

SUMMER 2009

Newsletter No.19



Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442

Native vegetation corridors pay dividends

On Friday 28 November a group of enthusiastic volunteers met at Hanging Rock Reserve to take part in the annual koala count. In 2007 only one koala had been seen and everyone was hoping for a better result this year.



Volunteers divided into groups to walk various parts of the Reserve and the group I joined, with Head Ranger, Guido Bigolin, walked the lower bushland around the base of Hanging Rock. We were delighted when one of the group saw a koala in a nearby tree. As we gathered to look, someone exclaimed, 'there's another one'

and when we thought our excitement was complete we saw a third – three in one tree and all looking healthy. We reported our find and continued walking. That was our final tally but other groups had observed more, including a mother with her baby.

The final official count was seven, but unofficial later reports suggested another three were sighted, making ten in total. This is the highest number recorded since 2001, when eleven were found.

Guido thanked everyone who had attended and stressed the vital importance of wildlife corridors in allowing movement of koalas between the nearby Cobaw and Macedon Ranges and the Rock Reserve. He emphasised the need for private land owners to assist animal movement throughout the landscape by planting native vegetation corridors on their land. The fact that such an increased number of koalas were found indicates their movement to the Reserve must have been facilitated by an increased habitat environment. Newham Landcare has encouraged the establishment of these corridors and is very pleased that all this work appears to be getting results.

Sue Massie

2nd Generation Landcare Grant applications approved

These two grants, totalling \$15,660, will support 3 landowners who wish to increase the amount of native vegetation on their properties.

North – south, 30m wide corridors of vegetation, with a total length of over 2km, will link with Five Mile Creek, and Hanging Rock Reserve... adding more substance to the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Headwaters Biolink.

President's Christmas Message

This year has been a challenging one for the Newham & District Landcare Group with a number of new committee members and changes in responsibility.

I particularly thank Penny Roberts who stood down from the President's role this year and has been of great assistance in advising myself, and still shoulders a significant workload in the fundamental aspects of NDLG service to members.

Of particular mention is David Bonsall our new editor and publisher of the Newsletter who, with significant hard work from the committee, has contributed to NDLG hitting a new membership peak. Newham & District Landcare has had its contribution recognised by the receiving of awards during the year including Penny who received a personal award.

2009 will bring challenges to the Newham community with discretionary spending suffering in the expected economic downturn. I stress that this makes caring for our environment all the more critical and Newham & District Landcare Group intends to maintain a programme of events that will inform and entertain in 2009 maintaining our momentum.

Finally I wish all members a very happy Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year.

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

Nothing until February – Have an enjoyable break everyone!

FEBRUARY

Sunday 15th

Walk, talk and picnic on the Jim.– *A look at some of the properties contributing to the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Headwaters Biolink that were supported by Federal grants.*

What worked? What hasn't done so well? Why? Seed collection along the way.

(details to follow)

Saturday 28th

Dinner on the Hill – Cricket, ball games, whatever

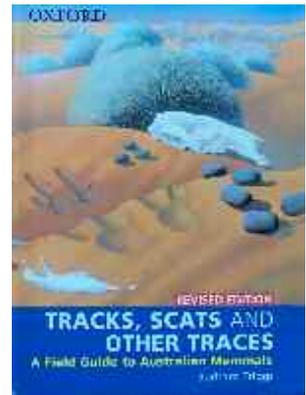
Book reviews

Tracks, scats and other traces - A Field Guide to Australian Mammals (Revised edition)

by Barbara Triggs. Published by Oxford

340 page paperback

First published in 1996



This book has four main parts consisting of Tracks; Scats; Shelters, Feeding Signs and Other Traces; Skulls, Lower Jaws, Humeri and Femurs.

Apart from being a very informative book on how to identify all of the tracks, scats and other traces you would find on your property or out in the bush, it is great for young boys looking at poo... they can look up the book and identify the animal by the poo they have found out in the paddock. What a great way to educate our youngsters! They can also then start to put all those sun-whitened bones they have found together and identify the koala skull from the wombat skull. (Do you know what makes them different?)

For the older reader, we can now identify the difference between a Common Brushtail Possum and Common Ringtail Possum scat and also Common Wombat and Eastern Grey Kangaroo. What's the difference? You will have to read the book to find out! Now all we have to do is to wait for the game show at the next Landcare event called 'What Scat is That?'

