

## NERRENA TARWIN VALLEY LANDCARE GROUP 2020 President's Report

2020 will be remembered for many reasons. Covid-19 – its restrictions and changes to our lives as we knew it – and - for our group a year of many projects mostly completed in isolation by the members.

### MEMBERSHIP

We have currently 21 member families and have a three year membership fee. Our Blackspur Creek Wetlands project (BSCW) newsletter membership keeps in contact bimonthly with many organisations such as Major Roads, Shire, Water authorities, CMA, rail trail committee, the local branch of the Australian Plant Society and many private individuals.

### ACTIVITIES

We had three meetings/ farm walks before March then a zoom meeting and many phone calls. We conducted our bird monitoring walks along the Great Southern rail trail and only missed two due to Covid-19 and several others due to weather conditions. In September Kate Walsh and I were invited to attend the South Gippsland Bird Observers Club meeting and presented on our bird monitoring project. Members Luke and Mel hosted Birds Australia members for a 4 day tour of South Gippsland, and group members were invited to make a presentation on our Blackspur Creek Wetlands project. Our group has two weed spray units to lend to members and the larger one was used twice through the year.

### PROJECTS

We have had three major projects running including the 'Making the Tarwin Terrific Again', a Victorian Landcare Grants project. Brad and Kathy, fenced off and enhanced remnant vegetation on the Ruby Creek; a tributary of the West branch of the Tarwin River, and Jennifer, Corne and Marijke fenced off and revegetated some badly eroded gullies on their property that drains into the East branch of the Tarwin River. We visited both properties to see their projects before they commenced work and did a baseline bird survey on both the properties.

Our Tarwin project was supposed to include community tree plantings and further farm walks. Covid-19 put a stop to those plans, so we decided to use some of our group funds to buy some plants to distribute to group members to plant on their own properties. Members photographed or filmed short videos on their phones of their 'separate but together' tree plantings and we put them all together in a video of all of our works to make a virtual farm walk. This is now on our website and has been viewed by members and friends all over the world.

Another part of this grant was to erect a sign at the Great Southern Rail Trail (GSTR) Koonwarra bridges to inform rail trail users of our bird monitoring project and encourage them to take part. Terramirra Press designed the sign, with assistance from the previous GSRT committee, South Gippsland Shire Council staff, Main Roads Authority and the road contractors CPB Contractors who kindly erected it on the northern end of the Blackspur Creek bridge.

The Blackspur Creek Wetlands Project is still a major group focus. For many of us the actual commencement of the realignment works of the South Gippsland Highway over the Black Spur Creek/ Tarwin River was long awaited. Bird monitoring is a large part of this project at the current time, and we negotiated with Australian Birdlife for shared sites around the 3 bridges between Koonwarra and Minns Road. Our data is stored by Australian Birdlife which can be accessed by anyone via their Birdata App. QR codes and site details can be found on the sign at the first bridge on the rail trail. We have monthly Bird monitoring walks on the third Wednesday of the month when we can – viruses and the weather allowing.

Tarwin River Koonwarra willow removal and revegetation project at members Luke and Mel's property continues with plantings of indigenous species on the Tarwin River banks. This involved the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority removing willows, elms, and riverside weeds from the riverbank, then fencing the site out. We recently were granted 500 plants from the SGLN 'One tree at a time' project towards this project.

#### COMMUNICATION

Most of our communication was via email newsletters, both the group one and the Blackspur Creek Wetlands Project newsletter, phone calls and a Zoom meeting. We have 61 on our electronic group mailout and 170 members on our BSCW electronic mailout.

Two signs about our bird monitoring have been made for this project. One is a light pull up sign for inside use and the second sign is now located on the rail trail. Both include the site locations, and birds that can be commonly seen in the area.

Our group also wrote to South Gippsland Shire Council about our concerns about clearing native vegetation from roadside and the revegetation of the same.

We have 81 followers on our Facebook page and a website which is regularly updated with current information for members, BSCW project updates, weed and vegetation information for anyone to use. <https://www.nerrenatarwinvalleylc.org.au/> .

#### GOVERNANCE

Our 2017 -2022 Action plan is current, and we have policies/ documents for bird monitoring, tree planting, epidemic guidelines and child safety and anti-bullying which is listed on our website. Our meeting minutes and financial reports are also listed.

#### SGLN

Four members were involved in the Online Strategy Workshops in April/May, as well as two members are involved in the Enhancing Soil Biology – Best Practice Soil Management project. Group member Herb Wildes sits on the SGLN board.

#### THANKS

I would like to thank all the members who have allowed us to have such a wonderful year and to achieve so much. Thanks goes to all our partners, authorities, supporters and community groups who have helped us throughout the year. I won't list them all in case I forget one, but we do appreciate your support and hope to work with you again.

Thanks to Kate Walsh, our BSCW project co-ordinator, who has worked tirelessly on making sure this project is relevant and engaging.

Thanks to Coral Hughes, our Treasurer, who has tackled online banking on our behalf and kept us financially on track.

To Jill Vella, our secretary, who has spent many hours keeping our group together. She is our IT guru, website manager, Facebook controller, project manager (that includes producing our wonderful video), and designer for our two bird monitoring signs. We are so lucky to utilise her skills.

Sue Miles

President Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare Group, July 2020.