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Significant projects and exciting new plans as work begins again after restrictions ease

With the festive season now well behind us our staff and partners have been busy commencing projects – which has now been made easier with the recent lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

This has also allowed our staff to return to our offices and open our Hamilton office to the public. We would love the community to drop in and say a 'hello'. It has been more than two years since we have been able to catch up with many people in our community face-to-face!

Some significant projects have just commenced and we have updates on many of them in this edition. This includes the recent launch of two significant projects in Warrnambool by Parliamentary Secretary for Water – Harriet Shing, 'Platycam' on the Grange Burn and the removal of one of the most significant environmental and recreational barriers in our region – The Bromfield Weir on the Merri River.

Adam Bester, CEO Glenelg Hopkins CMA

IMAGE: Reviewing the Flagship Waterways project 'Rivers of Warrnambool' plan on the Merri River are (from left) Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester with Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Harriet Shing, Warrnambool City Council CEO Peter Schneider, and Wannon Water Managing Director, Andrew Jeffers.

Harriet Shing launches Warrnambool waterways projects



Above: Harriet Shing with support partners in the projects includes organisations, businesses and significant community and volunteer support.

Left: Parlaimentary Secretary for Water, Harriet Shing

Parliamentary Secretary for water Harriet Shing recently visited Warrnambool to launch two big projects.

The Rivers of Warrnambool Flagship Project is a \$1.02 million investment in the Merri and Hopkins Rivers and Brucknell Creek. The project will include extensive community involvement in the current, future and ongoing management and development of the waterways to ensure the health of the waterways and the support of the communities and industries around them.

The Merri Connections Project is a \$400,000 investment in ensuring Victorians of south-west Victoria can connect with the nature on their doorstep by providing them with access through formal walking paths, seating areas and launching areas for unpowered watercraft like canoes, kayaks and paddle boards.

Both the projects build on the extensive community and cultural connection and support for the waterways around Warrnambool.

The launch was held at Platypus Park in Warrnambool at the Bank of the Merri river on Tuesday February 15. The launch had a casual attendance of community group representatives. Eastern Maar Elder, Uncle Rob Lowe began the event with welcome to country and smoking ceremony. Joined by the public with local dog walkers, fishermen and kids paddling in their kayaks on the Merri river, it was a great day to be launching these exciting projects.



Rare discovery on wetland plant ID workshop

A rare discovery was the highlight of the CMA hosting Graeme Lorimer from Biosphere to conduct wetland plants ID training recently.

A well-respected practitioner and trainer in his field, the aim of the Landcare-funded training was to increase the knowledge and identification skills of wetland plants within the region with Graeme's assistance. Attendees included Landcare facilitators, Glenelg Hopkins CMA staff and community members.

Day one was held at the Maam Water Reserve followed by an afternoon exploring Lake Pertobe.

The impromptu wander around Lake Pertobe led to a very interesting discovery - a critically endangered plant with only one prior record from Bemm River in 1978. Graeme and Ben are further investigating the discovery. Day two's activities were on the Mount Emu Creek at Panmure.



Above: Training day participants under the Princess Highway bridge at Panmure on the Mount Emu creek.

The Great South Coast sustainable water forum

The CMA supported the Great South Coast Sustainable Water Forum on the 15th of February in Hamilton. The forum had approximately 75 attendees including landholders, government agencies, agribusiness, council members and the Parliamentary Secretary for Water. The forum launched the Great South West's 18 point plan for Water Policy Reform in Victoria which aims to streamline groundwater use and licensing.

There was plenty of time for discussions and questions throughout the day. The forum was a terrific opportunity for all stakeholders to come together and hopefully make some headway into streamlining a complex issue.



Left: Attendees at the Sustainable Water Forum held by Food and Fibre – Great South Coast.

