

WINTER 2011
Newsletter No.29

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

 **Melbourne Water**
Production of this newsletter is funded through
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Newham visitor

see page 3



President's Message

This is my last message as President after three years in the position. The Newham and District Landcare Group's constitution requires the position to be vacated after three years and at our AGM on 12 August 2011 an election to appoint new office bearers and President will be held. I wish the new incumbents well.

For those considering nominating I can confirm that the opportunity to help contribute to our environment is a very rewarding experience – interacting with experts in their field and social events, all provide networks where new friendships can be formed.



This newsletter highlights all these aspects with a fun report on "Bollywood" a great social dinner dance and "Hotspots", about our contribution to the environment.

In addition I wish to record my appreciation for our most active subgroup, the Roadside Management Group who have been highly successful in getting Macedon Ranges Shire Council to spray our local roadsides to control weed infestation.

This encapsulates NDLG's aim to involve all in maintaining and improving our environment while having fun. I urge all to continue your membership and consider joining the committee.

Nick Massie

Group contacts

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

Committee members: Penny Roberts, Sue Massie, Marty Dillon, Jenny Waugh, John Luckock and Melanie Roberts.

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

AUGUST

Friday August 12th. *AGM, Newham Hall*

Notices will be posted out to all members. Screening "*Honeybee Blues*" with discussion afterwards led by Jim Sansom. Supper to follow.

Monday 22nd – Thursday 25th. *Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture*

This 4 day intensive course is being run by Nutri-Tech Solutions at 140 Taylor Road, Woodend between 8.00am and 5.15pm. Contact Suzi on 5472 9900 or suzi@nutri-tech.com.au

Course covers: Day 1– Mineral Management; Day 2– Microbe Management; Day 3– Plant Management and Day 4– Pest Management. (Human Health Management included each day)

This is a FarmReady approved training Course. Primary producers or one of their immediate family may apply for a subsidy against the \$699 cost of the course.

SEPTEMBER

As the weather improves (we can all live in hope) there will be a hands-on session in Wesley Park – filling out the plantings of local natives and doing much-needed maintenance in the previously planted areas. It will be a morning session with a BBQ lunch to follow.

No date set yet.

Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*)

Bird-watching can give as many thrills to the rank amateur as it does the seasoned twitcher.

In the last few days we have observed stubble quail – previously unknown to us – outside our kitchen window at Newham. The pair move out from amongst the Tall Tussock Grass and Spiny Mat-rush onto the native grass and wildflower lawn, then after a short while seemingly searching amongst the grass they put their heads down and scurry back into the shelter of the Tussock Grass clumps.

Preferred quail habitat is native grasslands – with grass dense enough to provide good cover but not so dense as to prevent other plants from flourishing amongst it. The peak breeding period is between August and December. A nest is prepared by the female, usually in thick cover, and consists of a shallow scrape in the ground lined with grass. Nesting on the ground means they are prey to foxes, cats and dogs.

It turns out that this species of native quail may be legally hunted in Victoria for a 3 month period between early April and late June. Hunters need only to have a valid Game Licence and limit their bag to 20 per day.

In theory, the season is in place to ensure that hunting is carried out in a sustainable way and does not impact on their breeding cycle BUT there is no testing to ensure that the hunters can distinguish between this and other species of native quail (such as Red-chested Button Quail and Little Button-quail) which are much less common and protected. Queensland and NSW have banned quail hunting and SA imposed restrictions on bag limits during drought periods. If hunters must engage in the activity of killing things for fun, why can't they be restricted to rabbits and other introduced species that are serious problems in Australia?

Historically, in Victoria grasslands made way for primary production – with ploughing and fertilization regimes resulting in the loss of the majority of grasslands with their extremely diverse and numerous species of native plants and the birds and small animals supported by them. Locally we can see remnants of this diversity on roadsides, most noticeable in Spring – Summer when the abundance of wildflowers are blooming.

Plant Profiles

More local plants – both of these will be available as part of our Spring TreeProject plants on offer at 30c a forestry tube.



Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum laciniatum*)

Sometimes regarded as a nuisance because of its ability to self-seed into disturbed ground, this pioneering species is to be admired for its lush green foliage, bluish-purple flowers and yellow – orange fruit. Flowering time is Spring – Summer, with fruit developing in late Summer and remaining on the tree as they ripen from yellow to orange.

