



Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare Group Report 2022-23

President's Report

With the opening of the new part of the South Gippsland Highway and few covid restrictions it has been easier to organise events.

PROJECTS

Regenerating the Farm; connecting soil, trees, water and people Project

Our weekend Carbon Farming / Regeneration Field days were cancelled in October due to our facilitator being flooded in at his home but it went ahead in April. The two events attracted more than 50 people over the weekend of 22 and 23 April 2023. Corne and Jennifer Smit of Nerrena hosted the Saturday Carbon Farming event lead by Deane Belfield from Regenerative Australian Farmers who discussed repairing degraded land through regenerative agriculture practices that build soil carbon, increase water retention, support soil biology and ecosystem diversity. Deane lead the Carbon Farming discussion which gave participants many points of view to ponder. On Sunday we travelled to Berry's Creek to see Fergus and Deb O'Connor's prime beef property to see how the regenerative practices have increased productivity and reduced soil carbon. Kevin Hughes lead the day with a walk around the property taking soil samples and Fergus gave us an overview of how he had achieved his results.

Blackspur Creek Wetlands Project

We have continued to conduct bird monitoring activities this year and our findings can be found on the Birdlife website. This year we have seen several new species that we have not recorded previously, including Black Shouldered Kites. As the major roadworks came to an end we were asked to assist with providing information for their flora and fauna interpretive signs which are to be installed on the Rail Trail.

Linking the old and new South Gippsland Highways by restoring the Apple Tree Wetlands Project

Once the funding was received (and access to the site) we were able to employ the Bass Coast Landcare Works team to first spray various weeds on site and then cut down the large Sweet Pittosperum on the steep bank. The team had to abseil down the bank which was the only option to access these large weeds. They returned in mid June to assist to replant the steep area. Approximately half of the 4000 plants for this project were planted in a community planting day held in June which attracted both Landcare members and rail trail users alike. These plants had been grown from locally collected seed. A new sign will be erected onsite to explain the project and site



Landcare members assisting the Dunlops to direct seed their Middle Tarwin property.



Friends of the Meeniyen Wetlands and Jill who joined in the photo session in solidarity seeing as how she organised it.

Community Conservation in the Tarwin Valley

We received funding for this project from the 2022 Landcare Victoria Grants which involves 4 members projects and then learning how to sell our landcare story to the world. November we held a pop up direct seeding day at Middle Tarwin, followed by a pop up weed eradication day at Foster North, revegetating a site at Leongatha and Minns Road, Koonwarra revegetation project. We are engaging Remember The Wild to help us sell our landcare story, which will be based on these small targeted projects. This exciting experience we hope will enable us to get our story out to the community. We will also be developing a Communication Strategy for our group.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

We held our AGM and a general meeting again this year in September (still with people on Zoom) and members attended a Christmas dinner at the Meeniyah hotel.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Memberships are now through the SGLN portal which has taken time to sort out. We send out monthly email newsletters (but if anyone wants a hard copy mailed to them you only have to ask).

As President I have attended SGLN Presidents meetings, and a Great Southern Rail Trail discussion meeting.

Our social media (website and Facebook page) have shown many of our activities.

This year the committee consisted of Sue Miles President, Jill Vella Secretary, communications and project officer, Meryl Andrews, Assistant / Minutes Secretary, Coral Hughes Treasurer, Robert Rainbow, project Officer for Friends of the Meeniyah Wetlands. Kate Walsh retired from the executive and we thank her for her project work over many years. I would like to thank all the executive members and the our Landcare members who attended any of our activities for their involvement. Without you all there would be no Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare group. In the coming year we are trying to spread the load of the committee with a vice President, and the Secretary taking over more of Jill's work. The more members that take a small roll the easier it is on all of us.

Once again it has been a honour to be the President of such a dynamic group.

