

AUTUMN 2012
Newsletter No.32

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Melbourne Water
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Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



The Platypus – its life and times

Geoff Williams from The Platypus Conservatory came all the way from Bairnsdale and provided three presentations for us. The first event was held at Newham Primary School where he managed to keep 80 children, plus numerous teachers and parents entertained with stories and pictures of the life and times of the platypus, one of our unique and highly endangered Australian species. To see 80 kids line up to pat a stuffed platypus was worth the visit by itself!

A late afternoon creek walk to discuss platypus habitat had been arranged, but this was cut very short by rain and hail which forced a rapid retreat to the Newham Hall. Geoff then proceeded to pull a rabbit from the hat (actually it was a water rat) producing an impromptu presentation for an hour on these creatures.

The evening presentation was based on the earlier school content but pitched at the older audience profile – *remarkably the same, but completely different!* Both were entertaining and informative and pitched so well to the audience and certainly reflecting Geoff's obvious love and interest in the life and survival of the platypus.

Our thanks to Melbourne Water for its support of this event and provision of dinner, a surprise in itself, and in particular, thanks to Geoff for his marathon effort.

Group contacts

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

Committee members: Lorraine Rutherford, Helen Scott and Nick Massie.

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!

DIARY OF EVENTS

MAY

Friday 11th – *Koalas in Crisis*

7pm for 7.30pm, Newham Mechanics Institute. Supper to follow

Cost: gold coin donation for non-members

Newham & District Landcare welcome you to an exposition of the life and times of Koalas including the growing threat to their habitat.

Deborah Tabart, CEO of Australian Koala Foundation, will discuss current issues and challenges for the survival of Koalas in Australia.

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) is the principal non-profit, non-government organisation dedicated to the conservation and effective management of the wild koala and its habitat.

Booking: Hilary Roberts, 5427 0795 <hproberts@bigpond.com>

Deborah has also very kindly agreed to further presentations at the ***Newham and Heskett Primary Schools on Monday 14th May.***

Saturday 26th – *Friends of Hanging Rock spotlight walk*

7pm, Hanging Rock Reserve.

Meet at the Café about 10 mins prior for some cross-species encounters.

Wildlife is prolific in the Reserve, although the animals being on the wild side, may or may not be amenable, likewise the weather.

The event is free and open to interested members of the public. Hanging Rock Ranger Guido will be conducting the walk of about an hours' duration.

RSVP: Martin Joiner, 5427 0592.

JUNE

Saturday 30th – *Winter Dinner, Austrian/Barvarian theme*

From 6.30pm, Newham Mechanics Institute.

This is a free event, Landcare covering hall hire. Attendees BYO drinks and food to contribute to the shared table.

This year you will be in the running for prizes if you get out the lederhosen and the frilly blouses.

Sound of Music songs look good, as do some waltzes.

RSVP: Penny Roberts, 5427 0795. <penroberts@bigpond.com> by 19th June.



**A little bit of magic was in the air –
*Bush Magic that is!***

An excited gathering of bandicoots (also known as children) made their way to Wesley Park, to assist a wombat and a wallaby, in their quest to save the bush.

A beautiful Autumn day prevailed for the performance, the setting seemed just right – and the timing of the traffic worked in perfectly!



The Vox Bandicoot team of two, played out the story of their attempts to save the bush from being overcome by the noises of the city.

The little (and big) bandicoots laughed, sang, made music, and added ingredients to magic potions to create a solution – and, of course, gave the absent-minded Wobbly Wombat a few hints along the way.

A lovely afternoon was had by all, and a great message given about the importance of Landcare's work.





TreeProject tubestock for 2102

This year there will be 2000 tubestocks available for purchase at 40c per tube.

Contact Penny on 5427 0795 or at <penroberts@bigpond.com> to order and arrange a time for collection. *1st in 1st served – pay when you pick-up.*

All species are indigenous to this area, grown by volunteers from seed collected locally.

The aim of providing this cheap plant material is to assist our members in their revegetation efforts – to average down plant costs and expedite the development of significant wildlife corridors between Macedon Regional Park, Hanging Rock Reserve and the Cobaw State Forest. These corridors are essential for the long term survival of small native species, such as the threatened brush-tailed phascogale (Tuan) and the diminishing koala population, allowing them to safely move across the landscape in response to environmental stresses.