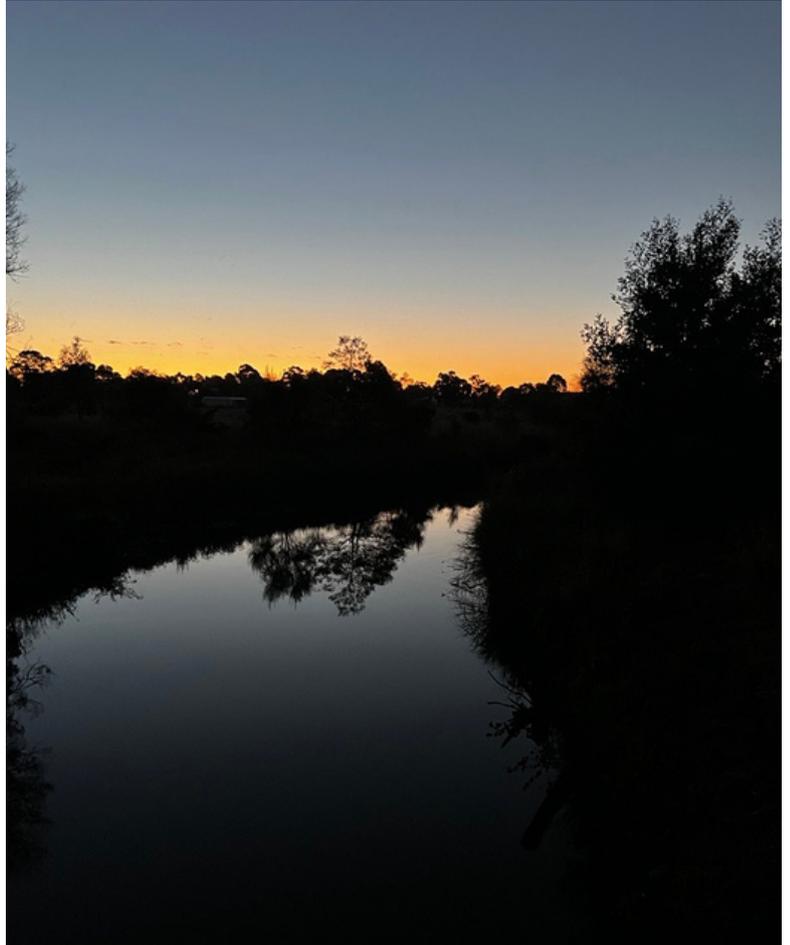
Platycam to live stream Grange Burn habitat

Hamilton's Grange Burn and its resident Platypus will feature in a new online livestream camera in their natural habitat - Platycam.

Significant waterway works have improved the Grange Burn to a point where it has a healthy population of the Platypus, which is now listed as a vulnerable species in Victoria. The new project is being undertaken in a partnership with Southern Grampians Shire Council and Arthur Rylah institute, which includes the livestream camera, will also install additional instream habitat and new bank revegetation works to support one of the world's most unique animals.

Platycam is believed to be the only livestream camera of platypus in the wild, with most other streamed footage of the notoriously shy animals broadcast showing them in captivity.

The project is being funded through the Victorian Government's support for Platypus habitat protection and restoration activities announced last year.



Above: The Grange Brun at dusk, one of the best times to spot a Platypus



Above: A platypus. IMAGE: Jarod Lyon, Arthur Rylah Institute

Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester said "the project would highlight not only the local platypus, but also how improving waterways was more than just water flows".

"It's quite exciting we will have the first Platycam installed on the Grange Burn," he said.

"The Grange Burn has been a focus of work for the CMA, Southern Grampians Shire Council and Wannon Water in recent years, and the presence of platypus is testament to how important that work has been."

It is anticipated Platycam will be live by May and viewers will be able to see live footage of the waterway 24hrs a day, with the platypus expected to make appearances at their most active times of dawn and dusk.

