov.au/what-we-do/biodiversity/grassy-eucalypt-stewardship-program/>

If you'd like to find out more about the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Stewardship Program or become involved in the fauna monitoring with the Geelong Field Naturalist Club, please contact Jess Lill on 0477 719 149 or jess.lill@ccma.vic.gov.au

This project is supported by Corangamite CMA, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



Dr Brad Farmilo establishing long-term monitoring at Inverleigh



Little Forest Bat (*Vespadelus vulturnus*) at Sutherlands Creek

Billy Buttons get a new name

This rare but iconic plant of the VVP has, until now been known as *Craspedia* sp. 2 Derrinallum. It has recently been newly described as *Craspedia basaltica*.

C. basaltica occurs on basaltic clay soils, persisting on linear reserves of the VVP and is threatened by land clearing for agriculture and development.

For more details and to read the paper by Neville Walsh, visit [muelleria-vol-39-walsh-craspedia-127-134.pdf](#)



Craspedia basaltica