

AUTUMN 2013
Newsletter No.36

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Melbourne Water
Victoria
The Place to Be

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Melbourne Water's Community Grants Scheme

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



Grade 5/6 Narmbool Experience !

DIARY OF EVENTS

MAY

Sunday 26th Planting at Hanging Rock Reserve –

9.30am start. Planting until 12.30pm, BBQ lunch provided to follow.

RSVP: Penny Roberts, 5427 0795.

JUNE

Saturday 29th Livin' in the 70s –

Winter Dinner Dance, 70s theme

6.30pm Newham Hall.

BYO drinks and a contribution for the food table.

RSVP: Penny Roberts, 5427 0795 – babysitting an issue?... talk to Penny.

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~newhamlc/>

More pages about Newham Landcare have been updated. Keep informed via the diary of *Events* page, the *Newsletters*, and *Activities reports* from the AGM; explore further afield from the *Links* page; see *Photos* of some of our activities. Feel free to send Helen Scott any suggestions at hscott@arkitura.com

Group contacts

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

Committee members: Howard Stirling, Karl Kny 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!

Supporting Newham Primary School

This term Newham and District Landcare Group has provided funding support for two school activities – the grade 5/6 camp at Narmbool and a whole school museum trip.

Narmbool Camp

Grade 5/6 teacher Eron Chapman writes:

'The overwhelming generosity of Newham Landcare meant that our grade 5/6 students could go on a truly memorable camp this year.

Our Landcare donated the total cost of bus travel, which would have made this camp otherwise inaccessible to us.

Narmbool – a magnificent and historic pastoral property of 2000 hectares located at Elaine and operated by Sovereign Hill, Narmbool is a fascinating example of sustainable farming in a diverse and fragile ecosystem.

With a thousand acres of bush land set aside for conservation, Narmbool provides habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna.

The education program they run is a highly creative program that blends science and the Arts with a big measure of FUN. The overall aim is to equip students with the skills to articulate a view about the importance of sustainability and protecting diversity.

By visiting and examining some biodiversity hot spots across the property, students learnt about healthy habitats, how all things are connected in ecosystems and the impact of human decisions in maintaining a healthy environmental balance. Indigenous perspectives on the land and its significance further enrich the experience.

The camp was in every way outstanding, all activities promoted learning, thinking and a good amount of outdoor exercise.

The children came back from this camp raving about the three days they had and have been able to reflect on what they learnt and how they may apply this knowledge around our school, at home and in the wider community.'

Student writing: 'Why all grade 5/6 students should go on camp to Narmbool'

Do you ever wonder how close the stars are and what they are called? Have you ever seen Saturn through a telescope, the close up dark and light side of the moon? These and many other questions can be answered at Narmbool. All grade 5/6 students need to go to Narmbool to experience this and many other wonders.

To begin with students will have fun while learning useful skills that will help them now and in the future. When I was at Narmbool I learnt how biodiversity is important to keep the food chain working. I learnt how our waste can be recycled to be used in more efficient ways such as toilet water. The worms eat the toilet waste, the water is then treated and pumped back into the toilets. This means no precious drinkable water needs to be used for this.

Next, safety for students at any kind of camp is a very important responsibility. Scott, Matt, Janelle and Mick, highly trained professionals, make sure that the wellbeing of the students comes first. They have radios to keep in contact with each other in case of any emergencies happening in the field. They give students a long but interesting safety talk before every activity.

Finally, learning about our environment is an important topic for students because the world's wellbeing depends on this. Experts say that if children learn how to care for the environment, our world will be a better place for us all.

By Saffron

Narmbool is a place where learning is broader than usual. A place where exploring boundaries is not only encouraged but easier than ever before. A place where learning is an exciting journey. Wouldn't you want to send your students to a place where the learning is not only relevant and interesting; it's also shaped and formed to each individual student's needs? Teaching students about sustainability and the environment has never been better. This is why all grade 5/6 students should go on camp to Narm-bool.

To begin with, it gives students the chance to explore and learn in a creative way. Exploring creativity whilst learning gives students the chance to be more successful in life. Studies show that 90% of students aged 11 to 16 learn better when given the chance to be creative compared to 10% who just want to read an encyclopaedia then take a test. According to a paper by Prof. John Brant, creativity is a better outlet for students learning. Also, it's more fun.

Usually, students of the grade 5/6 age don't know how to keep the home environment sustainable. Narmbool teaches students how. Teaching older students to be more sustainable helps in later life when they have homes of their own. We all know that even the smallest sustainable gesture can have a big impact on protecting our planet.

