

June 2006
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FROM THE DIRECTOR INTEGRATION ACROSS ILWS

On May 19 around 30 members met with Denis Saunders and Cathy McGowan from the Advisory Board to explore ideas for three ILWS integration programs. The day also included presentations from the Discipline Group leaders and an opportunity for an "open forum" at the end of the day.

Workshop participants were mostly drawn from the Management Team and the Reference Group. I provided some context to integration in ILWS and highlighted the ILWS mission which is to be *An internationally recognized provider of integrated research that is contributing to enhanced social and environmental sustainability in rural and regional areas*. The CSU Research Plan 2007-2011 also emphasizes the importance of integrated programs of research and indicates that substantial CSU investment will support this activity. I also emphasized that integration is not a panacea and it is often difficult to do.

The ILWS approach to integration has so far focused on supporting the development of strong discipline groups, working with the Advisory Board to scope potential integration opportunities, enhancing communication and relationship building across ILWS and engaging potential research partners. There have been some early successes, but this is a long-term process and the May 19 Planning Day was one part in that process.

Gary Luck, Robyn Watts and Mark Morrison with Penny Davidson provided 'primers' to stimulate our discussion of the three opportunities identified by the Management Team/ Advisory Board in February. These 'primers' have been posted on the ILWS web site. Our discussions soon revealed many of the constraints to integration, including different world views, concerns about acceptance of research outcomes in our disciplines; the additional time and resources required; and the workload issues faced by academics at CSU.

(cont page 2)

FUTURE DIRECTIONS WATER SYSTEMS GROUP

The Water Systems Group is about hydrology in a systems context looking at processes in the Murray Darling Basin like flow processes, contaminant transport processes and interlinkage between surface and ground water processes.

"We are developing strategic science which links with the other discipline groups within the Institute to develop integrated land and water management options from farm to the catchments levels," says discipline group leader Professor Shahbaz Khan.

Shahbaz and his team recently moved to what was the Fine Arts building on the Wagga campus. "We have the whole team in one place, and this move has given us the ability to invite our international visitors to strategic meetings...we now have a home," says Shahbaz who has used the area outside the building to set up a simple but effective display of how to grow vegetables using very little water and space.

Shahbaz is also developing a bid for a UNESCO centre, as a means of positioning CSU as a provider of quality international teaching and research in the agricultural water management area. He does not see his bid for international accreditation for the new International Centre for Water, Agriculture Technology and Environmental Research (WATER) as a move away from the Institute.

"While we are scoping the new international centre we are not pulling out of the Institute," says Shahbaz. "The Institute has its focus in the Murray-Darling Basin and within the MDB the Institute is doing many projects. The Water Systems Group very actively contributes to that research. But at the same time we are trying to develop a UNESCO centre with a focus on water for food security in an international context."

(cont page 2)



FEATURE STORY: DR DAVID ROSHIER

A principal researcher with the Institute, ecologist Dr David Roshier is now one of the few researchers in Australia studying migratory patterns of birds. Story page 4

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I was impressed by the diversity and quality of ideas, the high level of commitment to research and established research groups, and the desire to be part of helping ILWS make a difference in our regions. It was also clear that we need to invest heavily in building relationships, understanding and trust if we are to have successful integration programs. We were also able to advance our thinking about the three programs.

The next step will be to establish working groups to frame up the integration programs over the latter part of 2006. My expectation is that all ILWS members will have the opportunity and be supported to engage in this process. I have given a commitment that the integration programs will be properly resourced, including teaching relief for program leaders; travel to planning workshops; and eventually, some PhDs and post-docs to seed research efforts.

On other matters:

There will be 4 bids from ILWS for professorial appointments in the current round. Bids are being developed by the Ecology, Economics and Regional Development, Social Research and Water Systems groups.

Following discussions with Centre Directors, Prof Paul Burnett has established the rules for the 2006 Research Quality assessment. The 2006 and 2007 RQ rounds will be internal CSU processes. The first national RQ assessment will occur in 2008. For 2006, the process will focus on quality not impact (although there is some overlap) and each Centre will be asked to prepare a case for two research groupings/ themes, with a minimum of 4/5 individuals (max 8) identifying 4 "best" publications over the past 5 years (01 to 06). Centres have until early September to submit their portfolios. The ILWS Management Team has invited the Ecology and Social Research groups to identify groupings to prepare submissions on behalf of ILWS.

