

**SUMMER 2014**  
Newsletter No.39



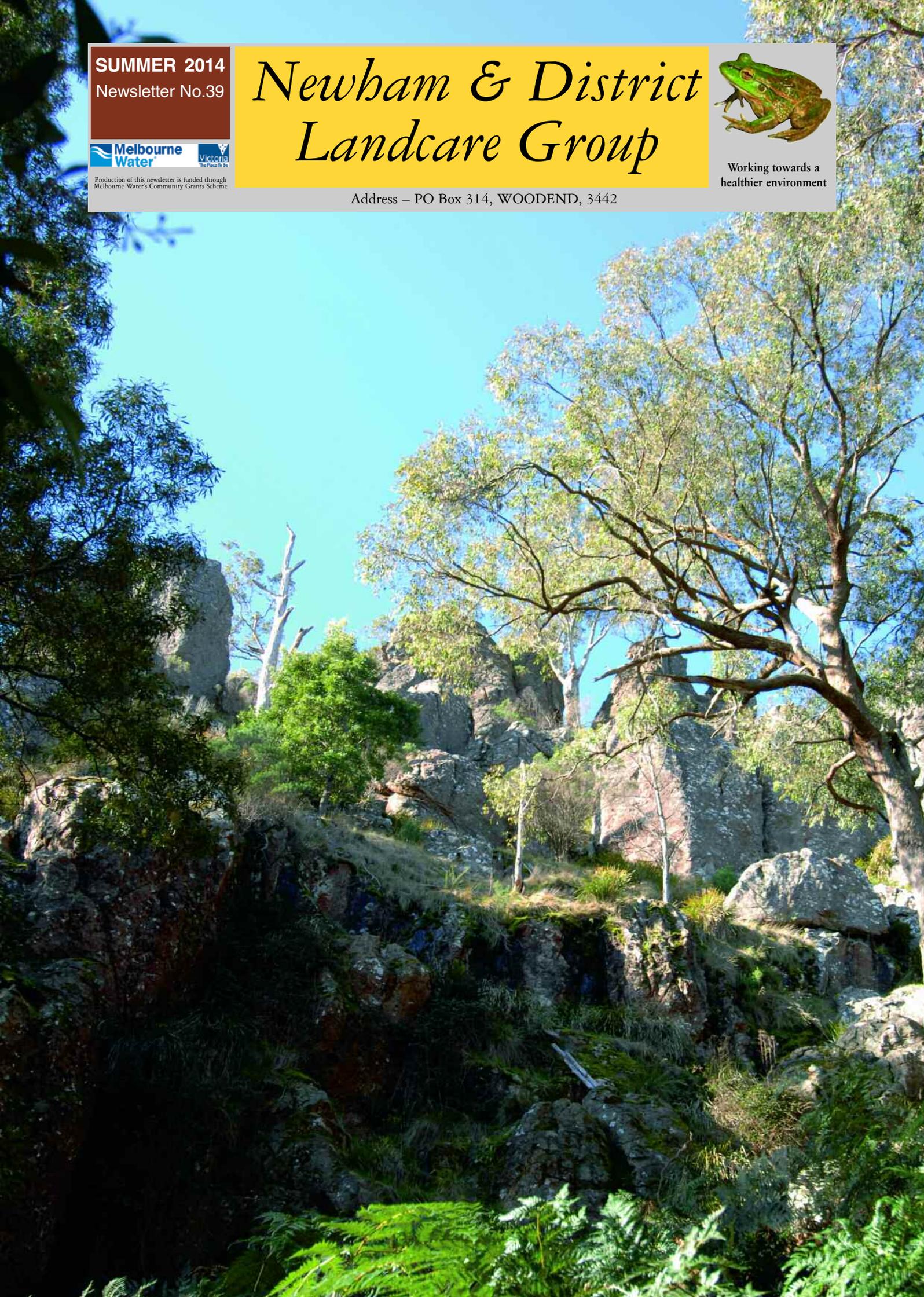
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# *Newham & District Landcare Group*



Working towards a  
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



# DIARY OF EVENTS

## MAY

**Sunday 11th. 'Trees for Mum' planting at Hanging Rock Reserve.**  
9.30 – 12.30am. BBQ lunch to follow. Details tbc.

**Friday 23rd. Farm dams, wildlife and floating islands.**  
Tania Begg. Newham Hall, 7pm for 7.30 start, supper to follow.