Check out www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/platycam

Removing the Bromfield Weir to improve the Merri

Warrnambool's Bromfield Street weir on the Merri River will be removed in a new project that aims to open up the waterway to improve community safety and return it a more natural condition. The \$772,000 project will be undertaken by Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (CMA) as part of the Victorian Government's \$248 million investment in improving the health of Victoria's regional waterways and catchments.

"Removing the weir will benefit native fish, which will be a boon for recreational anglers and the environment," Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester said.

Removing the weir will allow the community of Warrnambool to utilise the river more easily for kayaking and canoeing. The works will support the goals of the Warrnambool City Council's South of the Merri precinct plan, the Merri River Parklands Framework, and the Warrnambool 2040 community development strategy.

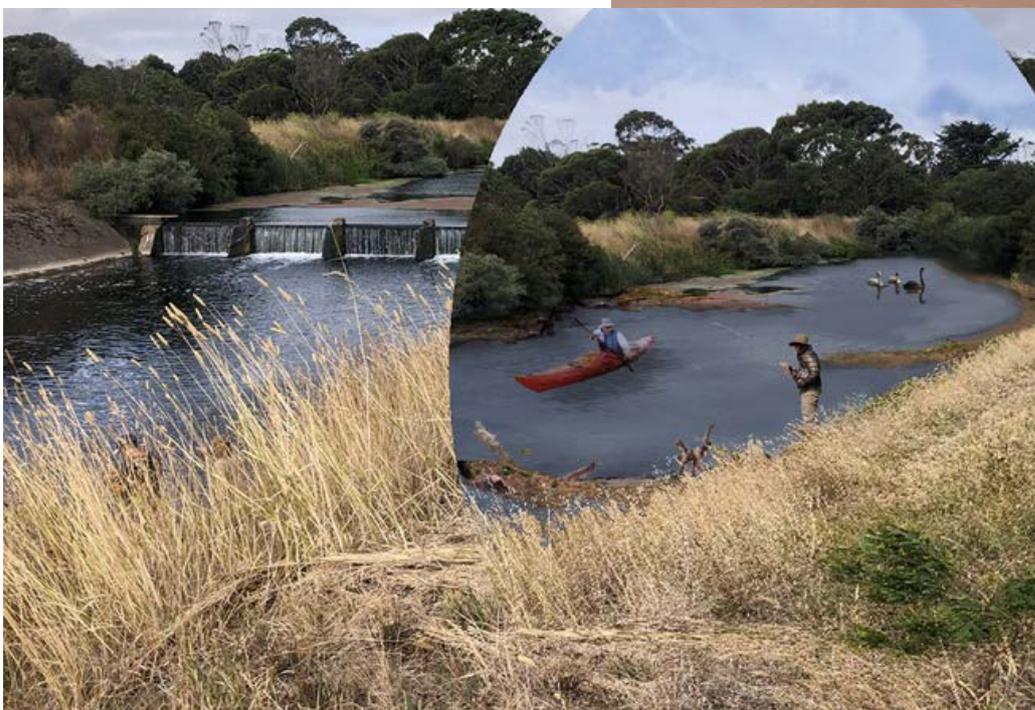
"The weir was originally constructed for Warrnambool's water supply in 1907 and was used until the Otways supply was constructed. It's quite an unsafe structure to have in town and we know that several people have unfortunately drowned there. This is an opportunity make the river safer for the community."

Removing the weir may also benefit local platypus populations according to platypus ecologist, Josh Griffiths, from EnviroDNA.

Learn more about the project, its benefits and how you can have you say here:

<https://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/.../bromfield-street-weir/>

Right: The Bromfield Weir structure on the Merri River will be removed in 2023



Left: An artistic impression of how the project on the Merri River will improve the waterway with imagery of the weir in place (LEFT) and its removal (RIGHT)

Maintaining critically endangered native grasses on road side

GHCMA staff have been undertaking post-burn surveys on critically endangered roadside native grasslands.

