

AUTUMN 2011
Newsletter No.28

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment



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Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



President's Message

Achievements and Celebrations

The last quarter has been a great one for positive community contribution by Newham and District Landcare Members. Achievements have been; the official opening of the Community Orchard, where N&DLC members assisted other groups including members of the Newham Mechanics Institute, with planting, weeding and training the fruit trees (provided by MRSC at no cost) and of course the mosaic sign.

A special thankyou goes to Fran Spain, whose artistic inspiration and driving force was behind the Community Orchard sign – a true labour of love.

The Harvest Festival was a great success with well over 300 people attending the various events. I thank the organising committee of Fran Spain, Sue Massie, Hilary Roberts, Penny Roberts, Marty Dillon and Jenny Waugh for their significant contributions. Particular thanks go to the presenters (unpaid), the Newham Primary School, the MRSC for preparing Wesley Park and surrounds and the use of the NMI.

Saturday 2nd July is a must date for your diary being the annual Winter Dinner and Dance (for the adults). This is the committee's way of thanking the membership, and encouraging them to welcome new members to the community. This year's theme is BOLLYWOOD which will certainly provide a FUN night for all. The committee wants to see you all there.

In August we have our AGM at which all committee members' positions will be declared vacant and a new committee elected. I have completed three years under the constitution and will be resigning the Presidency. I thank you all for your support over my tenure.

Nick Massie

Group contacts

President: Nick Massie. **Treasurer:** Hilary Roberts.

Committee members: Penny Roberts, Sue Massie, John Luckock. Marty Dillon, Melanie Roberts and Jenny Waugh have joined the committee for 2010 – 2011. We thank departing committee member Don Lang for his contribution over the past 2 years.

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!

DIARY OF EVENTS

MAY

Sunday 8th *Autumn Planting*

This is one of the project sites for the 2010-2011 PPWCMA Community Grant – David and Simone have 2000 plants to get in the ground this year. Come and give them a hand – planting in the morning with lunch to follow.

370 Hennebergs Lane, Newham – 9.30am onwards
BYO gloves and water bottle only
RSVP to Simone 5427 0878 for catering purposes.

JULY

Saturday 2nd *Winter Dinner 'Welcome to Bollywood'*

Mark it in your diary now and start practicing your moves

7.00pm Newham Hall
BYO drinks & a casserole or dessert for the shared table
RSVP essential

Can you help with miscellanea for dressing the hall?
Contacts Penny 5427 0795 or Sue 5427 0065

Saturday 23rd *Family movie evening "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang"*

5.00pm start, venue tbc

AUGUST

Friday 12th *AGM*

Average down your revegetation costs...

TREEPROJECT PLANTS AVAILABLE 14th May

30c each... yes, still only 30c !!

Only 2000 in total available. Limited species. Volunteer grown, so variable 'quality'.

Species include: Swamp Gum, Candlebark, Manna Gum, Woolly Tea-tree, River Bottlebrush, Tree Violet, Blackwood, Black Wattle, Silver Wattle, Tall Sedge, Tall Tussock Grass and Spiny Mat-rush.

Saturday May 14th. 9.00am – 12.00 noon
at 159 Dons Rd., Newham.

Otherwise, contact Penny on 0418 396837 to arrange a visit.

Waterwatch in Newham

Over the past few months we have been describing the tests that grade 5 and 6 students at our primary school have been doing on our pond water each month. Our readings of pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen and other chemicals give us an indication of what the conditions are like for pond plants and animals. This month we had an opportunity to find out just what range of macroinvertebrates (animals without backbones) lives in our pond.

Our Waterwatch co-ordinator, Sam Harrison, collected the macroinvertebrates from around the edges of the pond and put them in trays.



Students then searched through the trays, looking for different kinds of animals, putting each new type found in one compartment of the ice cube trays. We could then count them and record the range and abundance of animals.



Some of the macroinvertebrates are very sensitive to pollution and are only found in good quality water. Others are much more tolerant of pollution.

These results show that we have a very good range of bugs living in our pond and therefore very good quality water. Finding a mayfly nymph was particularly exciting, as many sites along the Maribyrnong River do not have any 'very sensitive' animals.

Our thanks to Sam and to Melbourne Water who provided this exciting lesson for all students from grades 3 to 6.



Jenny Waugh (Newham Waterwatch Co-ordinator)

Results of the Macroinvertebrate Survey

Very Sensitive Macroinvertebrates

1 mayfly nymph

Sensitive Macroinvertebrates

11 damselfly nymphs

14 dragonfly nymphs

2 freshwater mussels

1 freshwater shrimp

Tolerant Macroinvertebrates

5 beetle larvae

15 true bugs (backswimmers, water boatmen, water striders)

1 diving beetle

8 leeches

22 freshwater snails

270 flatworms

Very Tolerant Macroinvertebrates

2 fly larvae

8 bloodworms



All you ever wanted to know. . .

Hydrologist Barry Mann's *All you might ever want to know about underground water in the Macedon Ranges* provided a topic of great interest for local residents.

Barry also covered a wide range of information regarding the extent and usage of underground water both in other parts of Australia and around the world, pointing out the risks and downsides of not managing the resource properly.

It was comforting to find out that Newham has some of the purest underground water in Victoria, due mostly to the granitic rock underlying much of the district, which acts as an effective filter for our water.

Barry also gave us plenty of practical tips about bore placement and usage along with plenty of warnings about the potential for groundwater pollution from sewage and petrol.

Altogether a most informative and entertaining evening and great supper (food and wine) for the 40 or so attendees.