.-Prof. Allan Curtis

(Allan's notes on integration and the three 'primers' are at <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/research/index.htm>)

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

WATER SYSTEMS GROUP

(cont. from page 1)

"The new centre needs to be an independent legal identity otherwise UNESCO will not accredit it," says Shahbaz who is about 90% through the proposal process for the new centre which he is seeking funding for from UNESCO, the Australian Government, CSU and international bodies.

He says the new centre would benefit the Institute. "There will be people from the Institute and other places such as the E.G. Graham Centre who will be contributing to the new centre for water for food security, as well as international adjuncts and other appointments," he says. He expects current membership of the water systems group (20) to double once the new centre is accredited.



Prof Shahbaz Khan and the vegetables growing at Wagga.

EMERGING ARTS, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS DISCIPLINE GROUP

As a person who sees the cultural aspects of community as particularly important, Kevin Poynter sees the Institute's emerging Arts, Culture and Communications Discipline Group as providing a fantastic opportunity to continue and expand on his work enriching rural and regional communities.

"I'm really excited by the Institute's commitment to the cultural aspects of community which are very easy to exclude in the thinking about sustainable communities particularly with all the ecological problems besetting us at the moment," says the new leader of the emerging group Kevin Poynter. "But things like the quality of life, the voice of the community...they are also really important when we talk about the sustainability of rural and regional communities." (Kevin, who lectures in design for theatre and TV, and production, stage and company management, for the School of Visual and Performing Arts at the Wagga Wagga campus has taken on the leadership role of the group replacing Dr Ray Goodlass who retired earlier this year.)

Kevin says, for example, there are good models overseas of theatre companies which have been able to link into communities and enhance cultural aspects. These models include:

- The 7:84 theatre company in England and Scotland (so named because when it was formed seven per cent of the population owned 84% of the country's wealth). It is about making theatre for working class communities using those communities' forms of entertainment.
- Welfare State International which is strongly interested in the cultural life of communities
- The Makhampom theatre company in Thailand (with which Kevin did a study tour) which has an interesting approach that encourages village communities to establish their own independent theatre companies.

While Kevin's main interest and background is in theatre, he says the emerging group will provide opportunities for colleagues in the arts to become more involved in cross discipline research. "There are opportunities to provide creative interpretation of the work that other researchers in the Institute are doing," says Kevin. In his case, Kevin is the artistic director of a small theatre company called Gearstick Theatre, which could be a suitable vehicle to produce such work. With two former BA in Acting for Stage and Screen students, Craig Higgs and Shelley Gaul, he set up the cooperative theatre company three years ago as a forum for the talent of graduate students.

"Some of the projects are based on existing scripts which we have toured around, and others, such as an adaptation of Dracula that I did last year, we generated ourselves," says Kevin, who obtained a publication grant from the Arts Faculty to have the script published. "What we are looking at now is creating new work and designing work particularly for smaller, rural communities in the Wagga, Riverina area. Ultimately the work will be able to be taken anywhere. We are setting up the company so we can apply for Australia Council grants and the like. We need to set up similar opportunities for other researchers within the group. Because universities are only allowed to make a limited number of applications to the Australia Council for grants, it is important to set up partnerships which open up opportunities for those grants on a wider basis."

Kevin sees the emerging discipline group as (a) being able to provide links between members who might want to work together and (b) provide opportunities for external partnerships. "For example I think there is a real potential to put in applications through Councils, for example," says Kevin.



Kevin Poynter

INSTITUTE EVENTS

BIRD FLU INFORMATION EVENINGS

Over 45 people attended the ILWS Bird Flu Information Evening in Wagga on March 21 with ecologist Dr David Roshier, a Senior Research Fellow in ILWS explaining the movement of birds within Australia and between south-east Asia and Australia; and Tony Kolbe, Director of Population Health Greater Southern Area talked about public health and planning. They were joined by Dr John Glastonbury from CSU's School of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences speaking about avian influenza from an agricultural perspective and Kevin Prior from Wagga Wagga City Council provided a local government response. An audience of local medical and veterinary professionals as well as interested community members enjoyed lively discussion.

A similar event in Orange on May 3 was chaired by Professor Kevin Parton. Dr David Roshier was joined by Dr Tony Brown from the Greater Western Area Health Service who explained the health organisations response to a possible pandemic. Dr George Arzey, the Department of Primary Industries Avian expert gave a comprehensive analysis of the bird flu issue. He has assessed the risk of succumbing to food poisoning at a restaurant in Australia as 7.5 times more likely than contracting bird flu in Asia.

