



Case study: A new life for the gully

Anna and Bruce Spiden

Areas of concern

- **Erosion and landslips**
- **Protection for cattle (shade and wind)**
- **Loss of calves in steep gullies**
- **Aesthetic of the land**
- **Pest control in gullies**



A cow in the Bridge creek. One of the Spiden's major concerns



Bridge creek running through the Spiden's lush property

Benefits

- **Reduced erosion, improved water quality in creek**
- **Year-round Shade and Shelter for stock**
- **No cattle loss in creeks and steep gullies during calving season**
- **More aesthetically pleasing**
- **Increased biodiversity**

Action Taken

- **Spot Spraying for site preparation**
- **Planting out of steep gullies and stream-sides**
- **Fencing off steep gullies/ revegetation area**
- **Pest species spraying**



Spot sprayed sites being planted out by volunteers



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Who:	Anna and Bruce Spiden
Where:	Top of the hills, Glen Forbes (headwaters of Bridge creek)
Size:	685 Acres
Enterprise:	Hereford cattle, 450 head
Soils:	Grey dermosols
Rainfall:	Approximately 1000mm
Aspect:	Steep Hilly country, Gully runs South-East

History

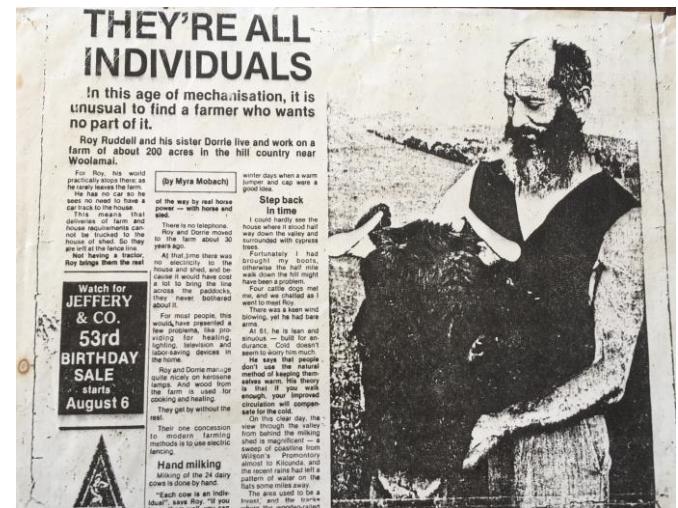
Anna and Bruce purchased the original piece of property (85 acres) in 1980. Since then, they have progressively purchased neighbouring properties that have entered the market and they now own a stunning 685 acres.

Prior to their ownership of the property, Roy Ruddell and his sister Dorrie lived and worked on the farm for many years. Roy was a very 'old-fashioned' man, and completed all of his farming using no machinery whatsoever. He had no electricity, tractors or equipment. "He was just a loveable intelligent old fella who read a lot and was probably 100 years behind the times and that's how he chose to live" Bruce Spiden.

The Ruddell's were famous in the local area for doing things the good old-fashioned way. On market day, they even opted to walk their cattle down to the market in Dalyston and all the way back up in to the hills again.

The property was renowned to be of high quality, due to being untouched by modern farming techniques, leaving great soil. However, the farming techniques adopted had left the place in a state of shambles.

"The paddocks were all shocking, had never been ploughed, trees had been pulled out by horses and left holes in the ground everywhere" Bruce Spiden.



Local legend Roy Ruddell



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Everything had to be done up. Tracks were all put in new to create easier access and all the paddocks were ploughed.

Bruce does majority of the farming himself, however he still works away several days a week, and is grateful for Roy's great nephew, who has a farm over the hills and has a look over calving when Bruce is away.

Bruce and Anna had a strong relationship with old Roy Rundell, which is how they were able to come across the property in the first place.

Recreating the landscape

Bruce and Anna have worked hard to turn a barren landscape into a healthy and aesthetically pleasing property. "it's sad to see that everything had been denuded", Anna said in reference to the removal of almost all of the native vegetation which originally enveloped the bass hills and greater region. A large amount of properties in the area only have cypress trees planted, which act as an effective protection for their cattle, however the monoculture stands are incredibly vulnerable to threats. In recent years, fungal pathogens such as cypress canker (*Seiridium* species) are causing dieback of Cypress stands on Victorian farms. Thus, a mix of species indigenous to the region is proving to be a more resilient alternative on Victorian farms.