If acclimatized it will cope with moderate frosts, but grows best if given a little protection by other, larger plants. The fruit can be used to make jam but I don't think it is worth the effort – although it is said that the quality of fruit is highly variable. This shrub grows rapidly to 1-3m in height and can be planted 1m apart to form a quick screen or use it as part of a mixed windbreak planting.

Button Everlasting (*Helichrysum scorpioides*)

A wonderful indigenous native to add color to the garden from mid-Spring to Summer. The leaves form a clump at the base of the plant, and from this rise many 20-40cm stems topped with yellow flower heads with papery bracts.



Bollywood Hits New Year

The themed Winter Dinner was a roaring success, with a full house of 'Indians' at Newham Hall. Some of our friends were unrecognisable, whilst others showed parts of the body previously hidden from view.

Dancing was the absolute highlight, with many new and innovative moves being displayed, some of which appeared to have been lifted from the Karma Sutra!

However, no permanent injuries were sustained and most would have recovered with appropriate massage and rest.

As usual, the food was appropriate to the theme and plentiful – no-one went away hungry.

Many thanks to the organising Committee for the decorations, music, videos, lighting and especially the leading dancers. Thanks also to the attendees for their participation, their food and the obvious efforts to be costumed for the night... despite a few costume malfunctions.



Northern Hotspots Project

Much, much more than funded plants wrappers and fencing!

Our fantastic success rate in grant applications has been, in part, due to our willingness to add value to the grant proposal through educational activities. For this grant we undertook flora ID walks, propagating activities, an informal study into the impact of kangaroos on under-storey recovery and a field session with Stephen Murphy on sustainable revegetation and biodiversity.

This project, funded by Port Phillip & Westernport CMA and due for completion by the end of October 2011, fits into the long term plan of the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Headwaters Biolink – a broad network of native vegetation linking Mount Macedon Regional Park with Cobaw State Forest.

Five properties are being funded for woody weed management, a total of 5500 indigenous native plants and associated 'hardware' and fencing to exclude stock.

It is the most recent in a long list of grants received from Federal and State sources (11 over 7 years!) that have supported on-ground works within the Biolink area.

In addition, the group has undertaken educational activities to increase awareness of our local flora. Grasses, clumpers, climbers, shrubs and small trees, pretty-little-things – how many can you name?

The eucalypts and wattles are easily recognized, and well known, but represent a very small part of our floral diversity! Smaller, under-storey plants play an extremely important part and should numerically far outnumber the Eucalypts.

A propagating group meets regularly over the warmer months, mentored by Penny Roberts. This group has propagated plants to order since 2010, principally for Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Management Program, with material costs covered by the Landcare group and all income generated going to Newham Primary school.

These \$\$\$ (almost \$4000 so far this year) are being directed into the landscaping of the school grounds. Surplus plants will be used in the landscaping of the grounds or sold to raise further funds.

If you are interested in participating in propagating activities or receiving funding support for a project, contact Penny on 5427 0795.



Best value plant hardware around!

@ \$1.65 for a reusable, folding, galvanized folding wire frame

- fits a standard plastic wrapper
- reusable multiple times
- order 20 (or any multiple of 20)
- pick-up from Newham



Contact: Penny (5427 0795 or 0418 396837 or penroberts@bigpond.com)

We have 6000 of these to be sold on a first-in, first-served basis – already we have orders for 2200.

In August these will be offered for sale to other Landcare groups and networks.

More will be available in the future – but the time lag from order to availability in Newham is 6-8 weeks.

	Bamboo sticks**	Hardwood stakes*	Folding wire *****
Outlay cost	30c	99c	\$1.65
No. uses	once	maybe a 2nd use for some	multiple: expect 6-10
Advantages	cheap 'sustainable'	Relatively cheap	*cheapest cost per use assuming minimum 3 uses *Easy to use in any soil type *Multiple uses *Tensioning wrapper is easy *Provides best protection for plant if knocked by an animal. *available in Newham *profit goes to support Newham Landcare activities
Manner of use	Pushed into soft soil by hand or with a PVC 'T'. Use a mallet or hammer for hard soil. Need to take special care to 'tension' the wrapper when the 3rd stick is inserted.	Driven in with a mallet or hammer. Apply tension to the plastic wrapper when the 3rd stake inserted.	Fold wire frame to an angle and push into ground. Compress frame to slip on plastic wrapper and then release, resulting in tensioned wrapper
Problems	Easily dislodged or broken and wrappers are lost to the wind Single use only	Physically demanding, especially if ground is rocky or hard – Single use only	Maybe bent by kangaroos – can be re-arranged to shape easily. If you fold the frames the wrong way the plastic may be ripped when you slide it on.

