



THE GRANITE NEWS

18TH OCT. 2020

VOLUME 14

ISSUE 37

WHITEHEADS CREEK • TERIP TERIP • CAVEAT • RUFFY • HIGHLANDS • HUGHES CREEK

Welcome, Wumindjika and G'day

Another week and a few more adjustments have been made to our day to day lives as a result of the numbers continuing to head in the right direction - down! Definitely most welcome. Although I haven't caught up with family and friends in Melbourne, in person, for many, many weeks now it's always a bonus to catch up with them either via a visual virtual, like Messenger, or a very long phone call. It's amazing the topics that can be covered during the course of one of these communiques. Of course there are also emails and texts that assist with staying up to date with the latest goss too, all of which makes the lag time go faster.

However, as the actor Ricky Gervaise espoused only 7 months ago, "We're all primates, we need hugs," and I can't help thinking how true that is. In the meantime though we'll just have to make do with virtual ones.

Until next issue continue to stay warm and safe, **Pauline And Kenny?** Was observing the HCCC Executive Committee Meeting .



Feedback? - editor@tgn.org.au
or to subscribe on-line go to
www.highlands.org.au

"You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams."

Dr Suess (1904 - 1991)

**Children's Author & Illustrator
(who would have thought?)**

The Granite News is an open but moderated community forum.

Readers are encouraged to contribute articles and we also encourage you to air your views on things that interest or concern you within our community. We certainly welcome feedback from you, positive or otherwise on anything that is published in **The Granite News**

How can Biodiversity benefit Agriculture?

Jim Radford from LaTrobe University will enlighten any interested community members who wish to register for this workshop. Jim has completed an extensive literature review on scientific peer reviewed studies completed in Australia on the workshop topic.

Date: Tuesday 20th October 2020

Time: 9.30am start, finish 10.30am try to log in 5mins prior to the start of the workshop.

Meeting place: Online

Click on the link below to register your attendance for the workshop.

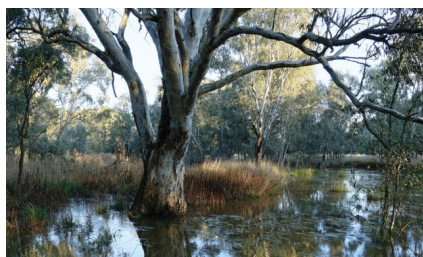
[Fill out this form to register for the workshop.](#)

Once you register for the workshop a link will be sent to your email address. In the email there will be a link that will take you to the workshop on the day. You do not have to download anything to attend this workshop.

If you have a query regarding this workshop, contact

Karen Brisbane - Bullock karenb@gbcma.vic.gov.au or 0409 955 396

Jim will present case studies and examples of research from Australia that show the benefits of biodiversity to agriculture. Examples will be drawn from a variety of farming systems with a focus on ecosystem services that benefit agricultural production. Jim will also cover what you can do to improve biodiversity on your farm.



Let's laugh



**HCCC Membership so far
155 ... and counting**

Website of the Week

While this website has featured previously it now has the new topic of BIG Weather listed as a link. If you haven't managed to catch this show on Tuesday night, try iview. <https://www.abc.net.au/your-planet/>

Please note: Thursday evening is the deadline for inclusion in the following week's TGN although this will depend on space and time constraints—thanks

Community Notices & Classifieds

CALENDAR of EVENTS — or something to look forward to...

