



Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442

A walk and talk around Newham

Sunday 15 February provided an opportunity to visit four sites that have received federal funding as part of the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Headwaters Biolink Project.

The weather was beautiful and there was great interest in seeing what had been achieved, with varied techniques, on these different sites. Our group of 43 met on Jim Road near the Northern end of Hanging Rock Farm. Phil Flanagan showed us the results of a trial of direct seeding native shrubs and trees and also the progress on establishing a haven for wildlife around their dam on Jim Road.

On the corner of Dons and Three Chain Roads we viewed the growth of tube-stock, planted in 2006, along a dry waterway which flows into Deep Creek.

At John Winter's property, off Three Chain Road, we viewed his plantings and listened to an impassioned talk on the do's and don'ts of successful planting.

Finally we arrived at Don's Road to check on planting that had taken place there in 2008. It

was surprising to see how growing conditions can change within a very small area and how the plantings coped with drought, elevation and the different techniques and timing of plantings.

To finish off this informative day we enjoyed a superb sunset picnic on the North face of the Jim Jim.

Our thanks to the Flanagan, Sweaney, Winter and Roberts families for allowing access to the properties.



President's Message

This summer and the continuing drought conditions, have had a significant impact on us all. Some of us have personal knowledge of people directly affected by the fires and all of us have been significantly stressed by these conditions. This has varied from personal experience of the fire's effect, as volunteers with the CFA, or as an increased loss of plants and damage to work undertaken by Newham and District Landcare or Landcare members on their own property from the exceptional heat and winds.

Landcare groups and Landcare nationally are providing assistance where possible and I am sure that the land and people will, being resilient, move through this period, learn from it and improve our land management for bushfires. Landcare and Newham and District Landcare in particular, will seek to understand the lessons to be learnt and incorporate these in information sessions and targeted events.

Nick Massie

Group contacts

President: Nick Massie. **Treasurer:** Hilary Roberts. **Secretary:** Don Lang.

Committee members: Penny Roberts, Jim Sansom, Arthur Clarke, John Luckock, Fran Spain, Doug Dalgleish.

Chris Wiggett has stepped down from the committee but will continue to take an active role in the group – particularly in activities planned for families.

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

Roadsides: Sue Massie, 5427 0665. **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!

DIARY OF EVENTS

APRIL

Saturday 18th

Film Night– *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*
(details to follow)

Sunday 26th

Upper Deep Creek network bus trip to view 3 properties in the Lancefield – Romsey area.

MAY

Saturday 23rd

Autumn planting (details to follow) (also see Bob Mc Kimm's article on page 5)

Book reviews

The Nestbox Book

Compiled by the Gould Group

80 page paperback

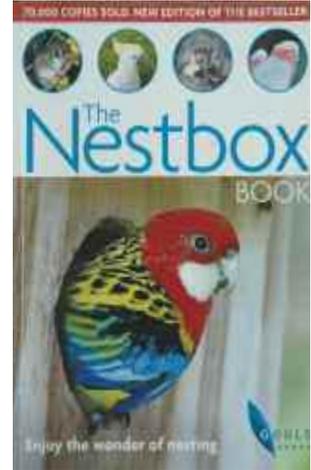
Please take my advice before you decide to take this book home with you, especially if you have children... DON'T... unless you want to build a nestbox! (Or otherwise it will be please, please, please daddy/mummy I want to build a nestbox please, please, please... I have warned you).

This book is very easy to read and understand, with simple instructions on how to make nestboxes for both birds and mammals. Some of the birds mentioned are the Rainbow Lorikeet, Kookaburras and Pardalotes. If mammals are your thing you could build one for a Bat, Sugar glider or Brush-tailed phascogale (tuan).

The book covers construction, installation and maintenance, as well as ways of complementing your nestbox. There is also information about the Gould Group* and some useful web sites).

Go ahead, be brave and take this book home... take some time out with the kids and teach them all about building their very own nestbox.

* Some readers might remember the Gould League certificates and the bird guide posters from their school days.



