



Issue 09/08,  
December  
2008

# Gippsland Natural Connection Newsletter of Gippsland

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Merry Christmas!

## integrated natural resources forum

### From the Chair...

I would thank the Executive Members for their participation during the year.

We have the great challenge of climate change and the importance of ensuring that any momentum is not lost.

A little rain seems to increase the sceptics who quickly forget that climate change must be addressed as a long term issue.

I trust that all members of GINRF have a safe Christmas and New Year and that 2009 meets their expectations.

Best Wishes,

**Keith Hamilton**

### From the Office...

It's hard to believe that another year has already passed us by. With 2009 just around the corner bringing with it new and exciting challenges, I would like to thank everyone who has been involved with GINRF for their hard work and enthusiasm towards preserving Gippsland's Catchment Health. It's been a pleasure working closely with many of you on different projects throughout 2008 and I look forward to working with you all again next year.

I wish you all a happy Christmas and a safe and enjoyable New Years.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS...**

**Adam Miller**

### From the Executive...

The minutes from the last Executive Meeting for 2008 are now available on the GINRF website. The meeting included discussions on:

- Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy
- Land and Biodiversity Green Paper
- GINRF Funding
- Small Town and Country Sewerage Scheme
- Flood and Bushfire Conditions and Response

Ethos NRM also conducted a Report Card Review Workshop with the Executive members who attended.

Latest GINRF  
Executive  
Minutes



**Catchment health, Gippsland's wealth**

[www.ginrf.org.au](http://www.ginrf.org.au)



Gippsland integrated  
natural resources  
forum

## Victorian Coastal Strategy

The **Victorian Coastal Strategy**, released earlier this month, is the State Government's policy commitment for coastal, estuarine and marine environments in Victoria. It provides a long-term vision for the planning, management and sustainable use of our coast, and the policies and actions Victorians will need to implement over the next five years to help achieve that vision.

It is also a framework to assist in the development and implementation of other locally and regionally specific strategies and plans such as management plans, Coastal Action Plans, and planning schemes.

The VCS 2008 builds on the principles and actions of the last two strategies and identifies and responds to three significant issues affecting Victoria's coast that require specific attention:

- Climate Change
- Population and Growth
- Marine Ecological Integrity



The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 is established under the Coastal Management Act 1995, and is the third VCS to be produced since 1997 – they are reviewed every five years.

Electronic copies and further information can be found at [www.vcc.vic.gov.au/vcs](http://www.vcc.vic.gov.au/vcs)

## Living With Fire

In other strategy news, the State Government released its first Bushfire Strategy, '**Living With Fire**' earlier this month.

The Strategy provides the vision for a significant change in the way government and Victorians manage fire to meet future bushfire challenges.

Bushfires are a vital part of our natural environment, driving regeneration and maintaining the health of species and ecosystems. The combination of drought, climate change and unnaturally high fuel loads have created an unprecedented bushfire risk. The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in the number, size and severity of bushfires in Victoria, evidenced by the 2003 Alpine, 2006 Grampians and the 2006/07 Great Divide fires.

Living with fire - Victoria's Bushfire Strategy has been jointly developed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the NEO partners (including Parks Victoria) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

Copies of the Strategy and further information can be found at [www.dse.vic.gov.au/fires](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/fires)





## Rhyll Landfill Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation work is underway on the former landfill site at Rhyll on Phillip Island.

Bass Coast Shire Council is working with Phillip Island Nature Parks to rehabilitate and revegetate the site. The site borders the Rhyll inlet salt marsh, an important feeding and roosting ground for a variety of bird species and a recognised environmentally sensitive area.

Council's Infrastructure Director, Steven Piasente, said the rehabilitation work was part of Council's lease agreement with the Phillip Island Nature Parks, who are the appointed Committee of Management for the site.

"The former landfill was closed to household garbage in 1991 and stopped accepting all waste in 1997," explained Mr Piasente. "It is a requirement of our lease agreement for the site to be restored in accordance with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) environmental guidelines."

An EPA approved Environmental Management Plan has been developed for the project. Erosion, odour, littering and contaminated water are some of the issues the Plan focuses on.

"The Plan has been developed to address the key environmental issues for the site," said Mr Piasente. "The aim is to address these issues, re-plant the area with indigenous vegetation and ultimately return the area to a wildlife habitat."

The work is being carried out in three stages over different areas of the site. [Full story available here...](#)

## Bird Rescue

An accident prone baby bird of prey has escaped with little more than a dent to his pride after miraculously surviving two 20 metre falls from his nest on an East Gippsland Water property in the Bairnsdale area and becoming the focus of a major rescue effort.

The four-week-old Whistling Kite, nicknamed 'Esc' (short for escapee), suffered the first fall from his nest high up a tree, when he made his exit two weeks before his due departure date. He was spotted in undergrowth, where he was being subjected to repeated attacks from other birds.

A major operation was mounted to rescue and return the kite to his nest, which involved staff from East Gippsland Water, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), East Gippsland Parks and Gardens, tree climbers from East Gippsland Tree Services and local volunteer Wildlife Shelter operator Lorna King.

While initially successful, the bird fell from his nest a second time and was taken into care for his own safety.