Sat 7th & Sun 8th November from 10-4	DARREN GILBERT's OPEN STUDIO 2742 Highlands Rd, Highlands Darren's studio, with his creative works is now open on first weekend each month. An inspirational environment where both art and sculpture come to life in a beautiful scenic countryside of Highlands.
2nd Monday each month @ 11am	HIGHLANDS SPINNING CLUB The Highlands Spinning Club will get together in 2019 at the same place Caveat-Dropmore Rd, the same time 11am and with the same good company! BYO lunch & coffee will be provided. contact Jan 5790 4361
2nd Wednesday each month @ 9.30am	TERIP TERIP MORNING TEA This enjoyable social event is open to anyone who enjoys a cuppa, swap any books or home-grown produce. Highlands Community Centre
2nd Friday each month @ 6.30pm	DRINKS ON THE VERGE Starts at 6.30pm. All welcome, especially those who enjoy a drink with friends old and new. All welcome, especially those who enjoy a drink with friends old and new. All welcome, especially those who enjoy a drink with friends old and new. Highlands Community Hall
3rd Thursday or Friday each month	HUGHES CREATIVE COLLABORATIVE MEETING The next meeting will be in 2020 commencing at 7pm. All welcome. at ??????
Last Thursday each month @ 5.30pm	SECRET MEN'S BUSINESS All people in the district are welcome, pink note (\$5) donation towards a BBQ, BYO and chat at Caveat Church
4th Saturday each month 10-12 or 12-2	HIGHLANDS BLACK MARKET Bring along your excess produce, buy local and learn from each other. at 94 Old Highlands Rd Enquiries? - Clare 0428 969366
Every second Wednesday 10.30-12.30	MURRINDINDI MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE The Mobile Library visits the TGN area, based at the Highlands Hall every fortnight. Why not pop in?? at Highlands Community Hall Please note the Mobile Library Service is temporarily suspended until further notice!!
Every Monday @ 10 am	QIGONG AT RUFFY Vivien Watmough looks forward to welcoming you to the benefits of this ancient well-being practice. at Tablelands Community Centre Ruffy For bookings and enquiries please call Vivien 5790 4361 or email: vivienwatmough@gmail.com
Every Thursday @ 7.30 (sharp) - 9pm	SWING DANCE CLASS Swing dances featuring Big Band music of the 1930s and 40s, and they are definitely all about having fun!! at Euroa Uniting Church Hall Enquiries? Ray 0467 951559

Seymour Rotary Club wants YOUR batteries



The Rotary Club in Seymour collects batteries as a fund source.

If anyone has any batteries laying around on their farm and wants to get rid of them, Ron Halicki would be happy

to collect them. Why not give him a call on 0428 674006?

Subsidies are now available through

HCCC Landcare group for Rabbit Ripping.
(Conditions Apply)

Please email Janet Hagan
hughes.creek1@gmail.com

Coronacast - all yours for free!

In these times of instant social media and 'fake news' **Coronacast** is an accurate podcast that helps to answer your questions about coronavirus or COVID19. The latest news and research is broken down to help you understand how the world is living through an epidemic.

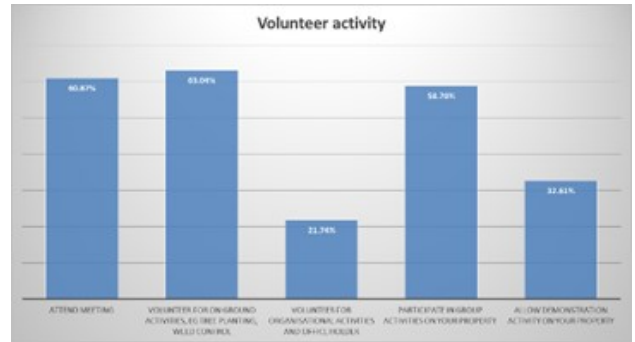
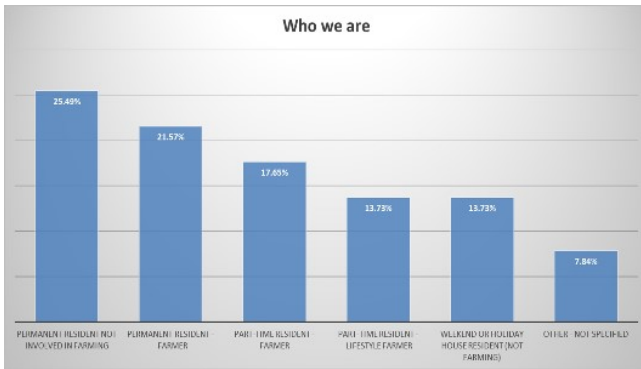
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Coronavirus 24hr Hotline

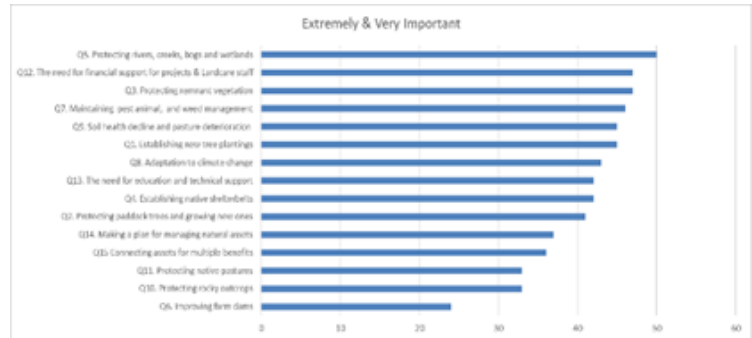
1800 020 080

Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative (HCCC) survey results



Just in case these graphs didn't come across too clearly, when they were smaller in last week's TGN, here they are enlarged a bit more and hopefully more readable. If you have any queries or would like further information please email Neil on hughes.creek.fac@gmail.com