INTEGRATION PLANNING DAY

The level of chatter among Institute members enjoying dinner at the Indian Tavern Tandoori Restaurant in Wagga the evening before an Integration Planning Workshop the following day on Friday May 19 was a good indication of what was to come. The workshop held at the National Wine and Grape Centre at CSU's Wagga campus which was attended by 30 Institute members from across the campuses and two board members didn't disappoint. There was plenty of brainstorming and discussion with the way open for positive outcomes.

The day began with a challenge to participants by the Chair of the Institute's Advisory Board Dr Denis Saunders who saw the Institute providing an opportunity to "integrate society, ecology and economics to get a product that actually makes a difference. Here is a wonderful opportunity for researchers to

work across disciplines, but one has to get out of the discipline silos which is no easy thing." He told participants that the workshop "provided an opportunity for discussion, to look at the issues of rural landscapes, of which there are many, and to begin the planning to undertake integrated research which is crucial to the survival of rural Australia. That is the challenge I put to you."

To introduce the capacity of the Institute's five current and one emerging discipline groups, there were six presentations describing each of the groups' membership base, areas of research expertise, plans and goals, and activities for 2006. After 10 minute "primers" members divided into small work groups to discuss the three potential integration programs identified by the Institute namely:

- Sustainable/holistic management of key environmental assets in CSU regions
- Environmental accounting
- Impacts and opportunities posed by post-agricultural landscapes

At the end of the day agreement was reached that there was a place for further planning on all themes with Dr Robyn Watts agreeing to "champion" the first, Prof Mark Morrison and Penny Davidson the second, and Professor Marg Alston and Dr Gary Luck the third.

"A great opportunity to experience the great diversity of skills and perspectives within ILWS" –Dr Ian Lunt

"It was a very useful and stimulating first step in a major process of integration." – Dr Denis Saunders

COMING UP

DISCIPLINE GROUP ACTIVITIES

The Ecology and Biodiversity Group will meet on June 29 to facilitate interaction among the group and swap stories of their latest research exploits. The day will include invited speakers, presentations by staff and group discussions about increasing the profile and research output of the group.

The Economic and Regional Development Group is holding a workshop at Bathurst on June 16 to share details of members' current research projects and to discuss potential projects.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

An International Conference 'Globalization, Development and Human Security in the Asia-Pacific Region' will be held at the Pattaya Learning Facility, Thammasat University, Pattaya, Chonburi, Thailand from Oct 18 to 20. For all enquiries contact Dr Manohar Pawar on mpawar@csu.edu.au

INSTITUTE SUPPORT

Funds were allocated to ILWS members to support workshops/seminars or publish proceedings from an event.

Peter O'Meara, School of Public Health in Bathurst, received support to run a one-day workshop on 'Innovations in rural and regional paramedic roles'. The workshop will be held prior to the 9th National Rural Health Conference at Albury in March 2007. ILWS will provide \$5,000 to assist with travel and accommodation for community participants involved in the research work, a dinner for workshop attendees prior to the workshop and publication of conference outcomes.

Dimitria Girogas, School of Humanities and Social Sciences in Wagga received \$1500 to publish the 'Social capital: Conceptual issues and application in public policy' conference proceedings. The funds will go also support the employment of a research assistant to liaise with referees and authors.

PROFILE

DR DAVID ROSHIER



Dr Roshier with a wood duck

As a youngster, ecologist Dr David Roshier, who grew up in the rural town of Mt Beauty at the base of Victorian Alps, was “always chasing everything.”

“I always had a keen interest in the natural world but as a kid it was mostly in reptiles and frogs rather than birds,” says David, 48 who is now one of the few researchers in Australia studying migratory patterns of birds. David, who studied zoology at Sydney University, went to western NSW in his last year for a kangaroo research project with NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service. That experience got him “hooked on the desert country”; a love that has taken him to arid regions around the world ever since.

David first worked as a NSW NP&WS ranger for 18 months in western NSW and then another 18 months as a research assistant at Newcastle University looking at the effects of fluoride fall-out from an aluminium smelter on plants (grapevines). But he decided “suburbia wasn’t the office for me” and began applying for jobs in Africa. “To my amazement a letter came back offering me a job,” says David who bought a one-way ticket to Nairobi, and, in 1983, became a member of a team surveying the southern rangelands of Somalia for the first intensive biological survey of the region since the 1930s. The team, which was categorising soils, plant distribution and structure, found six new species of plants.