A Complete Guide to Reptiles of Australia

by Steve Wilson and Gerry Swan. Published by New Holland Publishers

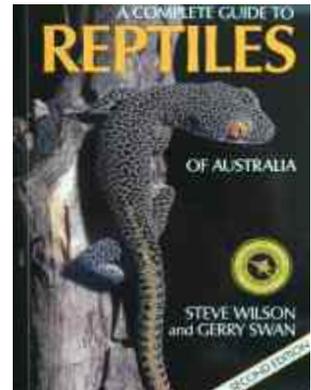
512 page paperback

If you love reptiles, like crocodiles, turtles, geckos, lizards, snakes, and dragons (not real dragons of course, the non-fire breathing lizard-dragons species), this is the book for you.

It contains extensive information on all of the above as well as: skinks; monitors; goannas; blind snakes; pythons; file and colubrid snakes; venomous land snakes; sea snakes and kraits.

Each description gives their scientific name, common name, measurements, identification, together with a fabulous full colour photograph. Individual maps show where the reptile can be found, its conservation status, and in the case of the snakes, whether or not they are poisonous.

This book would be a great resource for childrens' school projects.



On 1 March, Newham and District Landcare joined forces with Friends of Hanging Rock for Clean Up Australia Day. Our target was "Clean Up round the Rock" and an enthusiastic band of 26 volunteers put in a brisk couple of hours work early on Sunday morning.

With such a good turnout – but unfortunately not quite as well attended as the Landcare dinner the previous evening – we were able to clean up the perimeter – Colwells, Coach, South Rock Roads and Straws Lane, as well as inside the fence of Hanging Rock.

Our efforts were streamlined with Jim and Ian's rubbish roaming pick up system and by the Ranger's provision of wheelie bins (thanks Guido) for the rubbish – about 4 big wheelie bins and 3 recycle bins full of cans and bottles!! The morning concluded in the traditional way with a cuppa! Thanks to all who participated and to our outreach group who did a great job cleaning up at the Boundary Road water tanks.

Kathryn Colclough

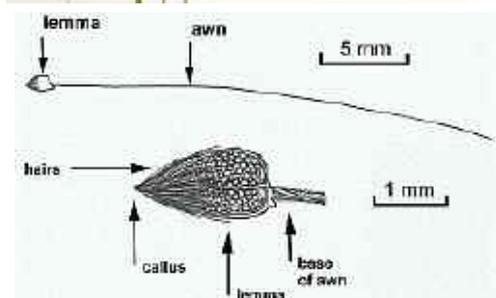
Plant Profile: Matted Flax-lily

For those who want to establish a colony of *Dianella amoena* (Matted Flax Lily) on their property, tubestock will be provided free to local landowners who are willing to plant and monitor the species.

This is a hardy perennial plant that forms a dense mat of blue-green strappy foliage, has spikes of flowers in late Summer followed by purple berries. This is a hardy plant – its ‘threatened’ status reflects the loss of a large percentage of native grasslands in Victoria due to fertilizing and ‘improvement’ for pasture.

This threatened species, known to be present at a number of sites in our area, was the reason we were able to access a Botanic Guardians grant from the DSE to support the production of the flora booklet by Brigitte Kny that was launched late last year. The grant has also enabled propagation of plants from seed.

Find out more about this plant on <www.dse.vic.gov.au> or contact Penny on 5427 0795 if you are interested.



Seed: Note long awn, attached off-centre to lemma, hairs on callus covering lower section of lemma, rough upper section of lemma.

Serrated Tussock has been positively identified on a property in Sheltons Road – thought to have been brought in on equipment to dig cabling trenches. If you have any concern that this nasty, nasty weed might be on your property there are several options:

- Check the DPI information brochure and laminated sample of seed head held in our library (Penny 5427 0795) or,
- Take a sample to DPI office in Kyneton for identification.

Early warning?

‘A “SUPERWEED” detected in flower at Falls Creek during a survey last month could potentially cause as much damage to Australia as rabbits and cane toads, a New Zealand scientist has warned.

Known as hawkweed, it is feared because of its ability to grow in wet and dry conditions, in sun and shade and to monopolise an area. It also changes the chemical make-up of the soil it lives in, leaving a bare ring around the perimeter of infestations, which other plants cannot grow in.’

The Age, 2 February, 2009

Planting for survival

Now that the weather has cooled off, our thoughts should once again turn to planting...