## ***Friends of Hanging Rock, now incorporated and 'rarin' to go'***

*Interested in botany, wildlife, geology and history? Love great views?*

- *Join for free*
- *Monthly activities*
- *Help protect and enhance the Rock*
- *Make new friends*
- *Membership form included / attached*

*Newham & District Landcare has always publicized events held by the Friends group, and had a physical presence. This is not surprising given that it is by far the most significant piece of public land in 'our patch'.*

*Please support the Friends group – join (free), attend events and spread the word.*

*Hanging Rock, as a natural environment under threat from development, could never have too many friends!*

**Newham and District Landcare Group has a new website address or URL. Please alter your bookmarks from the old Vicnet address to: [www.newhamlandcare.info](http://www.newhamlandcare.info)**

**Helen and Matthew plan to revamp the website soon.**

## **Group contacts**

**President:** Penny Roberts. **Vice President:** Helen Scott. **Treasurer:** Hilary Roberts.

**Committee members:** Howard Stirling, Karl Kny, Nick Massie and Luke Spielvogel.

**Secretary:** Fran Spain.

**New members, general queries:** Penny Roberts; 5427 0795.

**Roadsides:** Sue Massie; 5427 0065.

**Newham Primary:** Jenny Waugh; 5427 0408.

**Animal pests:** John Luckock; 5427 0909.

**Wesley Park:** Fran Spain; 5427 0661.

**Flora, library, small tools, grants:** Penny Roberts; 5427 0795.

**Spray trailer:** Chris Wiggett; 5423 5279.

The committee meets on the first Monday of the month (February to December) between 7.30 – 9pm in Newham. All members are welcome to attend the Committee meetings to become more involved or raise specific matters. Please advise a committee member if you wish to attend. Meetings start and finish on time... and we enjoy them!

# Myna eradication Program

Newham is now officially participating in the Woodend Indian Myna Eradication Program. The Landcare group has purchased 10 traps that will be loaned out to our members and other interested Newham residents.

We are looking for a coordinator – estimated to take an hour of your time each week. If you are interested in hosting a trap on you property, or acting as coordinator for a period, please contact Penny Roberts.

Indian Mynas are well established in our area – they are opportunistic feeders who will take advantage of cat or dog food left in the open and scraps or dry pellets in the chicken pen. These birds take over nesting hollows that would otherwise be used by native birds and small mammals and prey on the nests of other birds. The nature of Indian mynas (their aggressive nature towards other bird species and the way they form large social groups) means that they will drive away smaller birds and replace them in a given area.

Although it is easily the most hated bird in Australia and many other countries, in India, where they belong, people like them. In India the Common Indian Myna is called the “Farmer’s Friend” because it eats insects that destroy crop plants. The name myna comes from a Hindi word, “maina” meaning a bird of the starling family, Sturnidae, to which mynas belong. Mynas in India are also regarded as symbols of undying love, because they often pair for life and *maina* is also sometimes used as a term of endearment for young girls.

## The Indian Myna is an introduced pest



## The Noisy Miner is a native bird

# Good news – Communities for Nature Grant!

Newham & District Landcare group applied for a large grant in the 2013 round of Communities for Nature funding (from State Government through the Department of Environment and Primary Industry) and were successful. The group will receive \$157,000 over two years for works to increase connectivity and improve biodiversity within the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Headwaters biolink area. This biolink, known in Macedon Ranges Shire documents as the Cobaw Biolink, is a network of native vegetation between two large masses of forest – the Cobaw State Forest and Macedon Regional Park. Works will include stock exclusion fencing to protect remnant native vegetation, revegetation to improve connectivity and buffer existing remnant, management of pest plants and animals and some educational workshops. Some project works will be on public land – specifically rabbit and weed management at Hanging Rock Reserve, along with revegetation to improve biodiversity and habitat values there – whilst other works will be on private land.

