



2024 LYREBIRD AWARD

WINNERS

Gippsland Intrepid Landcare

The next generation of Landcare champions

Gippsland Intrepid Landcare are the future of our volunteer community.

Formed in 2017, the group is aimed at young people wanting to protect the region's environment while having epic adventures across Gippsland.

In just a few years, the group has grown to 60 members and has held over 20 successful events attended by 500 young people. This is an impressive start, especially considering three years impacted by COVID.

Their innovative activities aim to combine friendship, adventure and outdoors with environmental work and have included kayaking trips to map willows, beach-themed events to remove sea spurge and hiking expeditions to monitor deer.

A highlight has been the hugely successful Plant & Dance events funded by Victorian Landcare Grants, where thousands of trees are planted on sites followed by a dance party.

Not only is this Landcare group supporting Gippsland's environment, they are also providing opportunities for young people to make social connections, build professional networks and gain hands-on industry experience in natural resource management.

Their success at attracting and engaging members is contributing to a broader understanding of community groups and volunteerism in the West Gippsland region.



We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of the region, the Gunaikurnai, the Bunurong, the Boonwurrung and the Wurundjeri peoples, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country.



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John Topp

A lifetime dedicated to protecting native plants

Native plant guru and nurseryman John Topp has been sharing his love and knowledge of native plants and conservation for over fifty years.

He has played a significant role in protecting, conserving and restoring important native vegetation within the West Gippsland catchment through his nursery, his tireless contribution to Landcare and his passion for sharing his passion with others.

John owned and operated Gippsland Indigenous Plants, a specialist native plant nursery in Valencia Creek that supplied over 130 different species of local plants. John would travel across Gippsland collecting seed from the bush to propagate at his nursery

He has an 'encyclopaedic' knowledge of Gippsland's local biodiversity and vegetation communities and generously shares his wisdom with community groups, school children and Landcarers at workshops, nature walks and planting events.

You won't hear John boast about his accolades, but there are many, including his 2015 Pride of Australia Environment Award and his expedition to the Amazon Jungle as a conservation volunteer when he was 71 years old.

Now retired from the nursery, John's legacy and contribution to the natural environment continues through his involvement with the Maffra and District Landcare Network and the hundreds of thousands of native trees and plants that grow in our catchment thanks to his stewardship.



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Bass Coast Landcare Network

*When we get lyrebirds and platypus back
into the Powlett, I'll take a holiday.*

Planting over 5 million plants trees since it began in 2004, Bass Coast Landcare Network is a key partner for West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority helping to achieve positive landscape-scale change.

Unique to Landcare in Victoria, the network has an invasive species team, works crew and nursery where passionate volunteers come in each week to assist in producing 160,000 plants each year to supplement those grown by the local nurseries they love to support.

Since 2004, the team has grown from six staff to 25 and has evolved from planting 80,000 plants per year to a whopping 450,000.

The network works with farmers on sustainable agriculture activities and hosts over 40 community and education activities along with 30 community planting days each year with a record 20,000 plants put in at one single event - their largest planting event to date.

The network are key partners in the CMA's Kugerungmome/Powlett River Partnerships Project and will be instrumental in delivering pest animal control for the new Towards Zero Extinctions program delivered by the CMA as a Federal Government Regional Delivery Partner.



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Bryan Watterson

As the habitat is restored and reconnected, I dream of lyrebirds returning to the property.

·West Gippsland CMA recently achieved a first milestone by removing willows from the entire length of the Agnes River and fencing and planting over 98% along its length.

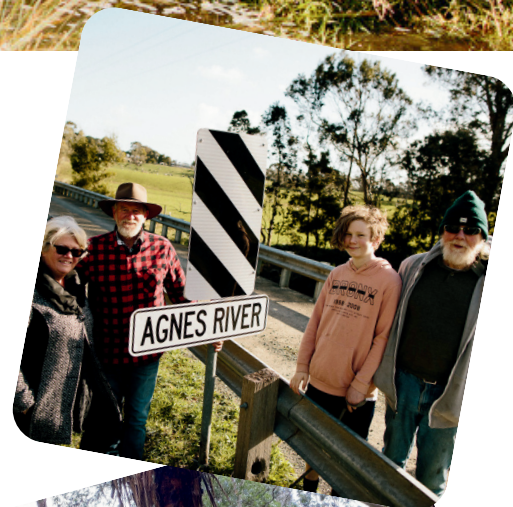
·his required buy in from landholders and Bryan's advocacy and hard work greatly contributed to this success.

·Bryan Watterson was one of this project's key community champions – planting extensively on his own property and inspiring others to do the same.

A member of Corner Inlet Landcare and absolute leader for the region, Bryan is a passionate, inspiring and influential Landcare member. He has supervised the planting of 70,000 trees on his own property alone and inspired many neighbours and landholders to get on-board, leading to hundreds of thousands of trees planted in Gullies of the Strzelecki Ranges.

·Despite his many decades of Landcare, Bryan is still organising monthly community plantings bringing together school kids, new lifestyle property owners and traditional dairy farmers.

Sculpture parks, platypus viewing areas, restored gullies and a river that is fenced and revegetated along its entire length are just some of Bryan's contributions on his own property and within his community.



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Kate Mirams & Peter Neaves

Kate believes everyone has the right to access quality produce and won't stop until she gets there.

When Kate Mirams and Peter Neaves laser graded their top paddock in 2019, it blew dust over the small town of Newry – it also made Kate's heart sink. She knew it was time for change.

The couple began working with their local West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Agriculture Victoria reps to repair the soil on their 330 acre dairy farm. "We remain focused on making a profit and just play at the edges of what is good for soil – so we can still grow plenty of quality feed," Kate said.

"A farm is an ecological being. When we look through an ecology lens, we aim to create the conditions we want rather than having to intervene to kill what you don't want." Kate recalled when she worked out their pasture consumption had remained at 12 tonnes, despite using only 20 kilograms of nitrogen per hectare.

They are determined to share their learnings with other farmers, hosting field days on their farm and in Newry Hall with Maffra and Districts Landcare.

"I want the whole food system to change so the quality of food is exceptional, so we'll eliminate a lot of disease, so the ecosystem is thriving and we help everyone through better quality food that is grown within a symbiotic relationship with the soil."



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