Thanks to Anna and Bruce's excellent initiative, 4.83ha of their gullies have now been revegetated with Landcare's support, being the second largest planting site in Bass Coast Landcare's entire region.



The gully prior to planting (2011)



Revegetation site in the Spidens' gully (2016)



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The project

One of the wonderful aspects of the revegetation works at the Spiden's farm is the co-operation that has occurred between the many individuals involved.

Wonthaggi Secondary College Year 9 students have played an enormous role in the procedure, participating in all of the Landcare plantings between 2011 and 2016. Each year students have helped put 5,000-10,000 plants in the ground, and 36,000 plants have now gone in to the gully system. Anna feels incredibly happy to see the work these students put in and she was stoked to see a student who had helped out back in 2012 joined in this year as a teacher, passing on their prior knowledge. The first year the students became involved there were 44 of them, and each year the number has gradually increased up until this year, where there was 66 students.



A view of the gully prior to planting (2011)

A positive outcome

The Spiden's are very happy with the overall success of the project. The survival rate of the plants has been very high, and several species are now naturally reproducing within the site. A healthy damp forest of Eucalypts, Acacias, Olearia and many other indigenous species now encompasses the gully. The paddocks adjacent to the revegetation site have greater protection for the cattle, with a windbreak and shade and Bruce no longer has to go searching for lost calves in the steep gully and creek. The banks of the creek have been stabilized from erosion and sediment run-off into the creek is now reduced due to the riparian vegetation.



The gully brought back to life (2016)



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Flora & Fauna

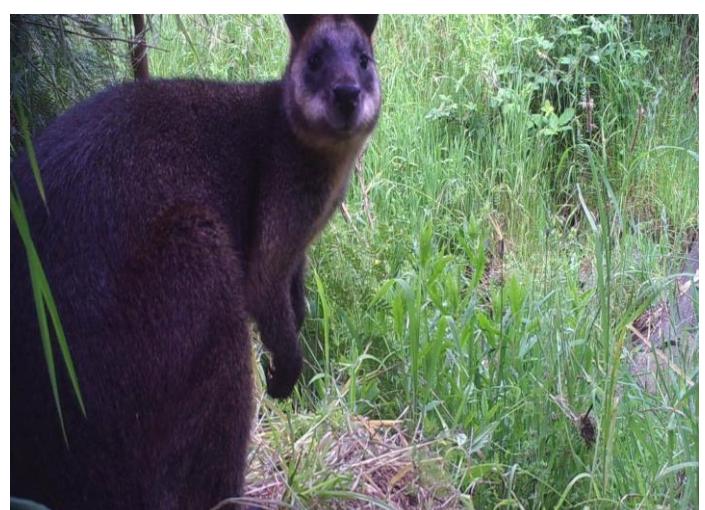
The project hasn't only been beneficial for the Spiden's however. Since its beginning in 2011, numerous species of wildlife have returned to the gully to relish in the new habitat and feeding opportunities. Kookaburras, wombats, echidnas, owls, kangaroos, wallabies, several bird and snake species and even a platypus now call the gully home. "There's a lot more activity in there, it's so great" Anna Spiden. The Spiden's were even lucky enough to have a Wedge-tailed Eagle nest amongst one of the remnant old Eucalypts that are scattered throughout the revegetation site. The gully has been notoriously named 'Snake Gully' by some who find the abundance of snakes disconcerting, however snakes are an important part of the ecosystem as middle-order predators. Without them the numbers of prey species would increase unnaturally and their predators, such as the Wedge-tailed Eagle, would struggle to feed themselves.



A wombat wandering through the gully in the night



A young Wedge-tailed Eagle surveys its surrounds from within the gully



A curious wallaby captured by a camera trap in the gully



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Looking forward

"If you wind it forward, it's going to be interesting to see the country and how it's all going" Bruce Spiden.

The Spiden's have re-created a healthy gully system that is improving every year. But they aren't finished yet...

They plan to go ahead with further revegetation work well into the future, with far more land to be restored. With the assistance of 3 Creeks Landcare, Basscoast Landcare Network, Wonthaggi Secondary College and the many other individuals involved in the project thus far, there are already proposals in place to proceed with plantings in the coming years. Bruce said that he felt guilty that they were being spoilt with so many hands on board and grants in place thanks to the Australian Federal Government, however it's large-scale projects like these that open up funding opportunities for other projects in the area, so the community should also be very thankful of what the Spiden's have achieved on top of the hills at Glen Forbes.



Three Creeks Landcare Group (2014)



Wonthaggi Secondary College Year 9 students (2013)