Hilary Roberts

Stephen Murphy on wind-breaks and habitat planting

Wind-breaks, shelter-belts, habitat corridors, wild-life refuges, bio-links, call them what you like, we know all about them; this is the very stuff of landcare, we are the experts! – **OR ARE WE?**

Like so many others present at Simone and David Moore's place on Saturday 2nd April, I thought I had a fair grasp of the essence of planting and re-vegetation! – **NOT SO!**

Stephen Murphy's wisdom, knowledge, great experience and enthusiasm for the subject, as well as his very entertaining presentation, opened our eyes to the REAL business of establishing wind-breaks etc.

If we are serious about creating sustainable refuge areas for the long term Stephen pointed out that we have to have a clear idea of the **diversity, structure** and **size** of the strip or area to be treated. The planting should be designed to be self-perpetuating, not for just 10 or 20 years but for hundreds of years.

We need to have the knowledge to assemble for planting, a large range of plant families, genera and species, so that all ecological niches are filled, (**diversity**) from large trees down to ground-cover species (**structure**). This will help to ensure on-going food sources for native fauna.

A width of 25 to 30 metres should be considered as a bare minimum to sustain a population of insect eating birds. To have any hope of a population of small fauna such as sugar and greater gliders a width of at least 40 metres would be needed; 100 metre plus with a minimum of 10 hectares would be required for good self-sustaining habitat.(**size**)

Gone is the myth that a satisfactory wind-break is a 10 metre strip!

Stephen also talked about research which showed that proper habitat planting can actually **slow down** wild fire contrary to popular belief.

Useful tips about seed collecting were also shared.

People who want more information about Stephen's work and wisdom should refer to his book; we have a number of copies in our Landcare library.

Submitted by Jim Sansom

A Myna invasion

Of late I have noticed some changes in the bird life in Williamstown and more recently, Pipers Creek. In Williamstown we have infestations of the Indian or Common Myna throughout our back yards, so much so that they are becoming the dominant bird, if not the only bird that you see.

In the past few weeks I have started to see these birds more frequently in the trees around our house at Pipers Creek. At the same time I realized that I hadn't heard the call of the kookaburras in the evenings for some time. This prompted me to get motivated and find out what is happening and what we can do about it.

Indian Mynas were introduced into Melbourne's market gardens in the 1860s to keep down insects. They were then taken to



Cairns and other places in far north Queensland to control insects in cane fields. These birds are both intelligent and aggressive and are becoming the predominant bird in urban areas all along the east coast – from Cairns to Melbourne. They are rated as one of the world's 100 most invasive species, actually beating cane toads, feral cats and foxes.

You may ask, "So what is the problem for us?"

The main issue for me is that these birds out-compete our native birds and arboreal mammals for nesting sites, preying on eggs, chicks and mammal young. They are noisy, territorial and not afraid of humans. They use superior numbers to aggressively take over and defend territory. During breeding season, they seek out nesting hollows, which they take over from native birds and animals, after harassing and evicting them.

Indian Mynas kill the chicks of other birds or destroy their eggs, or build their own nests on top and smother them. They have been seen to block the entries to hollows, causing the inhabitants to die of starvation, after which they then lay their eggs in the hollow.

Most of the solutions for minimizing Myna habitats within the suburbs won't work in the Cobaws or on our properties in Newham and Pipers Creek, which really only leaves us with community based trapping and euthanasia as the alternative. There are a number of trap designs on the internet, so please consider the options and see if you can help with this problem. I have contacted the Macedon Ranges and Hobsons Bay Councils, but as yet there has been no response to this issue.

In Canberra, the CIMAG trapping and euthanasia program – endorsed by the RSPCA and the ACT Government – has been highly successful, and has humanely removed over 12,000 Mynas from around Canberra in around 18 months. The program has led to a marked decline in Indian Myna numbers in backyards and nearby urban nature reserves, and has had a positive impact on local native biodiversity conservation.

Simon Rush

The Australian Painted Lady. . .

The Australian Painted Lady (*Vanessa kershawi*) is a fast, low flying butterfly commonly seen in the Macedon region between August and April, and found throughout subtropical and temperate Australia. The Australian Painted Lady has been reported to migrate in immense numbers in the eastern states, 'during one big migration in Victoria in 1889, numbers were so prolific as to darken the sky, and shop windows in Melbourne trapped many specimens which had to be swept out every morning. In the countryside, every footstep disturbed butterflies, and trains could not proceed because the butterflies resting on the rail tracks were so prolific as to prevent the locomotives from acquiring sufficient traction'. Unfortunately such migrations are rarely seen today – perhaps due to increased use of pesticides and destruction of grasslands.

The four eye spots on each hind wing are a key feature in identifying this species. Males are territorial and can often be seen sunning themselves in one position and then searching around for females, any males or other butterfly species entering their territory are chased away.

Food plants include numerous native and introduced species (many in the daisy family) and include Paper Daisies, Capeweed, Wormwoods, Billybuttons, Thistles, Common Everlasting, Yellow Buttons, Cudweeds, and Lavender. We often see them on seaside daisy and capeweed at home. Caterpillars

feed at night, hiding in a ball at the base of their host plants during the day. These butterflies thrive in suburban gardens free from pesticides. Other butterflies you may see flying around now include Meadow Argus, Australian Admiral, Caper White, Red Spotted Jezebel, Common Dusky Blue, and those dreaded Cabbage Whites that are feasting on my cauliflowers. To find out more about butterflies and for a great key to identifying them visit Museum Victoria's web site:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/bioinformatics/butter/>



Upper wing surface

© Museum Victoria



Under wing surface



The highly successful inaugural Newham Harvest Festival held on Saturday 9 April, was officially opened by Stephen Ryan, host of ABC's *Gardening Australia*. The free event attracted over 500 people, many from outside the area. The range of workshops were all well attended, with 'keeping backyard chooks' and pasta making being favorites with the kids! The general consensus was that the day had been most informative.