The kite was at first looked after by Lorna King and is now with a Wildlife Shelter specialising in birds of prey

near Traralgon, where he will be reared, hopefully with plans to release him sometime in the new year when he is old enough to fend for himself. [Full story available here...](#)





## Flood Recovery on the Avon River

A \$900,000 flood recovery project is being implemented on the Avon River south of Stratford with the aim of improving the waterway's ability to cope with major flood events. The project, supported by State Government flood recovery funding, will protect the productivity of farmland and livelihood of farmers living along the river.

Together with affected landholders, the WGCMA is working to repair damage caused by the 2007 floods, where an entire section of the river bank gave way under the intense pressure of the flood water.

Chris Lorenz, Project Officer with the WGCMA explains that the damage caused by the 2007 floods had the potential to cause a number of serious issues for the river and adjacent farmland.

"After assessing the site to determine the most appropriate way to repair the damage, we discovered that, in a future flood event, the river had the potential to gouge out what remained of the bank," explained Chris. "If this were to happen, the Avon River would join up with the nearby Nuntin Creek which would leave over 5km of the river's natural course without water."

"To prevent this happening a plan was developed to construct a unique spillway covering 3.5ha that will allow for better control of flows to prevent the river from gouging through the bank during a major flood event," said Chris. "Our aim is to maintain and improve the health of the Avon River while ensuring farmers don't lose any more land and that those downstream don't lose their water supply." [Full story available here...](#)



Construction of a spillway to protect the Avon River & surrounding properties from flood damage.

## Groundbreaking Soil Carbon Trials for Gippsland

A ground-breaking study into the controversial subject of soil carbon has earned Agribusiness Gippsland Inc (AGI) a \$150,000 Federal Government grant.

The Caring for Our Country grant, announced on Friday, will see three Gippsland sites examined for their ability to capture carbon in soil. Carbon capture is being considered a potential remedy for global warming, but scientists differ on its possibilities.

A series of 11 to 15 trial pits will be dug and 1000 soil samples tested across Gippsland to test existing soil carbon content.

The initial trials at Bairnsdale, Orbost and Swifts Creek will be repeated the following year further westwards.

Future sites in West Gippsland and Port Phillip regions will now be sought, said AGI chair Alex Arbuthnot.

"Growing plants that capture carbon and store it in their roots would be a true win-win for agriculture and the community," he said. "Farmers could help fight climate change, earn valuable offsets, save water and still increase the levels of food production that our hungry world needs." [Full story available](#)





## Search for Egret Breeding Sites on the Gippsland Lakes

The Department of Sustainability and

Environment (DSE) is undertaking a review of the distribution and abundance of Egrets on the Gippsland Lakes and would like to hear

from you if you have located a breeding site. Egrets are threatened in Victoria and the current climate is likely to be placing further stress on their food source in wetlands.

An initial review of the status of Egrets in the Gippsland Lakes has found no current breeding colonies for members of the Egret Family, including Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets. There are regular sightings of Egrets in breeding plumage, however, no evidence of nesting sites. If birds are breeding they may have fledglings from now until the end of January.

What to look for:

- Large trees in close proximity to wetlands
- Medium to large untidy platform of sticks, lined with reeds and grass
- Nests often in close proximity to other nests of same or other species (Ibis, Spoonbill, Heron)



Should you sight a nest please stay clear of the location and ensure your presence does not disturb the birds or interfere with their foraging and feeding behaviour. During the breeding season birds are sensitive to any disturbance in close proximity to the nest tree and may abandon their eggs or young.

If you have any information on breeding sites for any of the three Egret species, please contact DSE Bairnsdale on 5152 0400 or Belinda Rossack, Wetlands Project Officer on 5152 0413.

Local councils can now take immediate action to tackle invasive species on roadsides as part of the State Government grants worth more than \$1 million.

## Grants to Fight Roadside Weeds

Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the funding was awarded as part of the State Government's \$205 million Future Farming Strategy.

"We understand that immediate attention is required to tackle the issue of roadsides weeds and rabbits therefore we are working closely with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to develop a community pest management approach," Mr Helper said.

Local Councils can now take immediate action to tackle invasive species on roadsides thanks to Brumby Government grants worth more than \$1 million.

[Full story available here...](#)



HO HO HO...

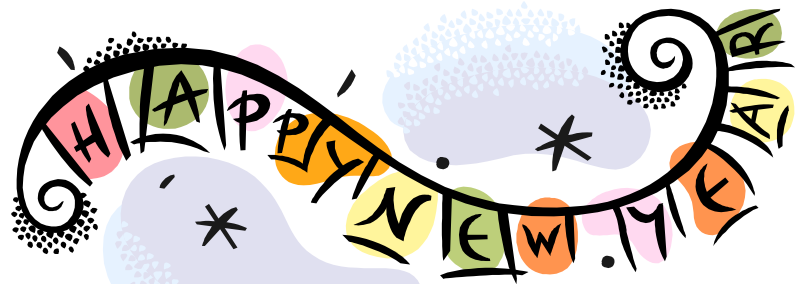
Issue 09/08, December



We would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a relaxing and fun filled New Year!

Best wishes,  
Keith, Chris & Adam

# Merry Christmas &



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