Sue Miles

President Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare Group

Sue with SGLN President Jillian Staton and last years threatened species cake - broad toothed rat cupcakes at out 2022 AGM



Treasurer's Report 2022-23

Balance brought forward 01/07/2022 **\$27,515.87**

Income

Memberships 394.52

WGCMA LVA Community Conservation in Tarwin Valley 17,578.53

WGCMA VLG grant. 5,935.60

Total income **\$23,908.65**

\$51,424.52

Expenditure

Running of group 304.84

GST to the ATO. 1896.00

Grants for plants, fencing, seeds. 5908.75

Appletree Wetlands - removal of weeds, trees & planting 7,172.88

ECO2 System Carbon talk and accommodation. 2386.52

Remember the Wild , deposit on speakers for August on communication 5500.00

Total expenditure **\$23,168.99**

Balance at 30/06/2023 **\$28,255.53**

Secretary's Report

Our Action Plan objective 1. To promote and implement projects addressing priority natural resource management issues

Actions undertaken to achieve these goals this year included

The 2021 Victorian Landcare grant for our project called '**Regenerating the Farm, connecting soil, trees, water and people**' was concluded. In 2021 we undertook a revegetation project on the Westaways farm, and also held a revegetation workshop and farm walk on their property.

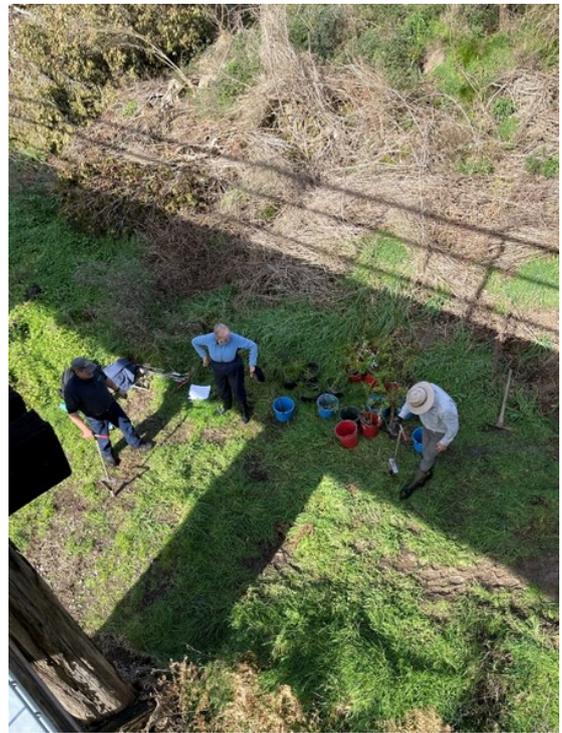
This year we completed the project with a regenerative agriculture and carbon farming workshop held on the Smit's property and a regenerative agriculture farm walk held at the O'Connor's farm. This was attended by 50 people over the two days of the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of April 2023. (32 on Saturday and 18 on Sunday) These workshops were scheduled for last year, however our presenter from Regenerative Australian Farmers was caught in the October flood event in Castlemaine and was unable to leave his property. We postponed the event until this year. Information about this project can be found at - <https://www.nerrenatarwinvalleylc.org.au/regenerating-the-farm-connecting-soil-trees-wat/>



The Gippsland Transport Environmental Projects Pilot Program '**Linking the old and new South Gippsland Highways by restoring the Apple Tree Wetlands**' concluded this year. Weed control was conducted over the length of the project in stages. Firstly, blackberry and broom were sprayed with herbicide to kill them, with the dead plants left in position to provide cover and habitat for the many birds and animals in the project area. Some woody weed control was also done at this time, controlling willows and hawthorn.

Pittosporum control was done late last year and earlier this year. The site is steep and weed control using our preferred cut and paint method required specialist weed control operators.

Native plants grown from seed collected onsite and locally was undertaken by both the Bass Coast community nursery and Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare group members. These plants were planted during a community planting day held in early June. This was not an agreed project output, but due to community interest in the site a well-attended planting day was held to foster community engagement and ownership of the project. About 2000 stems were planted on this day, the rest by the works crew due to the steep and dangerous nature of part of the project area. Bird monitoring has been undertaken during the project duration. More information can be found at <https://www.nerrenatarwinvalleylc.org.au/gippsland-transport-environmental-projects--pilot/>



Action Plan objective 2. To communicate and educate – community capacity building in natural resource management

We published 16 newsletters via our Mailchimp account to an audience of 111 subscribers. About 60% of our audience open our emails. The web page and Facebook status were updated regularly with 77 social media posts to 177 people who follow our page.