These are some of the highest quality native grasslands remaining on the Victorian Volcanic Plain, which have been maintained by community and CFA brigade burn-offs over the past century.

However, local volunteer brigades are finding it increasingly difficult to achieve all their burns each year.

To address this, brigades have begun to burn earlier in the season (i.e. before Christmas). GHCMA are working with the brigades to better understand how the vegetation responds to earlier burning, and how burn timing is related to burn patchiness.

The early season burns were assessed prior to Christmas, which will be compared to the regular season burns that occurred in February.



Above: GHCMA Staff Rhiannon Fischer, Liam Meredith and Jordan Lahy undertaking a post-burn survey of an endangered native grassland at Wickliffe.

The grasslands projects on the Victorian Volcanic Plains are supported by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA with funding through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

The project receives additional monitoring, funding and staff support from La Trobe University, Regional Roads Victoria and the Arthur Rylah Institute.

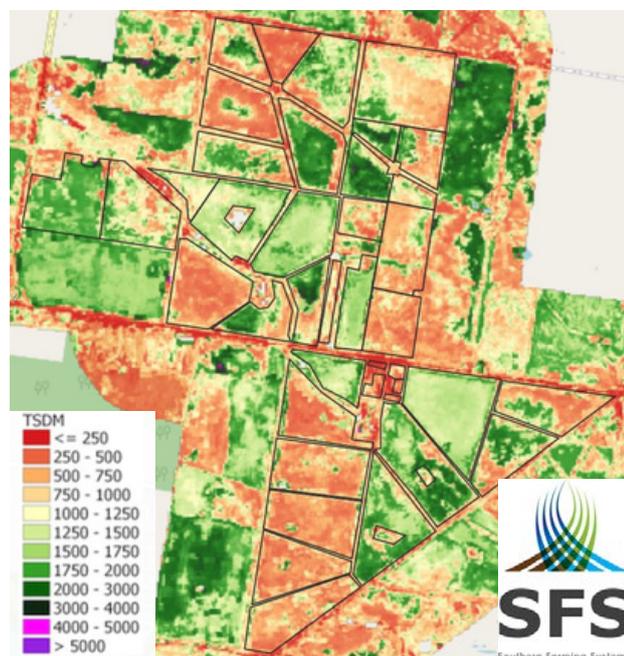


Remote sensing pastures for Southern Australia will soon be a reality

For the past two years, Southern Farming Systems and the Building Farm Resilience Team have been working on calibrating satellite data to estimate pasture feed on offer and groundcover to assist farmer decision-making.

The pasture satellite work is part of the National Landcare Program Smart Farming Partnerships Project, building the resilience and profitability of cropping and grazing farmers in the High Rainfall Zone of Southern Australia. Other partners in the project include Federation University (Ballarat), Glenelg Hopkins CMA, MacKillop Farm Management Group and Agriculture Kangaroo Island.

To keep informed about this project visit: www.sfs.org.au



Above: Example of Satellite Food on Offer estimates on a pasture cut farm in Victoria

Seeking landholders for Red-tail food source planting



Left: The endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. IMAGE: BEN ZEEMAN

Are you a landholder in the South-west corner of Victoria with some space for some extra trees on your farm?