Furthermore, it gives students access to scientific equipment and activities that would otherwise be out of reach to many schools. Scientists say that giving students access to these things helps nurture the next generation of scientists. We need more scientists of all kinds to help us protect the planet we all depend on to live and make it a better place.

It is without a doubt that all grade 5/6 students should go on camp to Narmbool. So go on, get out there and alert your local school's principal today.

By Asha-Mae

Imagine if you're in the middle of the forest and it's about to rain. You have to scavenge for materials to make some shelter to keep warm and dry. It buckets down. This is why all grade 5/6 students should go to Narmbool to learn the skills of the forest. Last week I went there, so I can convince you.

First of all we learnt about nature around us. This is important because when we learn about nature we can identify the poisonous plants and edible ones.

Second of all we learnt about astronomy and planets. This is good because when you go home you can teach someone else to find every planet, star and solar system.

Last of all, we learnt hut making. This is important because if you're stranded in the middle of the forest you can build a hut and take shelter from the rain.

Whole school museum trip

Grade 2/3 student contributions:

Thank You Landcare

The bus delivered us to the Melbourne Museum. When we walked through the door we found interesting fossils. We found out how things used to look; Victoria used to be a dinosaur stomping-ground!

We explored the wildlife of Australia and how the world has changed from the past. The forest gallery brought us close to plants and animals.

When we walked out of the museum we left the past behind us. We are ready to find out about what is around us here now.

Thank you Newham Landcare for helping us find out about interesting facts about the past.

Grade 2 and 3 Museum Poetry

Humungous dinosaurs
I saw a 3D movie
Snowball earth
The Pterodactyls were up on the roof
Real bones hanging.

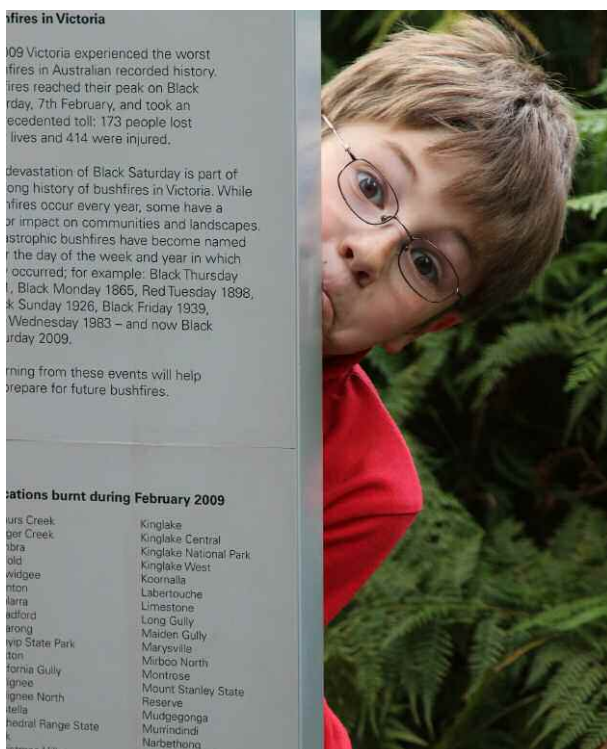
Charlie

Huge dinosaurs pose in time
Interesting facts lie on touch screens
A shark inside the door is chasing seals in mid air
Old bones stay in the same spot
Rotten chicken sits on a bench
Yelling back from time.

Mackenzie

As the misty tunnel whips past,
The jungles keep secrets.
Dinosaurs are bold and bright.
Turning each corner a new world begins.
As we enter a new room the magic starts to fill it.
Whirling past lots of interesting objects.

Phoebe



I'm weaving through the hills and caves
Then I enter into a misty cave.
I climbed to the top.
I popped my head out to look.
I looked into the Wild Life.

Talon

We were ready to learn about the past
We were in the forest at last
A misty tunnel behind a waterfall
We heard the satin bower birds call
We saw a mouse run by,
a bird caught it in its beak.

Susie

In early December 2012 Woodend Wildlife Shelter Linda Healy was called to an injured female koala near Romsey. The koala had attempted to cross a paddock to reach another habitat and was believed to have been trampled on by a horse.

While this event would normally go un-noticed by the public and the local press, this incident made headlines not only in the local papers but the Herald-Sun as well, as the koala had a small joey in the pouch. For several weeks Linda tried to save the koala mum to give her joey the best chance of survival. Unfortunately the head injuries were too severe and the koala mum ultimately died.