These works will build on the approx. \$0.5million works done progressively within the biolink area (predominately on private land) over the last decade, supported by funding grants received by the Landcare group and its members.

Contact project coordinator Penny Roberts if you are considering environmental works on your land and are interested in participating in year 2 of this project.



## **GARDEN THUG** present around Newham

**Blue Periwinkle** (*Vinca major*) is an invasive plant – meaning that it can quickly get out of hand in the garden, even though they are not regarded as weeds and are commonly sold in garden centres.

*Vinca* is from the Latin *pervinca*, meaning periwinkle and is derived from the Latin *vinco* meaning 'I conquer' referring to its aggressive nature – *Major* means large.

Blue Periwinkle is a sprawling hardy, perennial ground-cover with dark green opposite leaves that have a rounded base, tapering tip and a shiny and darker upper surface.



The single long-stalked flowers are blue to violet with a white throat. They are 3-5cm in diameter and tubular with 5 radiating petal lobes that are somewhat diamond shaped.

This garden escapee is sometimes found invading damp shady areas such as creek lines in disturbed woodland and paddocks. The plants are able to cover large areas by producing roots where the stems contact the ground. It is native to the Mediterranean region and widely cultivated in Australia. It flowers mainly from winter to early summer but occasional flowers may be found all year.

It is defoliated by frost but quickly regenerates from buds and copes well with a range of positions from full sun to shade.

Spread by seed is of minor importance.

Stems take root at the nodes increasing the size of patches. Stem fragments take root when they are moved by cultivation, disposed of in garden refuse or moved by earthworks or water flows.

Cultivar 'Variegata' has cream leaf margins and has also naturalised in Australia and New Zealand. This variegated form often reverts to the green form as it naturalises.

### **Why it isn't nice**

*Vinca* is a weed of water ways, pastures, gardens, streams, flood plains, bushland, moist shady areas, roadsides and disturbed areas.

Single clones can form dense intertwined mats and cover large areas of woodland crowding out pasture, understorey species and preventing regeneration of overstorey species.

It's toxic to horses, cattle and sheep because it contains alkaloids. Poisoning usually occurs when stock have sudden access to clumps.

### **Management and Control**

Small areas can be controlled by digging the plant up and ensuring all the stem fragments are collected and burnt to prevent them taking root.

It is difficult to control by hand weeding because stem fragments readily take root or break off. Disposal of stems from hand weeding often leads to new infestations where they are dropped in transport.

Larger areas can be mechanically raked to raise the runners off the ground then mown.

High intensity fires will kill it and solarisation by laying sheets of clear plastic over small infestations for 4-6 months, is sometimes used.



## Peregrine Falcons – long term residents of Hanging Rock

by Bruce Donaldson

Next time you visit Hanging Rock, look up high above the tree line at the rocky face on the eastern side of the Rock and you'll see a white curtain of guano, a certain sign that this is Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) breeding territory.

This species of falcon has been inhabiting the Rock for a very long time. In fact, due to the lack of obvious cliffs in the Macedon Ranges, Hanging Rock is one of the few places around here that offers Peregrines what they need. Remember, these birds even nest on the ledges of skyscrapers in central Melbourne, they being the next best thing to cliffs in that area. Down there they do a good job mopping up the pigeons that foul central Melbourne – it preys predominantly on other birds wherever it occurs. It is a curious peculiarity of this bird that it is found all over the globe, the meaning of *peregrinus* being 'wandering'. Strangely enough, however, New Zealand is one of the few land masses where this bird is not found. The Peregrine is the cheetah of the air when it comes to speed. It mates for life. At the time that abseiling was permitted at Hanging Rock, the Peregrine disappeared from the area but returned after it was banned, clear proof of human activity affecting the choice of habitat.