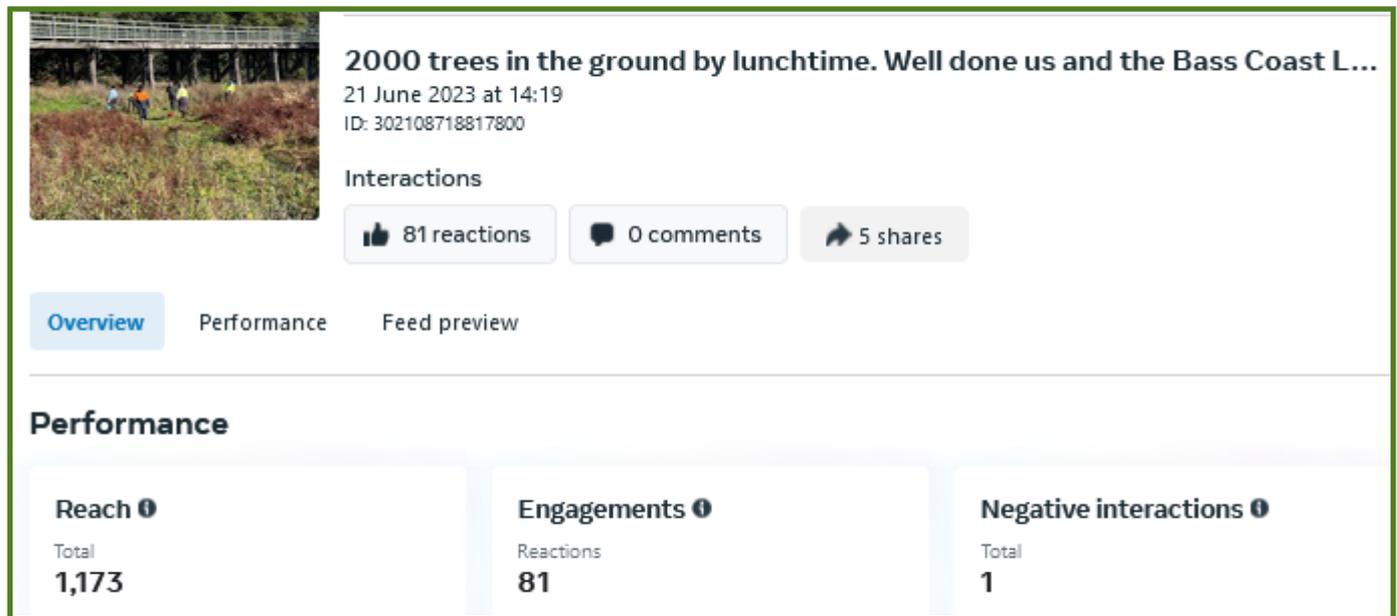
Our AGM held at the Meeniyon pub on Friday 16th December @ 6.30pm although post covid we have not held very many traditional meetings. Mostly we meet bird monitoring and at our activities.

Our most popular Facebook post is pictured below. If we were this successful at promoting our message all of the time we would not need our next Victorian Landcare grant project which is the ***'Community Conservation in the Tarwin Valley project'***. This project involves a community engagement process that will draw on four on-ground work projects as case studies. The foundation of Landcare is weed control, revegetation, waterway protection and community engagement. These are our strengths and focus as Landcarers and our works projects reflect this. Our Community Conservationist workshop was delivered by Remember the Wild (RTW), will share how to use narrative persuasion to affect behaviour change.

Our case studies are a blackberry control project, we will explore how weed control can be effectively undertaken by part time landholders. By demonstrating cost effective weed control (and future revegetation) of a steep site we aim to engage more of this cohort and inspire more effective weed control projects. This site is visible from the road and will be inspirational. The video developed from this project is available now on our website and at <https://vimeo.com/870135834>.

Two of our projects involve fencing waterways and replanting native vegetation. One will use tubestock and the other direct seeding. Both landholders are experienced but the sites are challenging. These will make compelling case studies, but more importantly protect local waterways, improve sediment and nutrient flow into the Ruby and Good Creeks, and ultimately the Bunurong coast. There are scant remnants of native vegetation on both sites that will be protected and enhanced.

The fourth project involves removing weed species from the roadside and planting endemic species. This will be the last major planting in an ongoing project involving adjoining landholders. This project has engaged neighbours, family and friends working together to protect and enhance roadside vegetation. This roadside forms an important biolink between preserved remnants and the Tarwin River. Please keep an eye out for our communications strategy and our resources developed from the case studies.