One of our members, Bob Mc Kimm, was involved in research for the Forests Commission and produced a publication entitled *Improving Survival and Growth of Planted Eucalypts*. The following extract makes informative and interesting reading:

The most important factors determining potential growth and survival of planted eucalypts are:-

- genetic attributes of the species
- amount and seasonality of the rainfall
- depth, texture and structure of the soil
- soil fertility

The application of appropriate fertilizers can overcome nutrient limitations in the soil, often with spectacular increases in growth and survival. Control of competing weeds to reduce water stress is essential when fertilizers are applied, and site preparation that improves drainage and encourages root growth is also important.

The surface texture of the soils of the gently undulating plains around Newham is generally classified as silty loam, with a depth to the hardpan varying from 0.5m to 2m. The nutrient status of the soils is considered low to moderate with Phosphorus (P) and possibly Calcium (Ca) limiting. Although the present land use mainly comprises grazing of introduced pastures, the original vegetation was open forest.

On the basis of fertilizer trials, conducted with eucalypt species on various sites throughout Victoria, height growth is not influenced by P alone. In fact eucalypts rarely respond to P alone applied at the time of planting, which probably reflects the low requirement of the genus which has evolved on soils typically low in P.

However, there is almost always a marked response to Nitrogen (N) given as a localized application at the time of planting, even in relatively fertile soils.

Some form of site preparation accompanying any fertilizer application is essential for satisfactory establishment. Ploughing, ripping or furrowing all provide successful results.

At age four years it is expected that the height growth of eucalyptus trees to which N fertilizer has been applied will be double that of unfertilized seedlings [5m cf 2.5m] and that the survival of the unfertilized trees will be significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) than that of the fertilized trees (60% cf 85%).

Conclusion: The application of fertilizers containing N is associated with increased early growth of eucalypt species. A localized application of urea at around 60g per tree at the time of planting would be an effective treatment.

Ps from Penny

Obviously we can't do much about the amount and seasonality of the rainfall – but we can influence the outcomes of our plantings in a number of ways. Bob has highlighted the importance of N fertilization and site preparation to the growth and survival of eucalypt species.

In addition:

1. Choose locally provenanced plants – by doing this you are selecting plants that have adapted genetically to OUR area – and if they have been grown outside our area, make sure they have a decent 'adjustment' phase.

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2. Protect them with tree guards. This limits grazing by rabbits and hares (and to a certain extent, kangaroos and wallabies) and evaporative water loss due to wind.
3. Start planting in Autumn to allow maximum time to establish before the onslaught of Summer (keeping in mind the pattern and severity of frost on your site) – we recommend watering holes, prior to planting regardless of the planting time, and this becomes essential if you are starting early in Autumn, before the ‘break’.
4. Plant plenty of Acacias (yes, even the ones that are sometimes considered pesky or short-lived!). They are Nitrogen-fixing, grow rapidly, ‘condition’ the soil for other species and provide habitat whilst the eucalypts are growing. And they help you ‘space’ the eucalypts – so you don’t end up with a dense forest that prevents growth of understorey plants.

Preventing weed competition is vital, whatever sort of planting you undertake. If you wish to establish a plantation of trees (perhaps for timber production or firewood), then following the advice given by Bob (herbicide, breaking up the soil, N application) will maximize the outcome.

If your goal is to enhance or reproduce remnant vegetation then ripping and fertilization may be counter-productive – other research has shown that ripping and ‘knock-down’ herbicide to prepare a site for planting may destroy remnant grasses and wildflower species and result in a net reduction of native vegetation on the site, and that deliberately impoverishing the soil favors small species of remnant natives over introduced pasture grasses. But trees are an important (even if small numerically!) component of ‘balanced’ native vegetation – providing shade and frost protection to the under-storey and significant habitat for wildlife – and on open sites are usually the first species planted. If we can improve their growth and survival by simply making a heel divot 20cm away from the tube-stock and dropping 60g of urea into it, why aren’t we all doing it?

Urea is available at Elders in Kyneton – \$40 for a 40kg bag – a cost per tree of about 6c.

Or you could just favor your eucalypts over the family lemon tree – 300mls of urine per tree (near it, not on it!) should be about right.



Dinner on the Hill

This was a resounding success with 82 adults and 40 children enjoying the hospitality of Penny and Hilary at their hill top home.