Ask for a demonstration

We have also obtained heavy duty plastic wrappers from Western Plains Flora, which we will sell at cost (30c each), as a service to our members.

- protection from marauding hares and rabbits
- reduce evaporative water loss

This results in better growth rates for protected plants compared with those left 'undressed'.

Waterwatch in Newham

Each month grade 5 and 6 students have been collecting and testing the water from the pond near Newham Primary School. We now have nearly 5 years' data for the temperature, turbidity, pH, salinity, dissolved oxygen, ammonium and phosphate of the water. In previous newsletters the data for temperature and dissolved oxygen has been discussed. This time we will look at the pH of the water – whether it is acidic, alkaline or neutral.

A pH of 7 is neutral, lower numbers are acidic, higher numbers are basic or alkaline.

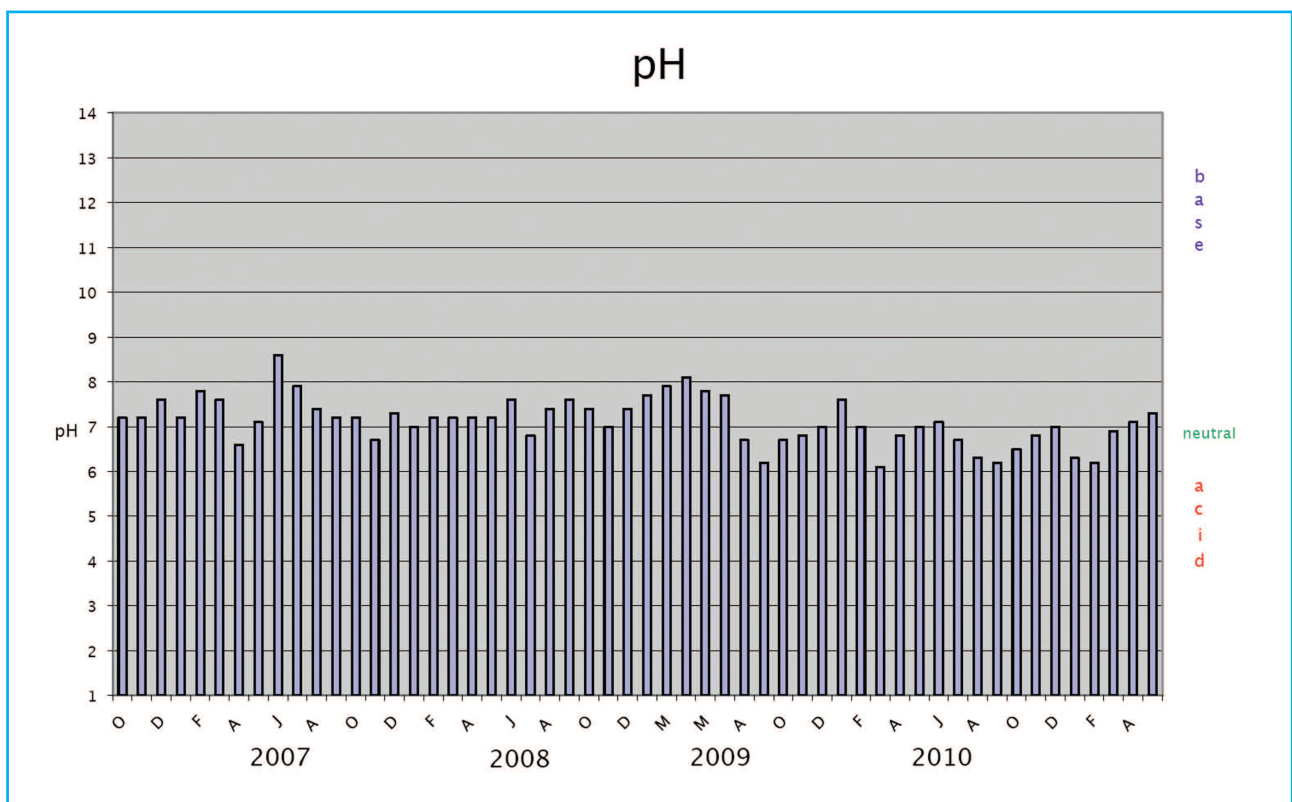
Many of you will have tested the pH of your soil, and know that different plants need different pHs to thrive. In the same way aquatic plants and animals need their environment to be within a particular pH range.