Some species may never be offered through TreeProject, and others only on a limited basis due to difficulties in accessing seed or in propagation. Our TreeProject order was for Autumn but, as in previous years, growth rates have been variable between species and also between plants of the same species.

As a result plants will be available over a long period, the bulk of them in Spring.

Species list – If highlighted they are available now:

Clumping:

***Poa seiberii*, *Poa labillardieri*,
Lomandra longifolia.**

Shrubs:

***Hymenanthera dentata*,
Callistemon seiberii, *Leptospermum lanigerum*, *Leptospermum continentale*,
Solanum laciniatum, *Cassinia aculeata*,
Cassinia longifolia.**

Understorey trees:

***Acacias pycnantha*, *paradoxa*, *verticillata*,
dealbata and *melanoxydon*,
Allocasuarina verticillata.**

Big trees:

***Eucalyptus viminalis*, *Euc. ovata*,
Euc. obliqua.**

A Wild Anniversary

There was great intrigue at the school as the cages of animals were carried in. Big cages in one room, small cages, tanks and aquaria in the other. After a short celebration to wish Landcare a happy 25th birthday, the Wild Action Zoo sessions began. Those in the Australian animals room saw a huge range of animals from a blue tongue lizard to a tiny possum, a laughing kookaburra, an owl and a lorikeet. Everyone was able to pat the animals as they were brought out one by one, and all had a turn of holding one.

The other room was investigating the world of minibeasts. Stick insects, giant millipedes, starfish and a tarantula were all part of the cast, and everyone was brave enough to touch or hold something.

Meanwhile outside students, parents and Landcare members were planting locally grown grasses and shrubs in the school grounds. Students learned the best way to plant, watered and mulched each one, then added tree guards to the bigger shrubs and trees. Grade 5 and 6 students even dug the holes for the plants. The highlight of the day was the water tank on the

back of the truck which needed hand pumping – the queue for a turn stretched off the truck and down the bank. All students worked so enthusiastically that we managed to get over 600 plants in the ground.

What a great day. Happy 25th Anniversary Landcare Australia and many thanks to the Port Phillip & Westerport Catchment Management Authority for the anniversary grant which made the day possible.

Jenny Waugh



Black Cockatoo

As the vegetation on our property has grown, we have noticed more and more birds around – an increase in species as well as numbers. Last year we saw Stubble Quail for the first time and this year we had our first sighting of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. A pair noisily hung around the she-oak forest and pine-nut trees for several days.

Robyn and Bill van Smeerdijk have seen them many times over the years at their place to the south of the Cobaw forest. Thanks go to them for providing the following information: The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo is found from Queensland to Tasmania, and in South Australia.

Flocks of hundreds tear out and eat sapwood and grubs from eucalyptus trees, wattles, casuarinas and grass trees. They feed on the ground and in foliage, their favourite food being the seed capsules of hakea, banksia and pine species. They have a loud harsh screech (sounds like 'why laar' or 'weelar'. Begging sounds from the young. They live in temperate rainforest and woodlands from sea level to snowlands, nesting in tree hollows. Both sexes construct the nest, lined with wood chips. The female alone incubates the eggs, while the male supplies her with food. Usually only one chick will survive and this will stay with its parents for about six months.

They are moderately common seasonal nomads or migratory, with widespread movement occurring in autumn – winter from high country to the lowlands.

There are 7 varieties of Black Cockatoos, all a little different from each other. You can find them all in *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, available on loan from the Landcare library.



Waterwatch in Newham – Ammonium

When Grade 5 and 6 students collect water for testing each month, one chemical they check for is ammonium. Ammonium is a chemical which contains nitrogen (its formula for the chemists is NH_4^+).

High ammonium levels in the water can be caused by:

1. Nitrogenous fertilizers – overuse of high nitrogen fertilizer is a problem when runoff from farms, lawns or gardens are washed by rain into nearby waterways or the ocean.
2. Industrial pollution.
3. Faulty septics.
4. Animal waste – dog waste left in streets will wash into waterways.

Jenny Waugh

Waterwatch Co-ordinator.



Equipment used for the test.