Due to the high winds, games of ‘skill’ were cancelled and more relaxing pursuits were undertaken. New members were welcomed and everybody enjoyed the sumptuous range of food and drinks. Such was the spirit of the evening that even those washing up had smiles on their faces!

There were a few items left behind, so if you are missing anything please call Penny on 5427 0795.

LANDCARE – THE BROADER VIEW

Over the past few months three neighbouring Landcare groups have held meetings to create the **UPPER DEEP CREEK LANDCARE NETWORK**.

We are now incorporated with a formal structure linking:

Newham and District Landcare Group

Deep Creek Landcare Group (centred on Lancefield and Romsey)

Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group (centred on Darrweit Guim)

Why form a network of three groups?

We are now facing environmental issues which reach beyond our own area. Deep Creek, a major tributary stream of the Maribyrnong river, is the common feature and in many places it is degraded with eroded banks, weed infestation, decreasing flows and declining water quality.

Tackling the problems of this stream is much better done with a united approach. New arrangements for federal funding under the Rudd government give priority to grant applications showing broad-scale projects.

Rivers and streams are not the only focus. Ridgelines and connecting valuable patches of native vegetation and habitat across the boundaries of individual landcare groups is also important.

Sharing social functions and informative occasions are also an important part of the new Network. We have already combined to stage a great display at the Lancefield Show last October and a Network Field Day will be held on 26 April – watch for further details.

For further information about the new Network contact:

President: Fletcher Bakewell (Darraweit) 5789 1255

Secretary: Jim Sansom (Newham) 5427 0408

Treasurer: Hilary Roberts (Newham) 5427 0795

Roadside Management Group

Members of the Roadside Management Group met on 5 March 2009 to undertake inspections of Jim's Road and Egan's Lane to assess the success rate of poisoning gorse, broom and blackberry along these roadsides, which occurred two years ago.

The results were very disappointing, as whilst areas of kill had been achieved, there was significant regrowth and new growth of all weeds along both roadsides, in particular Jim Road.

The Group will meet on Monday 16 March to discuss this situation further and to draw up a strategy in consultation with Lachlan Milne, Environmental Resource Officer, MRSC, as how to best deal with this regrowth.

A novel gift idea... does this appeal to you?

Last year Sally Stabback gave a gift of trees – paying for 150 TreeProject tube-stock that was given to two landowners. For any future gifts like this, a card will be available – describing the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Headwaters Bio-link project and stating the number of trees that have been planted in the recipients name. Contact Penny on 5427 0795.

Melbourne Water Young Watercare Grant

Everyone at Newham Primary School was delighted to hear that we had been given a Melbourne Water 'Young Watercare' grant of \$500. These grants are part of the Junior Landcare Grants Program developed by Landcare Australia.

For over two years Grade 5 and 6 students have been testing the water on the Deep Creek pond. This data is then sent to Melbourne Water to be collated with all the other data from along the Maribryngong River. The grant has enabled us to buy new chemical testing kits, safety glasses and safety gloves and to continue the water monitoring program for another year.

For information about the Melbourne Water/Landcare grant or water testing, contact Jenny Waugh 5427 0408.

Serious Kid's Stuff. . .

ACROSS

- 1 Found on the outdoor dunny seat.
- 2 Never smile at a...
- 3 One of the 'coat of arms' animals.
- 4 Found in the woodlands of WA, I am the only marsupial that eats insects.
- 5 A baby found in a pouch.
- 6 Found on Rottenest Island.
- 7 Fresh water prawns.
- 8 Great laughing bird.
- 9 Hairy nosed or southern...
- 10 Pink and grey colored bird.
- 11 The Aussie Easter 'rabbit'.

DOWN

- 1 A reptile with azure inside its mouth.
- 2 Aussie dog.
- 3 I lay eggs, suckle my young, I have a ducks bill.
- 4 Tree hugger.
- 5 a prickly creature.
- 6 Dame Edna's catch cry "Hello..."
- 7 The other 'coat of arms' animals.
- 8 Bird with a yellow Mohawk.
- 9 Smaller version of one of the 'coat of arms' animals.

- Q.** What do you get if you cross a kangaroo and a sheep?
A. A woolly jumper.
- Q.** What do you get if you cross a kangaroo and a koala?
A. A sleepy jumper.
- Q.** What do you get if you cross a kangaroo and an echidna?
A. A prickly jumper.

Jumper Jokes