The pH of a creek is largely determined by the rocks and soil the water runs through on its way to the stream, Water running off limestone areas, for example, would be alkaline and would have a pH above 7. The pH can also be affected by the photosynthesis of aquatic plants, and so can change during the day. Students therefore always record the time of testing as well as the date.

For a stream like Deep Creek at Newham, a pH between 6.5 and 8.5 is best for the healthiest and greatest diversity of aquatic plants and animals. As you can see, the data shows that our pond has been in this range nearly all the time – a good sign of a healthy stream.



Mitchell Lee using the pH meter





Newham & District Landcare Group

Membership Renewal / Joining Form 2011 / 2012

Annual membership – \$20 per mailing address per financial year
(Membership runs from 1st July to 30th June)

Name:

Postal address:

..... Postcode:

Tel: (AH) (BH)

Mob: Fax:

Email:

I am happy to receive my newsletter by Email... yes / no

Property name and address (if different from the above):

Postal address:

..... Postcode:

My Landcare related interests/concerns are:- [also use reverse of form]

.....
.....

- Membership covers all residents at the landholders address.
- Members will receive *Australian Landcare News* and our quarterly Newham & District Landcare Newsletter.

Payment: *cheque/cash*, PO Box 314, WOODEND 3442

direct payment, BSB: 013706 Account No. 4992 33654

(Newham & District Landcare Group ANZ Kyneton account)

Queries / Contact: Hilary (Treasurer) or Penny Roberts 5427 0795



Newham & District Landcare Group

Unless you are a recently new member, renewal for 2011 – 2012 was due on June 30th

Advantages of membership

[Revised June 2010]

1. Discount at Elders, Kyneton
2. Equipment available for loan
 - GPS unit, •seed separator / sieve set, •15 L back-pack spray units, •Hamilton planters, •weed wands, •long-handled ratchet loppers *[No charge unless we have to chase you for return, in which case a fee of \$10 applies!]*.
3. Equipment available for hire
 - 600L spray trailer *[\$50 charge for 1st day, \$25 for additional days]* contact Keith Wiggett, 5423 5279, •Stihl auger *[short training session required prior to use. \$25 per day, \$15 per half day]* contact the Roberts 5427 0795.
4. TreeProject native tubestock at cost [30c]
Queries or special requests to Penny 5427 0795 *[lead time may be up to one year]*.
5. Assistance with planting days
organization and tools, volunteers *[local or corporate]*.
6. Assistance obtaining funding support for works that
 - protect remnant vegetation, •link areas of remnant *[with local native species]*, •protect and rehabilitate waterways, •expand on existing remnant vegetation, •pest animal and plant control.
7. Lots of learning opportunities – if you have a specific interest, let us know.
8. Special interest groups
9. Access to library resources – currently held by the Roberts *[5427 0795]*.
10. Quarterly Newham newsletter – in addition to Victorian Landcare magazine.

The membership benefits listed above are those to *you as an individual – consider as well the benefits to the community of Newham and district* through the involvement of the group in local activities.

We all benefit by the changes in the landscape around us that have been happening on private land – in many, many ways. Water quality, biodiversity, carbon sequestration... as well as visual amenity and property value.

The scale of this change is significantly influenced by access to cheap plants *[TreeProject]* and groups of corporate *[or Landcare member]* volunteers that are made possible by the Landcare group.

For 23 of our member households this has also been through funding support made possible by Government grants accessed and administered on a *voluntary* basis by group members.

Administrative component \$\$ in these grants have given the group the financial means to support the various projects in the community and Newham Primary school.

Your continued membership is an indication of your support for what we do, and the size of our membership base helps when applying for grants.

Educational activities at the Newham Primary school will continue – in the past we have provided resources *[texts, posters, science equipment]*, monthly Waterwatch activities *[courtesy of Jenny Waugh]* and funding for 'incursions'.

We have also been responsible for the revegetation on the creek line south-west of the school and will continue to maintain and extend this area.

We are now also providing support to Heskett primary school, and the school principals have expressed interest in joint in-/ex-cursions to maximize value for our \$'s.

Both schools will benefit from a 6 year cycle of funding *[up to \$1000 per year]* to support activities that have an environmental focus.

We can all see evidence of roadside weed control activities by MRSC contractors – these follow mapping and database entry of data by members of the roadside group *[led by Sue Massie]*. This group is progressively working its way around our area.