Rommy, the little koala joey, eventually settled and thrived after those earlier traumatic weeks. And around New Year his human mum Linda was confident enough to have a few days of well-deserved respite and left him in care of Newham Wildlife Shelter Brigitte Kny which is part of our Landcare revegetation network.

It was a more or less a 'chance' visit when Newham artist Kerry Clarke dropped by at the wildlife shelter and fell absolutely head over heels in love with the little man. For the next few days Kerry captured his cuteness, spirit, charm and adorability on paper (as husband Daryl put it 'she was on a mission, totally forgot about us.').

Artist Kerry Clarke has donated her drawing to the Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network and 15 signed and numbered copies are available for sale. All proceeds are going to the Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network to assist local wildlife shelters.



Hanging Rock Revegetation Project Stage 2



Newham and District Landcare Group (NDLG) has been successful in an application for a Communities for Nature Grant. This grant is for Stage 2 of the revegetation of Sailors Creek within the Hanging Rock Reserve.

Sailors Creek is the creek that all visitors to the Rock pass over after passing through the main entrance. Most visitors will have seen the planting and guards that extend to the right of the internal road. These plantings were done as part of Stage 1 of the project which has its aims to control blackberry, thistle and broom and to stabilise the banks and surrounds of Sailors Creek by planting of native trees, bushes, grasses and understorey.

Stage 2 extends the treated area further along the banks and the funding of \$5,864 is for the provision of plants, guards, weed control chemicals and the engagement of specialist contractors as required.

NDLG invites all members when visiting the Rock to checkout the Stage 1 work. Stage 2 works will commence on 26 May and continue for 12 months. Watch out for emails advising of planting dates and working bees.



Examples of Stage 1 works.

Design and planting for bushfire mitigation

On 6 April the Newham Hall was the venue for a very interesting and vital presentation by the CFA.

Based on the booklet '*Landscaping for Bushfire*' (a recommended read), the speaker Owen Gooding, Acting Vegetation Management Team Leader at CFA, described how fire behaves and how the choice of vegetation around the home can influence the risk of your property being lost in a bushfire. Built around examining how plant types influence fire, it was not a listing of fire retardant vegetation that you must or must not plant but how any plant, based on its form and location, influences fire behaviour and intensity.

Owen's presentation was very informative and we thank him for standing in at short notice for Terry Ouroumis (CFA Vegetation Management Officer) who was unable to present.

Given Newham is in a bushfire prone area, it was disappointing that fewer than 28 people attended this presentation, despite it being a FREE event and given wide publicity throughout the community.

NDLG urges every one to source a copy of '*Landscaping for Bushfire*' booklet from the CFA and read and implement the measures recommended. It may save your life and dwelling.



On 3 March 2013 NDLG volunteers "cleaned up" Newham. Roads attacked were Dons and Coach Road, Colwells Road, South Rock Road, Jim Road, Straws Lane and part of Romsey Road.

Some 20 people volunteered and thanks is given to individuals and families Muller, Spains, Quinn, Roberts, Massie, Spielvogel, Uffing, Luckcock, Stirling, Nicholson, Colclough, McMaster Omont, Dolle. As usual a high percentage of rubbish was drinks containers (all recyclable – so why thrown out of window of cars), food wrappers, plastic and general dumped stuff.

The picture above shows the volume of rubbish collected.

Edible Weeds

What grows everywhere without any effort from us, don't need watering, fertilising or protection from bugs; are often more nutritious AND tastier than what grows in our veggie patch – and are FREE? Too good to believe? Then think again – the answer to the question are – EDIBLE WEEDS!

Doris Pozzi ran a very successful workshop for Newham Landcare and the Newham Primary School in March this year. The students went for a weed hunt after the talk and found many interesting things in their school yard!

Doris who has been an avid veggie gardener for many years says, 'I spent most of my life pulling out perfectly edible plants from my garden only to replace them with often less nutritious and blander vegetables! When I think of the hard work I could have avoided!'

As her interest in edible weeds developed Doris found herself doing more and more research to discover the range of weeds available locally, their properties and ways of preparing them in the kitchen. Her booklet '*Edible Weeds and Garden Plants of Melbourne*' grew out of that interest.

Newham and District Landcare has purchased copies of the booklet for our library.



Indigenous people's plant use and land management in Victoria

On Friday evening, 10 May, around 50 people from as far as Melbourne gathered in the Newham Hall to hear renowned ethnobotanist Dr Beth Gott speak on how Indigenous people used plants and managed the land in Victoria. Beth has worked all over the world and is currently an Honorary Research fellow from the School of Biological Sciences at Monash University.