“The country was very wild and unexplored,” says David who was based at Mogadishu. “It was the hardest job in my life. There was no time off and you worked 10 to 12 hours every day...and there was a low level war going on which complicated things a bit. I learnt a lot but I’d never want to do it again.” He then took on his “highest paid job ever” as a truck mechanic at a local construction site which gave him the funds to travel through Egypt, the Mediterranean, Europe, North America and Mexico. After two and a half years away he returned to Australia to work for the Department of Agriculture at Broken Hill as a rangeland ecologist for six years. From there it was to the Middle East where he worked for a year at the National Avian Research Centre in the United Arab Emirates studying habitat use by the Houbara Bustard.

In 1995 he returned to Australia to live in Wagga Wagga. Initially he taught on a casual basis with CSU’s School of Science and Technology before commencing his PhD in 1996 looking at patterns of distribution and abundance in waterbirds in response to changes in wetland distribution.

“The whole Somalia experience had given me an interest in how patterns of resource distribution and their variations affected population levels processes in plants and animals,” says David. Because he was able to access existing waterbird data for his PhD, David became interested in waterbirds which has set him on his current path. “I am now interested in migratory connectivity, the way in which some organisms, such as waterbirds, have a certain distribution in the breeding season and a different distribution in the non-breeding season.” He says while we know a lot about migratory birds in northern Temperate regions who often have set patterns of movement, little is known about the migratory patterns of birds in Australia where many use quite different “cues” to start travelling. Quite a number of our land birds migrate to and from the islands to our north, New Guinea and Indonesia.

“While we know which species migrate, we know little about which populations are involved, whether all or part of the population migrates, where they go and the constraints on movement,” says David. “There is a lot we need to learn about their patterns of movement, particularly so we have a better understanding of the threats to species that spend part of their life-cycle outside Australia and what the risks are in terms of birds acting as disease vectors into Australia. We need an understanding of what’s connected to what.”

Since completing his PhD in 2000 David, an ILWS Principal Researcher, has worked on two major research projects. One, almost complete, is a three year project with Prof Nick Klomp and Prof Richard Kingsford – integrating the rice industry with biodiversity conservation: the spatial ecology of waterfowl in agricultural and natural landscapes. This project has involved tracking the movements of grey teal fitted with satellite transmitters. While the results are still to be written up David says: “In short, they certainly fly further and faster than I ever imagined.”

The second project, in its last year, is a three year ARC Discovery Grant project with Dr Dave Watson- Why Isn’t the World Full of Mistletoe? An integrative approach to understanding dispersal, recruitment and distribution of parasitic plants. David, who is analysing the spatial relationships between hosts and parasites, says: “We are developing, with other colleagues, some innovative analysis techniques.” David also has a CSU competitive grant to track Glossy Ibis which turn up in their thousands at the Fivebough Swamp near Leeton in Spring but after that no one knows for certain where they go.

He is currently applying for a major ARC Linkage Grant looking at the migratory connectivity in bird populations in Northern Australia, particularly those that cross the Torres Strait, in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests and the Department of Environment. His co-investigators for the proposed project are Assoc. Prof Robert Heinsohn from ANU and Dr Leo Joseph from the Australian National Wildlife Collection at CSIRO. This research has relevance to the current concerns about the possible spread of avian influenza (bird flu) to Australia, and the perceived risk of wild birds as vectors of the disease.

David is now planning another adventure. This month he leaves for the remote Chukotka Peninsula in NE Siberia as one of a team of western scientists joining counterparts from the Russian Academy of Science to study seabirds, waterfowl and shorebirds. “The reason I’m going is because it’s a part of the world I have never been to, and a lot of Australia’s migratory shorebirds use that part of Eurasia as their breeding grounds and there has been very little work done on that,” says David. “I saw an opportunity to go and I’m taking it.”

IN THE NEWS

FARMING SYSTEMS IN LAOS

Dr Joanne Millar was interviewed by Melanie Sims for the ABC's Rural Report on March 14. Jo spoke on farming systems in Laos and the introduction of forages to improve livestock production (market demand from Vietnam and Thailand). She talked about the role of AusAid and ACIAR and her research on extension methods and capacity building of extension staff.