Hubert Weisrock image showing falcon entering rocky area nesting site.

Tuans are like diminutive Tasmanian devils – they are marsupials, but not the herbivorous kind, like possums and kangaroos. Tuans specialise in large insects, such as spiders and centipedes, which they forage from the bark and leaf litter of their dry open forest habitats. When the gums are flowering, they will eat pollen and nectar as well.



# Tuans

An animal's home range is the area it ranges over while it goes about its daily business of finding food, mates and shelter. The tuan is about the size of a black rat. It is the tuan's black 'bottlebrush,' fluffy tail that firmly distinguishes it from a rat – rats have almost naked tails.

We might expect that an animal this size would only need a small area, but tuans need 30-100 hectares of habitat to call home.

Tuans have a number of nest sites or dens in tree hollows, in both live and dead trees, and under flaking bark. As the tuans move about their large home range, they change den sites. This means that one tuan might need up to 30 suitable dens.

All of these quite specific needs mean that tuans have been getting rarer and rarer in dry forests. They can't cope very well when drought reduces the number of insects and flowers, and they are very adversely affected by the removal of tree hollows, both for firewood, and past logging practices. Tuans are listed as vulnerable at both a state and national level.

Over the long term, tuans need linkages across the landscape, as opportunities for them to move and disperse are crucial for genetic diversity, and as a safeguard against local extinctions due to fire events.

But cornerstone to the linkages – or biolinks planning, is a number of interconnected reserves of intact, structurally complex vegetation.

Hanging Rock Reserve represents a key part of the tuans' range in the Macedon area, as one of the 'islands' of native vegetation between Mount Macedon and the Cobaw Range.

The last record of a tuan on Hanging rock is from Guido Bigolin who found a dead male *phascogale* in 2011. Penny Roberts says it is possible that they are not breeding there at the moment – but they are known to be on the south and north eastern faces of Jim Jim and Mt Macedon. Nesting boxes and cameras will hopefully be produced in the next year or so, and these should provide some more up to date records.

The proposed development of the Hanging Rock Reserve would no doubt see a huge increase in 'tidying up' – as fallen hollow logs, branches and leaf litter are removed for 'visitor amenity'. This woody debris is an essential habitat component for the tuans, and its removal would severely impact the population.

Tanya Loos, article adapted from *Daylesford Nature Diary; six seasons in the foothill forests*.

## Christmas Social

Again this year a great and appreciative crowd attended the Newham and District Landcare Christmas event in Wesley Park.

The Hall BBQ provided excellent food, with cooks Don Lang and friends providing the culinary delights. Landcare provided free BBQ food and sweets were donated by the members.

Main event winners were – *The Egg Toss*: Bruce Hedge and Philip Schubert (Wwoofer) from Austria. *The Boot Throw*: David Moore.

Star turn was the demonstration of Bruce Hedge's flying camera that took some great pictures.





### Hanging Rock Picnic Day

Landcarers, Friends of Hanging Rock and a host of others from in and around Macedon Ranges and beyond, gathered on February 23 to show their support for the Rock. A gorgeous day, live music, Ann Lambert, Wild Action Zoo, politicians agreeing on the matter at hand and rousing speeches – what more could you want?

*Well, to have the Council consult with its ratepayers would be a start!*

## Clean up Australia

On 2nd March 2014 another successful clean up around Newham was achieved. Areas cleaned included the Village, Anderson Road, Rochford Road, Dons and Coach Road, Lavender Road and Bryces Lane, Colwells Road, Straws Lane and South Rock Road.

Fifteen people took part and collected a total of sixteen bags (nine recyclable and seven rubbish).

There was a reduction in the quantity of rubbish this year but recyclables, mainly drinks containers, exceeded the general rubbish – why can't people take the drinks containers home and dump in their recycle bin – it's a mystery!

The turn-out was greater than last year and is much appreciated.