HCCC Committee



ITEMS STILL FOR SALE – Property sold

Cash & Collect from Trawool 0417 353425 (Di Schrapel)

Lots of other items for sale, furniture (2 x corner TV units, large pine TV unit, chest of drawers, extension laminated table, vintage vinyl couch & chairs), china, glasses, office chair, box of leather, cream separator, used pine posts, electric fencing materials (ceramic insulators, pigtales, stand off wires), futon base, new & second hand timber, and lots more. Enquiries welcome **Tel: 0417 353 425 or 0407 921 082**
ALSO

Mini Bike/BMX/ Mountain Bike Ramp Steel kicker ramp frame just needs a new sheet of ply wood put on it. 2670 long x 780 wide x 1300 high. Located at Trawool **\$150 ono. Cash only**



But wait, there's more....

Pit Bike Parts

Numerous pit bike and motor bike parts ranging from 90cc to 250cc. Looking to sell as package not separate. Atomic 250 frame, Atomic 125 frame Bunch of engine parts. Some plastics from different bikes

Other odds and ends. Different tyres 1 x 4.60-17 4PR, 1 x 4.60-17 6PR, 1 x 3.00-21 51P, 1 x 5.10-17 6PR
On bike rear wheel 110/100-18 Small bike rolling frame wheels Front Wheel 2.50-14, Back Wheel 80/100-12 Other smaller tyres 1 x 60/100-14 30M (2.50-14), 1 x 80/100-12
\$300 ono for the lot. Cash only



Nest Box Life –Span

Following on from Heather Taylor's article a few weeks ago about her Nesting Box Iso Project here are a few findings from a decades long study of installation of nest boxes for arboreal mammals in southern Australia.

(by Goldingay, Thomas & Shanty)

“Nest boxes are commonly installed to support hollow-using species where the abundance of hollow-bearing trees is deficient. Recent studies have provided equivocal evidence about the effectiveness of nest box projects... The study documented the functionality of 303 nest boxes, installed across 5 different community-led projects in southern Australia for periods of 10-25 years. As was expected it was found that nest boxes lost functionality over time. However 60% remained functional enough to support the Brush-tailed Phascogale and the Sugar Glider after almost 20 years. The number of years installed, method of nest box attachment and tree species influenced whether the boxes remained functional...

Maintenance of most nest boxes occurred twice a year in the first 5 years after installation, but many received no maintenance for periods of 3 years and in some cases 10-15 years. The findings suggest that infrequent maintenance by community groups can sustain nest box projects over periods of several decades.” **Why not make you own boxes? They work!**



Koala – (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

The word koala is said to come from the Dharug peoples (whose traditional lands span the area from Parramatta to the Blue Mountains of New South Wales) word meaning 'no water'. Koalas are marsupials, giving birth to underdeveloped young and they share a number of characteristics with wombats, who are their closest living relatives, including a backward-facing pouch.

Koalas live over a range of open forest and woodland communities but ultimately their habitat is defined by the presence of a select group of food trees. Koalas are found in higher densities where food trees are growing on more fertile soils and along watercourses. They do, however, remain in areas where their habitat has been partially cleared and in urban areas. The distribution of koalas covers much of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and a small area in South Australia. Over the past 200 years, their distribution does not appear to have reduced, however, individual koala populations have declined. Local extinctions have occurred due to clearing and fragmentation of eucalypt woodlands and forests for agriculture and human settlement. Fossil records indicate that many years ago, the koala inhabited parts of Western Australia and the Northern Territory. There are no fossil records of koalas ever living in Tasmania.

A Koala's fur is usually grey-brown in colour with white fur on the chest, inner arms, ears and bottom. They have no fur on their nose or the palms of their paws. Koalas have particularly hard bottoms, which is similar to their closest relative, the wombat. For the koala, this feature enables them to wedge comfortably in tree forks for long periods of time, whereas the wombat uses its hard bottom as a defence mechanism.