BIRD FLU

The ILWS Bird Flu Information Evenings at Wagga and Orange generated good media interest with:

- a story in the Wagga Daily Advertiser on March 14, and a follow-up story on March 22
- an interview (Dr David Roshier) with ABC radio Riverina, March 15 before the event and other coverage on March 17 and March 21
- an interview (Dr David Roshier) with 2WG, March 20
- coverage by the Central Western Daily on May 2
- an interview on ABC radio Central West before the event in Orange

CURLEW SUMMIT

The Bush Stone-Curlew Summit held on April 6 and 7, at the Rutherglen Research Institute, Victoria, featured in:

- The Weekly Times "Curlews to Count", March 22
- The Riverina Media Group's *The Rural* supplement "Study examines why Curlews are vanishing", March 31
- The Border Mail, March 29
- and PhD student Elisa Tack, who organised the event, was heard on ABC Goulburn-Murray's Rural Report on the first morning of the summit.

BATS

Craig Grabham's research on bats featured in an article "A natural biological controller of insects" in the autumn issue magazine, Town and Country Farmer.

SUGAR AND WEEDS

Dr Ian Lunt and Dr Suzanne Prober's research on using sugar to control weeds in grassy woodlands continued to be picked up by the media with stories appearing in:

- Land for Wildlife News, April/May
- Australian Landcare magazine, March
- various electronic newsletters including that put out by the Brisbane Valley Kilcoy Landcare group, the WA Local Government Association's Natural Area Managers Network e-newsletter, and the Department of Primary Industries' Organic News, March issue
- A profile piece on Dr Prober and her research work in a story entitled "Hidden Treasures" in P.M. Williams **OUTBACK** magazine (April/May issue).

SOCIAL RESEARCH

Professor Margaret Alston continues to be busy in the media with

- an interview with Arlie Douglas from ABC RURAL Northern Territory on Drought impacts on rural youth education, March 3.
- comments about drought forcing many would-be university students to stay at home and earn a living instead, "Country youngsters' academic hopes dry up", in *The Australian*, March 8
- Comments on the trend for a sporting club to actually be starting up in a rural community on ABC Radio Western Queensland, April 4

- The launch of the NSW Farmers Rural Mental Health Blueprint in Sydney where she answered questions as an expert for NSW Farmers which resulted in an article on Page 2 of the Sydney Morning Herald "Volunteers step in on suicide watch", May 3 and an interview on ABC Radio NSW 'Country Hour' on May 4.

LANDCARE RESEARCH

Professor Allan Curtis' study on 20 years of Landcare in Victoria generated high impact media interest with an article "Landcare is on the brink" in the Weekly Times on page 3 on April 19 with an accompanying editorial and call for readers comments which were published the following week; a story in the Bendigo Advertiser; and an ABC radio interview with Kate Stowell for the Rural Report on April 21.

BUDGET COMMENTS

Following the announcement of this year's Federal budget Professor Allan Curtis commented on the Government's allocation of \$500 million for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission for WIN TV news (Albury) and ABC Regional Radio Goulburn on May 6. Professor Shahbaz Khan was also interviewed on the same subject for WIN TV News (Wagga) on May 9.

CARP AND WATERBIRDS

Dr Iain Taylor's research on the food of waterbirds and their reliance on carp as a food source featured in:

- The Border Mail, May 13
- The Rural, May 19
- The Northern Daily Leader, Tamworth
- Radio interviews with ABC Riverina, NSW, May 11; ABC Central West, May 17; and ABC Riverland Today, SA May 22.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

Dr John Atkinson's research on the digital divide in regional Australia received a lot of radio airplay around Australia including:

- Star FM/The River news, 2PK/ROK, 2AY Afternoon Show, ABC Inland NSW afternoon show, May 1
- ABC Goulburn Murray breakfast show, 2AY news, May 2
- ABC Northern Rivers, May 3
- ABC NSW Sunday morning show, May 7
- ABC National Bush Telegraph, May 11.

FEDERAL REFORMS

Assoc. Prof Ian Gray's comments on his research into Federal reforms appeared in an article "Reformers push for tiny states in two tiered nation" by regional reporter Daniel Lewis in the Sydney Morning Herald on May 13.

WATER

Professor Shahbaz Khan featured in an article in *The Canberra Times* on March 27 "Water: voices we need to heed" as one of 10 people we should listen to if we want to achieve a result that will benefit all Australians.

As part of the coverage for the Wealth from Water Festival at Wagga he was on Prime TV (Wagga) and on WIN TV news on May 17.

