

"SPECIAL EXTRA BUSHLANDS BANTER"

No 10 extra - Autumn 2020



Bushlands Re-Wilding Project: from Scott Hall

In our recent Bushlands Banter it was announced that the Chewton Bushlands Association has been successful in receiving a grant of \$3000 from the Mount Alexander Shire Council as part of their Community Small Grants Program.

This project is open to the Bushlands Community and many have been asking for more details.

The Re-Wilding Project will be carried out on Tim Purdie and Hannah Nicholas's property in Sparks Road. It is a pilot program that aims to demonstrate a practical way to begin the process of enriching the environmental values of one property through transforming a dam into a beautiful space to attract birdlife and provide a safe haven for a variety of wildlife, including endangered species.

Depending on the outcome this pilot program could be used as a basis for future larger grant applications to make possible a wider roll-out across the Bushlands and perhaps the wider community.

The project will include expert advice from an environmental consultant, workshops, working bees, and plants and bird/mammal box installation.

Workshops

Free workshops and forums will be open to our community and should be a lot of fun. Appropriate groups will be invited to also attend. The wider community will have access to information about the project and its outcomes.

One workshop will be presented by Damien Cook from Rakali Ecological Consulting. Damien is a renowned expert on improving dam habit.

Eco-friendly dams can become a wildlife haven as well as improving water quality. So a further benefit is drought proofing the dam as much as possible with appropriate plantings.

Damien presented a workshop for Connecting Country at his Newstead property in 2017 and will do something similar on Tim and Hannah's property.

Damien has a wealth of practical ideas. He and his partner Elaine Bayes have planted Water Ribbon, Common Swamp Wallaby Grass, have made formerly dry areas moist, have mitigated erosion and much more on their property. The result has been amazing with many different frog species deciding to live there. The property also has a number of the critically endangered Golden Sun Moths.

A second workshop will show you how to build your own inexpensive aquatic floating pontoon. Paul Kerwick has generously offered to help me make a prototype to use for this particular workshop.

Bird/Mammal Boxes

These will be installed on Tim & Hannah's property to encourage birds and mammals, including threatened species. At the CBA committee meeting on 11th January this year Miles Geldard talked to us about all things bird/mammal boxes. He pointed out that many birds and mammals suffer a housing crisis and need suitable box accommodation. His expert advice, as well the sharing of local knowledge, will guide us on this aspect of the project.

Re-Wilding Sub Committee of the CBA

The success of this project will depend on the vision, skills and commitment of Bushlanders guided by the working group which will comprise a sub-committee of the CBA with additional interested and committed folk. If you think you may be able carve out some time in between family and other commitments please consider joining.

Challenges

A project like this has lots of challenges and learning opportunities for us all. We intend to discover:

- How Covid 19 will impact on the Project. With the pandemic is likely to affect our timelines we will need to work around these challenges particularly in the early stages.
- How, when, where and with whom the workshops are best organised.
- Local and expert knowledge on for example
 - what dam plants are most suitable
 - given that water levels of dams rise and fall, where on the dam banks we should plant various species.
 - given that the dam banks are very compacted, how successful planting is maximised.
- What plants should be planted in the riparian area leading into the dam and what else should be done in this zone.
- How to engage the whole Bushlands community.
- The best way to reduce evaporation and improve water quality in the dams.
- How to best track our progress and successes in a way that enhances our chances of a future larger grant.
- How to learn from mistakes and correct the situation as much as possible and move on.

We will learn many of these things from the project's expert consultants.

From little things big things grow. Hopefully the Re-Wilding Project will be yet another example of what can be successfully achieved by the CBA around our core environmental values.

Contact us: If you think you may be interested in becoming involved, attending a workshop/s or are just curious to find out more, please contact Antoinette Birkenbeil on 0414 802 738 or Scott Hall on 0413 931 232