Christina Wiggett, N&DLC Member

Spider Watch – a guide to Australian spiders

by Bert Brunet. Published by Reed New Holland

146 page paper back



This is not a book for the faint hearted! If you don't like spiders, I would recommend not reading it at all, but for all of those who do, there are many, many great pictures and lots of great information.

'Spider Watch' tells us all about some of the spiders that you can find in Australia, and other things like their habitats and life cycle, first aid for bites, and also has an extensive identification guide to help us tell the little monsters apart.

With all the full colour photos and diagrams of a spiders anatomy and how it works; reproduction and growth; development of spiders, and the fossil record, this book is a must have for all spider enthusiasts.

Natalie Wiggett, N&DLC Teenage Member

Chris Wiggett wants to get more of the Group's younger members involved in this newsletter and will be organising a special page in the next issue. If you have any suggestions for what to include please contact her.

Plant Profile: Common Tussock Grass

Poa labillardieri [Common Tussock Grass]

This perennial native grass is a favourite because of its hardiness as well as its attractiveness.

It forms large tussocks, that may reach a metre in width and height, and typically occurs on lower slopes and valley floors.

The clumps turn a pale straw colour in summer. If preferred, they can be chopped back quite vigorously to encourage new growth.

In the Newham District it is widespread – occurring along waterways [great for stabilizing the banks and filtering run-off from paddocks!] and across the flats and slopes.

It is frost and drought tolerant. Whilst forage value for animals is low [4-12% protein] it provides shelter for small animals – including lambs.



Identification: it is distinguished by its channeled leaf blade [flips between the fingers when you roll it], tussock form. Seeds do not have an awn [the seed 'tail'].

Important note: Serrated Tussock is a nasty introduced grass from Argentina – a real thug, despite its pretty appearance!

Its leaves are cylindrical and roll between the fingers, seeds are purplish and have 'tails'. Tussocks are somewhat smaller and have a drooping appearance.

DPI notes on Serrated Tussock are available from the DPI website <www.dpi.vic.gov.au> or from the Kyneton DPI Office.

Ring them on 5422 11777, or Penny on 5427 0795 if you have queries or want to see our laminated sample.

School's out at Hanging Rock

On Thursday 4 December, Doug Dalgleish and Fran Spain (Committee members) welcomed a group of Preshil School students to Hanging Rock.

The plan was to have them assist with weeding around plants, straightening stakes, replacing bags and stakes, gathering rubbish from the creek bed and getting rid of thistle and blackberry.

They were divided into various task forces and spent over an hour working hard on the FoHR planting site. They then had time for lunch and a wander around the Rock.

Thanks to Jenny, and the staff from Preshil who accompanied them, for their assistance and the donation of new hand diggers and hammers to N&DLC.

Fran Spain



How to propagate and multiply!

The Roadside Management Group (*Weedies*, Sub group of Newham and District Landcare Group) presented the '*Beginner's Indigenous/Native Plant Propagation Workshop*' on 11 October at the Newham Mechanics Hall and Marie Marmara's Nursery in Bolgers Lane.

Aimed at the beginner gardener, the workshop explained basic methods of identifying plants, collecting seed and propagating indigenous plants of the Macedon Ranges. The knowledge gained by the participants will allow them to grow a range of plants.

Our presenter was Marie Marmara, local indigenous plant grower and Landcare member. She covered: Introduction to propagation; local conditions; simple botanical nomenclature; propagation methods; seed dormancy; types of growing containers; recycling issues; potting mixes, their quality and uses and Occupational Health & Safety. Identifying and cleaning seeds was covered in the practical at the Hall.

A field study walk and talk was held on the presenter's property as well as a practical on sowing and germinating seeds.

The evaluation by the 22 participants was very positive and a follow up workshop may be held in the future.

This workshop was made possible by a grant from the Port Philip Catchment Authority.



Meet Stanley (used to be Maggie) the fabulous rabbit catcher of Newham. Stanley came to us from the Castlemaine RSPCA site 4 years ago and has proved her worth as a vermin killer. Not only has she cleared our site of rabbits but she is working on next door's. Last count for 16 months – **28** rabbits (that we know about)

Birds are not in danger and neither are most other native animals as she is a 7am – 5pm (only) outside cat and she wears a bell.

Fran Spain

End-of-Year Gathering

Wesley Park, 6 December 2008