Action Plan objective 3. To foster community partnerships

We worked with (in no particular order and if I have forgotten anyone, sorry)

- the Shire of South Gippsland,
- South Gippsland Landcare Network
- Major Roads Projects Victoria,
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning,
- Bass Coast LC Network,
- West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority,
- Remember the Wild,
- Department of Transport and Planning
- Meeniyan Community Garden
- Other local Landcare groups including Tarwin, Fish Creek, Arawata, Mardan Mirboo North, Hallston regenerative farm group. We have an exciting Tarwin River project in the development stage.
- Landcare Victoria Inc.
- Regenerative Australian Farmers
- Fergus and Deb O'Connor

And thank all these groups and people for their contribution and collaboration.

Action Plan objective 4. To maintain the NTVLC membership and the viability of the Landcare Group

We persisted with the Landcare membership portal even though it didn't work very well. The premise and function were good in theory. As West Gippsland Landcare is not going to continue with it due to the astonishing costs associated with fixing it - we are back to being on our own. This is ok as we have the capacity through our website to sell a membership through our website shop. We can continue to use the same commerce system (Stripe) as we used in the portal. The stripe account was always ours so it was easy to transfer.

Memberships will remain per calendar year which we moved to so as to accommodate the portal system. Now when memberships are taken out or due they can be securely paid through the web shop by bank transfer or by credit card. We have 23 financial families this year.

Action plan objective 5. To make sure all members of the community have access to their local Landcare Group

We have endeavoured to plan all activities with inclusion as an integral part of the planning.

Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare group

Apple tree wetlands rehabilitation project



You are here

and you are in a very interesting part of the world. In the early Cretaceous era, 115 million years ago, this area was part of a freshwater water body. Mudstone deposited at this time has preserved an important part of Australia's fossil record, with plants, insects, spiders, crustaceans, fish and feathers found ~500m SW of here.



Herbarium specimen, Queensland Herbarium, Queensland, Australia. Digitized by the Queensland Herbarium, Queensland, Australia. Digitized by the Queensland Herbarium, Queensland, Australia. Digitized by the Queensland Herbarium, Queensland, Australia.

Many millions of years later Aboriginal people used a site ~600m north of here to meet and trade. Heritage recovery works before the road works has discovered many important artifacts.



Members of the Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare group smile at the archaeological dig before the road works, August 19th, 2016.

This area has been a wetland during all the history we are able to uncover. Our goals as a landcare group are to restore and protect this area. The Nerrena/Tarwin Valley Landcare group acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Landcare group area and pays respect to their past and present Elders. We honour and celebrate the spiritual, cultural and customary connections of Traditional Owners to country and the biodiversity that forms part of that country.



Being public railway land helped preserve the natural environment. The original trestle bridge of the Great Southern Railway Tarwin River 2nd crossing was 146 metres in length and contained 24 timber pile spans. Built by surveyor Andrew O'Keefe in 1888-1892, the structure is heritage listed. This kept the impact of the railway above the wetland.

We have named this project after the old apple tree beside the bridge that perhaps grew from an apple core thrown carelessly from the train. Our landcare group obtained funding in 2022 to remove the weeds from this area and replant with native species.

Why are we so keen to protect the wetlands here? Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They reduce the impacts of floods on the Tarwin River, absorb pollutants and improve water quality.

This wetland provides habitat for animals and plants and contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals that may be rare in other environments. The Strzelecki gum tree (*Eucalyptus strzeleckii*) is an endangered species which is found in this wetland complex.

Which weeds are we removing? The main woody weeds we are focusing on are sweet pittosporum, blackberry, broom and willow. We are targeting herbaceous weeds including prickly ox tongue, wandering trad and thistles.

Sweet pittosporum has a dense canopy that shades the ground and drops lots of leaves. A chemical inhibitor in the leaves prevents indigenous plants from growing beneath. It reduces habitat for native animals and the leaves are very flammable. Sweet Pittosporum starves surrounding plants of nutrients, water and sunlight.

How are we protecting habitat during weed control and replanting? We have sprayed blackberry but left the canes in place to provide prickly cover for small animals and birds. The pittosporum trees have been felled but left in place to provide cover. Use the QR code to find out more.



Project page link



Bird monitoring page link

We hold regular bird monitoring walks to monitor our progress. Anyone is welcome to join our bird walks. Scan the code for details.



VICTORIA State Government
Department of Transport and Planning

Nerrena Tarwin Valley Landcare group is grateful for the support of our project partners