He was again mentioned in another *Canberra Times* article on May 24 "Climate change to turn off the tap for Murrumbidgee" with the prediction that water flows in the Murray-Darling Basin could fall by as much as 35% by 2050 because of climate change.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

Over the last few months Professor Margaret Alston has:

- spoken at a meeting about "The Future of the Murray" giving a social perspective to government planning efforts. The NSW Dept of Planning and Victorian Dept of Sustainability and Environment met to discuss collaboration efforts on the Murray in April in Mulwala.
- presented a paper about 'Social issues in succession planning' at a succession planning seminar in Dubbo in April
- presented a paper at an international Rural Health conference at the University of Coventry, UK at the end of March about 'Australian Rural Health Inequalities'.

FEDERAL REFORMS

Assoc Prof Ian Gray presented a paper on 'The Political Viability of Federal Reform: A sociological analysis' at a national symposium "Federalism & Regionalism in Australia: New Approaches, New Institutions?" held in Sydney on May 8.

He also participated in a study tour of railway branch lines in NSW organised by the Railway Technical Society Australia, a sub-group of Engineers Australia, from March 22 to 25. The aim of the tour was to develop the RTA's submissions to the Neville Inquiry – a government inquiry into Integration of Regional Rail and Road Networks and their Interface with Ports.

VEG FUTURES CONFERENCE

The Institute was well represented at Greening Australia's Veg Futures Conference, held in Albury from March 20 to 23, which attracted some 500 participants. Posters were presented by Alison Skinner on 'Trees on farms the natural way: How past land use affects the potential for eucalypt regeneration' and PhD student Sue Hughes on 'Exploring the effects of historic land-use policies on landscape and vegetation patterns in NSW.' Presentations were made by:

- Joanne Miller, 'The role of social research in understanding why landholders engage in vegetation management and conservation'
- Emily Mendham, 'Understanding factors influencing landholder participation in native vegetation best management practices in the Murray Irrigation region'
- Gillian Earl, 'Who should care for remnant vegetation in agricultural landscapes?'
- David Watson, Matthew Herring, 'What are we doing about the threats to native vegetation?'
- Jonathon Howard, 'The use of Corporate Risk Analysis to improve pilot programs' and 'The role of communication in the successful implementation of an MBI'
- Catherine Allan, 'Informing future practice through evaluation'
- Hugh Stewart, 'The role of planted forests in regional landscapes of south Eastern Australia'
- Ian Lunt, 'How have woodland tree densities changed since European settlement?'
- Matthew Herring, 'Wetland management for waterbirds: the vegetation cover balancing act'

Workshops in the field were conducted by David Watson and Matthew Herring who visited mistletoe removal sites around Holbrook; and Ian Lunt, Leigh Thompson and Robyn Watts who conducted a riparian workshop at Wonga Wetlands with Mike Copeland.

BUSH STONE-CURLEW SUMMIT 2006

The second Bush Stone-curlew Summit was held in Rutherglen, Victoria on April 6 and 7. The Summit was organised by PhD student Elisa Tack, with the Department of Environment and Conservation, NSW; the Broken-Boosey Catchment Management Network; and Department of Primary Industries, Victoria. Over 60 people from across southern Australia attended the summit, with presentations from landholders, researchers, and government agency staff. For more information on Bush Stone-curlew conservation work contact Elisa Tack (etack@csu.edu.au; 02 6051 9837).

WEALTH FROM WATER

The Wealth from Water Festival, a joint initiative of Charles Sturt University and the Wagga Wagga City Council, was held from May 15 to 19. Professor Shahbaz Khan had a major role in the festival's organisation. The festival included:

- a strategic meeting of the Irrigated Cropping Forum and Grains Research & Development Corporation looking at the future of irrigation research
- a Cooperative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures sustainability program workshop
- a regional planning meeting for the UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific & Cultural Organisation)'s Hydrology for Environment Life and Policy –Regional Coordination Unit
- the launch of the Wagga Wagga 'Global Water Smart City' project
- a public debate on Sustainable Water Management on 'Is it possible to have sustainable water management in an arid environment?' The debate attracted speakers from around Australia including people with international backgrounds.

JCEC NEWS

The Johnstone Centre Environmental Consulting (JCEC) unit has projects across the Murray-Darling Basin including flora and fauna assessments for an extraction north of Cobar and a quarry expansion near Wagga Wagga; bat surveys on abandoned mine shafts near Nyngan and at the old Prince Alfred Bridge at Gundagai; threatened species assessments for proposed subdivisions; landholder surveys for the North East Catchment Management Authority; Swift Parrot surveys; and an aquatic assessment on a proposed stormwater channel in the Berriquin Irrigation Area.