Koalas have poor vision and rely heavily on their other senses. They have excellent hearing which helps them detect predators and other koalas. They have an acute sense of smell which also helps them detect other koalas and their favourite food trees. The male uses a scent gland on his chest to mark trees and attract females, by rubbing his chest up and down the trunk. The gland oozes a clear, oily, strong musky smelling liquid. The size, colour and shape of koalas differs slightly across eastern Australia, with southern koalas being bigger and heavier than their northern counterparts.

Koalas eat a variety of eucalypt leaves and a few other related tree species, and they consume around 500 grams of leaves each day, (approximately the size of a small lettuce) and obtain most of their water requirements from the leaves, which can contain up to 50% water. This removes the need for a koala to climb down a tree for a drink of water, except during very hot or dry periods. The leaves are also very low in energy comprising, on average, only 5% sugars & starches.

Eucalypt leaves contain many toxic compounds similar to that of cyanide, which most animals cannot eat. This unique diet is shared only with possum and gliders, and provides koalas with access to a relatively untapped food resource. Koalas are able to break down the toxic oils using a specialised digestive system. First, the leaves are ground into a paste by the koala's heavily ridged molars, allowing any nutrients to be absorbed in the stomach. Toxins in the leaves are isolated by the liver and excreted as waste in their urine and faeces. The residue is then broken down by specialised bacteria in an elongated, coiled sac (the caecum) that branches off the large intestine before any remaining nutrients are digested. Koalas are not born with these bacteria in their system and need to acquire it from their mother when they are young. The mother passes on these bacteria by excreting a sticky runny faecal substance called 'pap', which the young ingests instinctively, providing it with the bacteria it needs to eat the leaves in adult life.

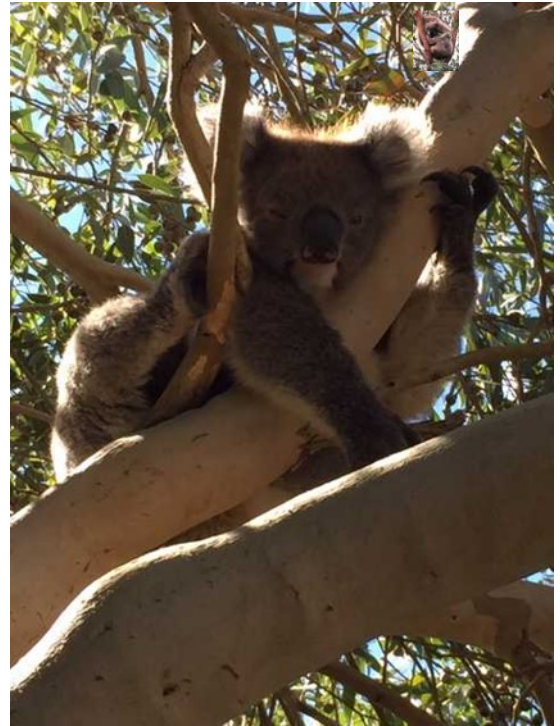
Koalas can sleep for up to 20 hours a day, due to their low energy diet, and the intense amount of energy required to break down toxic leaves. They are mostly active at night (nocturnal) and around dawn and dusk. However, they can be seen moving during the day if they are disturbed, get too hot or cold, or need to find a new tree.

Koalas are solitary animals living within a network of overlapping home ranges, which allows contact between individuals for mating. Males will try to establish dominance over the home ranges of a number of females during the mating season. In spring, adult males begin to call as a way of advertising their presence to surrounding koalas. Males will seek out a mate and fight with rival males to establish their dominance and give a distinctive call during the breeding season over the summer months. The call is produced as the male 'snores' as he inhales and then gives a loud, deep roar as he breathes out. On a still night, the call can be heard almost a kilometre away. Females may also produce a low-pitched bellow similar to a male to indicate they are ready to mate. They will also 'squawk' and 'wail' during mating.

Males begin mating at three to four years of age. Females begin mating, and can breed, when they are two years of age, generally giving birth once a year, for the next 10 to 15 years. The gestation period of a female koala is 35 days; after which she gives birth to a single joey. Female koalas are also capable of giving birth to twins, however this is quite rare. Birth usually take place between the months of November and February. The young stays in the pouch for the next six months before emerging for the first time. The joey will then spend between six and 12 months riding on its mother's back.

By 12 months of age, the young is weaned and takes up a home range, which overlaps with its mother, for much of the next year. Between the age of two and three years, these young disperse beyond their original home range to establish their own range, usually during the breeding season. On average, koalas live for 10 to 12 years of age in the wild. Although females can continue to breed into their 'teens' and may live as long as 18 years; males are thought to have a slightly shorter lifespan.