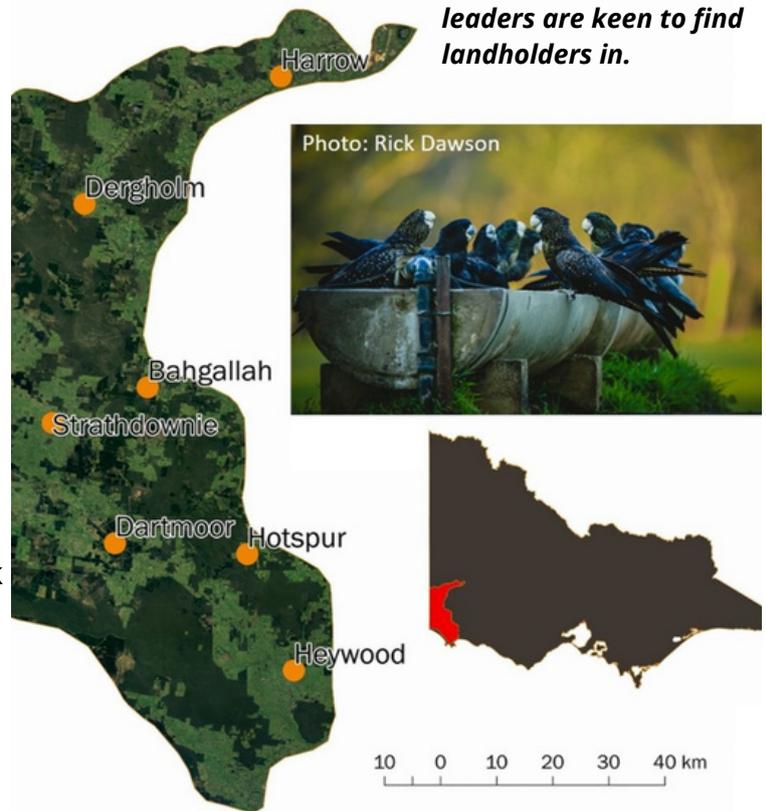
If you live within the distribution of the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Greening Australia are looking for you to help with the recovery of the species.

Project leaders are keen to talk to landholders within the known distribution of the birds in the Glenelg Hopkins region, which extends in Victoria from Harrow to Portland, who would be interested in revegetating areas of their property with the food source of the cockatoo, the Brown Stringybark tree.

Over the past three years, landholders in this area have so far contributed to over 100 ha of revegetation on their properties to help with the recovery of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo.

“Red-tails are highly specialised feeders, only able to feed on the fruit of Stringybark trees, and seasonally on Buloke, so we are keen to talk to landholders who would be happy to have these species planted on their property,” Glenelg Hopkins CMA’s Ben Zeeman said.

Below: The distribution area of the species project leaders are keen to find landholders in.



For more information, or to register your interest please contact either Ben Zeeman at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA (0411 311 328, b.zeeman@ghcma.vic.gov.au) or Dave Warne at Greening Australia (DWarne@greeningaustralia.org.au).

This project is supported by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA with funding through the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program

CMA NEWS:

Our Catchments Our Communities weir project at Bryan Swamp

Bryan Swamp is in the mouth of Victoria Valley in the southern Grampians, part of the upper Wannon River catchment. It is one of the nine priority large wetlands 'Our Catchments Our Communities' Project. In early August 2021, in between lockdowns, nine pairs of busy hands from a local farm, Nature Glenelg Trust and Glenelg Hopkins CMA filled and installed 120 sandbags to establish a trial weir in one of its outlet drains.

This weir has kept the swamp wet for a few weeks in summer giving its birds, frogs and plants more time to finish breeding. This hydrological restoration trial was funded by the State Government and approval for the works was given by Parks Victoria who manage the Bryan Swamp Reserve.



Left: The weir building team in front of the finished structure after four hours hard work.

Below: Growling Grass Frog on Trial Weir sandbags, January 2022



OCOC Regional Leadership Grants NOW OPEN

Community groups and non-for-profit organisations involved in natural resource management can now apply for our Regional NRM Leadership Grants Program is now open with applications accepted until 5pm Friday 25 March 2022.

Grant categories include:

- Community NRM Leadership Grant – for community members involved in Friends of groups, Landcare groups and networks, Coastcare and other NRM focused community and user groups
- Farmer NRM Leadership Grant – for community members working in an agricultural industry for a minimum of 3 days per week
- Women in NRM Leadership Grant
- Aboriginal NRM Leadership Grant

For further information, or to apply, please visit our website <https://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/get-involved/grants-tenders/>



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