AWARDS & APPOINTMENTS

Professor Margaret Alston has been appointed to the South Australian Rural Sustainability Taskforce as an advisory expert. The taskforce has been formed to guide policy to ensure agricultural industries and rural communities will be sustainable in the future. Auspiced under the SA Farmers Federation, the group has prioritised mental health and support for young farmers as key issues.

Professor Shahbaz Khan has been invited to be part of the ARC Research Network for Earth System Science based at Macquarie University.

Professor Allan Curtis has been appointed on the editorial panel of the Australiasin Journal of Environmental Management.

An **Honours Scholarship** is available for mid-year intake for a project exploring farmer responses to market-based incentives for riparian enhancement. Contact Dr Catherine Allan on 02605 19781 or callan@csu.edu.au for further details.

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED PAPERS

Lunt, I.D., Jones, N., Spooner, P.G. & Petrow, M. (2006). Effects of European colonization on indigenous ecosystems: post-settlement changes in tree stand structures in *Eucalyptus-Callitris* woodlands in central New South Wales, Australia. *Journal of Biogeography* **33**, 1102–1115.

Khan S., Rana T., Yuanli C., Blackwell J. (2006). Can irrigation be sustainable? *Agricultural Water Management* **80**, 87-99.

Spennemann, Dirk H.R. (2005). Is unexploded World War II ammunition abandoned property? A case of ethics and the law in Micronesia. *Journal of South Pacific Law* vol.9 (2), December 2005 <http://law.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/jspl/current/art3>

CONFERENCE PAPERS/ PROCEEDINGS

Alexander, K. and Khounsy, B. (2006). Agricultural Production and Marketing Systems in Xieng Ngeun District Luang Prabang Province, Lao PDR. Paper presented as a poster at the *International Symposium: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystems in Mountainous Regions*, Chiang Mai, Thailand, March 7-9.

Alexander, K., Lipscombe, N. and Millar, J. (2006). Whispers, voices and challenges for people in the hills of Lao PDR. In *Voice, Identity & Reflexivity, Proceedings of the second Qualitative Research as Interpretive Practice Conference*, 22-23 September, 2005 (pp. 250-254). Bathurst: Charles Sturt University.

Alexander, K., Khounsy, B., Millar, J., Lipscombe, N., Spennemann, D. H. R. (2006). Towards Sustainable Livelihoods: Project intervention in Xieng Ngeun District, Luang Prabang Province, Lao PDR. In proceedings of the *International Symposium: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystems in Mountainous Regions*, Chiang Mai, Thailand, March 7-9. <http://www.mountainsymposium2006.net.ms/>

Alexander, K., Millar, J., Lipscombe, N., Spennemann, D. H. R. (2006). Changes to Agricultural Production and Livelihoods in Xieng Ngeun District, Luang Prabang Province, Lao PDR. In proceedings of the *International Symposium: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystems in Mountainous Regions*, Chiang Mai, Thailand, March 7-9. <http://www.mountainsymposium2006.net.ms/>

Coldwell, Ian. (2006). Traditional Masculinities: Obstacles in the turn toward sustainable farming practices. In *proceedings of the Australian Pacific Extension Network International Conference*, Beechworth, March 6-8.

Mendham, E. and Millar, J. (2006). Whose voice counts? Reflections on interpreting farmer identity and relationship with native vegetation management in the Murray Irrigation Area of NSW. In *Voice, Identity & Reflexivity, Proceedings of the second Qualitative Research as Interpretive Practice Conference*, 22-23 September, 2005 (pp. 228-239). Bathurst: Charles Sturt University.

Millar, J. and Photakoun, V. (2006). Pathways to improving livelihoods in the uplands of Laos: Researching and improving extension practice. In *proceedings of the Australian Pacific Extension Network Conference*, March 2006. http://www.regional.org.au/au/apen/2006/refereed/5/3133_milla_rje.htm

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BOOK CHAPTERS

Khan, S., (2006) Water reforms in the Murray-Darling Basin: law and policy changes. Chapter 3: Hydrology and Water Law- Bridging the Gap. Wallace, J. and Woulters, P. (Eds) IWA Publishing, London.