Continued on p.5 >>>



Protecting rivers, creeks and waterways

The number one priority on the HCCC Survey was 'Protecting rivers, creeks, bogs and wetlands'. Fortuitously this article comes from ANU's Sustainable Farms initiative—10 ways to improve natural assets on a farm. Enjoy.

Rivers, creeks & wetlands are often the most productive and biodiverse parts of the landscape, making them good places to focus vegetation protection and restoration efforts. They can also be key sources of high quality water for your farm.

When riparian areas are well managed, water persists longer on a farm, which can boost productivity. Restoring riparian vegetation can limit erosion and improve dry matter production in adjacent paddocks, leading to greater milk production in dairy herds and a boost in farm income.

Well managed riparian vegetation is a hotspot for biodiversity. Threatened species such as the squirrel glider, regent honeyeater, Macquarie perch, southern pygmy perch and Booroolong frog are associated with healthy riparian systems. Healthy populations of native animals add value to farms in many ways, including through better pest insect control, pollination and nutrient cycling.



To protect rivers, creeks and wetlands, consider the following:

- Fence riparian areas to limit the impacts of livestock, particularly faecal contamination and pugging, on water quality. Set fences back from the high-water mark and active erosion zones to ensure that they are not washed away during a flood, or use fence types that will tolerate flooding, such as plain wire.
- If you can, install troughs to provide livestock with water away from the watercourse. If not, fence the riparian areas and provide a hardened access point for stock.
- When riparian areas are protected from grazing, grasses, reeds and rushes usually regenerate naturally. They provide an important filtration service for runoff from adjacent paddocks and upstream, reducing the amount of sediment and chemicals entering the watercourse.
- Allow native plants to naturally regenerate, or plant trees and shrubs within fenced riparian areas. Ensure that native plants are used. Exotic plants must be avoided – they can contribute to invasive weed problems that badly damage the environment.
- Leave fallen timber in and around waterways. Snags help to form “leaky weirs” and create a chain-of-ponds, enabling water to persist in the landscape for longer during dry times. Snags also provide habitat for native animals and an underwater surface for biofilm, which provides food for invertebrates and other animals.

Making Cent\$ of Carbon & Emissions on Farms - Part 2

A number of farmers are proving there are ways to increase on-farm productivity while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Most farmers have already made great resource efficiency improvements by using new technologies, new practices and skills. Such improvements can also result in reduced overall emissions. When thinking about how to manage carbon and emissions on farms, it is useful to think of the farm as having the following key action areas—



Energy: increasing efficiency, renewable energy and emissions reduction.

Nitrogen use efficiency & fertilisers: improving efficiency and saving money.

Healthy soils: to grow food and store carbon.

Livestock: improving performance & reducing energy loss

Trees: for farm health.

Supply chain: prepare for what others are doing.

To stay updated go to

www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/carbon-emissions

KOALAS - continued from p.4

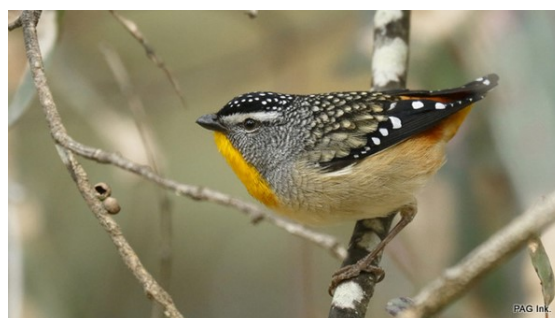
Koalas are subject to a range of diseases which can affect their life expectancy, eg: *Chlamydia* is a bacterial infection affecting many koalas in South East Queensland. The stress-related disease weakens the immune system and can cause blindness and reproductive tract disease which may render a female infertile. Koala infertility from *Chlamydia* infection is one

Koalas are among the most easily recognised of all Australian animals, however, they often go unnoticed as they rest wedged in a tree fork, high in a gum tree. From the ground, a koala may appear to be little more than a bump on the tree itself.

Text – Queensland Department Environment & Science

NB: After the 2019-20 bushfires koala populations in both NSW and Kangaroo Island have been dramatically reduced enough for them now to be regarded as an endangered species. Previous studies also indicated that koalas could be extinct in NSW by 2050 due to climate change impacting the leaves they eat not being able to produce enough moisture for koalas to survive.

Aussie Backyard Bird Count - 19-25 Oct.



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