Khan, S. (2006) Cultivated Systems, Ecosystems and Human Well-Being, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Current State and Trends, Vol 1, chapter 26. (pp747-:787)

OTHER

“Planting Partnerships” Community partnerships for plantation forestry: Enhancing rural incomes from forestry in eastern Indonesia and Australia. This 23 minute DVD, directed by John Walker, supports the work of ILWS Principal Researcher Dr Digby Race and PhD student, Hugh Stewart in their three year ACIAR funded forestry project in eastern Indonesia. The DVD captures the issues, challenges, people and scenes that comprise the partnerships in commercial forestry. It also provides a taste of what it is like to be part of an international research team. For a copy of the DVD or more information please contact Digby on drace@csu.edu.au

RURAL SOCIETY

Papers in the latest publication (Volume 16, Number 1, 2006):

- People are accepted as long as they don't misbehave (Andrew Woodhouse)
- Local perceptions of sustainability indicators (Kevin O'Toole, Anne Wallis & Brad Mitchell)
- Being young in rural settings (Charlotte Fabiansson)
- Marking the occupational body (Lia Bryant)
- Subjective realities of older male farmers (Judith Gullifer & Anthony P. Thompson)
- The changing role of bush nurses in East Gippsland (Phillippa Greene and Mollie Burley)

PROJECTS AND GRANTS

NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE GRANTS

Farming systems options and catchment salinity responses. A joint project with NSW DPI and CSIRO funded by Grains Research and Development Corporation. The CSU component (\$69,600) is to conduct a socio-economic analysis of the farming context in the Simmons Creek district, NSW, during 2006-'07. Dr Digby Race, Dr Hamish Cresswell (CSIRO) and Dr Iain Hume (NSW DPI) **Exploring business process improvements for quality regional NRM service delivery.** Land and Water Australia. Project team: Prof Allan Curtis, Dr Rod Griffith, Prof Kevin Parton, John Dean (John Dean Consulting), Gavin Hanlon (North Central CMA, Victoria). (2006) (\$100,000) This project will identify the key attributes of best practice business processes that are suitable/applicable for regional NRM service delivery.

RESEARCH GRANTS

Diversity and dynamics of the arthropod assemblages of mistletoe in remnant woodlands. PhD student Anna Burns and Dr David Watson have received a Holsworth Wildlife Research Endowment of \$4500.

Responses of biofilms to cyclic releases during a low flow period in the Mitta Mitta River, Victoria. Murray-Darling Basin Commission, River Murray Water (\$15,000) Project team: Dr Robyn Watts (Team Leader), Dr Errol Nye, Dr Andrea Wilson, Dr Remy Dehaan, Mr Alek Zander, Dr Darren Ryder (UNE), Dr Adrienne Burns (UNE). This project will examine the responses of biofilms to cyclic flow releases during a period of low flows in the Mitta Mitta River. Two different cyclic flow patterns are being trialled with the aim being to improve the health of the Mitta Mitta River. The project will provide flow management recommendations for future operations of this kind.

Assessing customer responses to channel automation in Central Goulburn Irrigation Areas 1-4. Water for Rivers. (\$84,150) Prof Allan Curtis, Dr Digby Race, Dr Jim Birkhead, Mr Royce Sample. ILWS researchers will work closely with Water for Rivers Project Managers to conduct an independent review of Goulburn Murray Water customer responses to channel automation. Their findings will underpin decisions about the future roll-out of this technology that is expected to lead the recovery of substantial water volumes for the environment.

VISITORS

A senior lecturer at the College of Social Work in Mumbai, **Ms Prabha Tirmare** from India, visited CSU Wagga on 17 May. Ms Tirmare is interested in rural development programs and is looking at research programs in Australia. She met with researchers to discuss developing professional linkages and possibly an exchange program.

Dr Donna Johnston project manager with the Lake Cowal Foundation spoke at Thurgoona on 16 May and Wagga on 17 May about the work of the Foundation. The Foundation is a non-profit environmental trust with the objective to protect and enhance the Lake Cowal environment.

Two senior government officials from the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES), Lao PDR visited the Thurgoona campus and the Albury-Wodonga region from March 5-12. Deputy Director of the National Agriculture and Agriculture Extension Service in NAFES, **Dr Tienne Vannasouk**, and Director of the Livestock and Fisheries Extension Centre, **Mr Nounghong Sihanath**, are involved in an ACIAR project led by Dr Joanne Millar that aims to accelerate impacts from participatory livestock extension in Lao PDR.

The Water Systems discipline group hosts international visitors working on collaborative research projects. Current visitors include **Dr Shahbaz Mushtaq** from the International Rice Research Institute, Social Sciences Division, Philippines; and **Dr Zhaoqing** from the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agricultural Ecology (China).

EDITOR

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