This is an outline of her talk:

'For at least 40,000 years Victoria's Indigenous peoples lived on what the land would provide. When the Europeans arrived to take over their lands, they reported a people in good health, with plenty of food, much of which was from plants. The staple vegetable food in south-eastern Australia was from underground plant storage roots, which were available at all seasons. By the use of fire, these foods were managed so that they renewed themselves and were not used up. Many other plants were used for fibre, implements and medicine. The countryside encountered by the European invaders was not pristine, as is often believed; its biodiversity was created by Aboriginal management. We can learn from the long history of that management.'

Beth made her presentation fascinating by showing slides and samples, and telling stories of many of the plants used by Aboriginal people from local areas. One of the staples, 'Murnong' (yam daisy /*Microseris* spp.), once grew all over what were grassy plains, but has been destroyed by cloven-hoofed grazing animals and is now rare. Of its three concurrent sorts of root, 'grandmother' and 'baby' were left, and 'mother' eaten, ensuring harvesting without destroying the plant. Tubers from the various Lilies, such as Vanilla, Chocolate, Bulbine, were eaten. These can be easily grown from seed, and are seen on many of our less disturbed roadsides; after the Kosciuszko fires in 1983 Vanilla lilies sprang up in swathes. Orchid tubers were another food and are still eaten in Europe. All these small tuberous plants need light to grow, so skillfully timed burning was used to keep forest open, and open structure between tussocks on the grassy plains to allow food plants to grow and provide habitat for small animals which were also part of the diet. Ash from fires fertilized the soil.

Aquatic plants still widespread in the Murray Darling system, such as Cumbungi, (Bulrush/ Gumbung /*Typha* spp.) were used for food starch and its fibre for string, as were 'Water ribbons' (*Triglochin* spp.) Basket making has undergone a great revival; Beth showed pictures of some made from Poong'ort, or *Carex tereticaulis*.

Grass trees, (Baggup /*Xanthorrhoea australis*) had many uses – resin for adhesive, flowers for nectar, young roots as food, flowering stem as a base for fire making, leaves to cut meat.

'Old man weed' (*Gukwonderuack* /*Centipeda cunninghamii*), found on floodplains and again, easily grown from seed, was used as a medicine for almost any ailment; River mint (*Panaryle* /*Mentha australis*) for coughs and colds.

There were many more examples, and over supper before and after the talk people keenly studied Beth's samples, and also live plants brought by Penny Roberts from her garden.

The information gathered by Beth from work on Victorian archaeological Aboriginal sites and ethnobotanical studies over the past 25 years is stored in computer databases – she has records of approximately 1000 plant species which Indigenous people from Victoria alone are known to have used. It is freely available to the people whose inheritance it has always been.

Many years ago, Beth set up a demonstration garden at Monash of important Aboriginal plants, but this was recently bulldozed to make way for new buildings. A new garden has been formed in Monash grounds, beside the lake near the Science Centre, and visitors are welcome. An informative guide to *Aboriginal plants in the grounds of Monash University* provides the Koorie name, the English common name, and the Latin botanical name, followed by a description of the plant's uses. It can be downloaded at http://www.fsd.monash.edu.au/files/bethgottpamphlet_po.pdf (168 kb)

Beth once said the best piece of advice she'd received was: 'Never take knowledge from people without giving back what you have done with it.' N&DLG is grateful she shared some of her immense knowledge and wisdom with us; she has already inspired plans for growing plants mentioned, trying bush tucker and spreading information.

(Helen Scott notes: for those interested in more on Aboriginal people's complex system of land management using fire and the life cycles of plants to ensure plentiful wildlife and plant foods throughout the year, Bill Gammage – *The biggest estate on earth: how Aborigines made Australia*, Allen & Unwin, 2012, rewrites the history and ecology of the Australian continent. 'What we think of as virgin bush in national park is nothing of the kind'.

Helen Scott



*Beth Gott in the
Aboriginal garden
at Monash
University's Clayton
campus.*

The secret Life of Garden Hut Creek and Deep Creek

While us Newham Landcare members are busy planting seedlings on degraded farmland, re-vegetating contour lines, looking after creek frontages, stabilising eroded creek beds and creek banks – we mostly admire our handiwork above ground and cherish growing trees, grasses and shrubs. But we also should congratulate us that by doing so we enable our generally unknown and un-recognised Australian ‘wildlife’ to thrive and multiply. While most of us know that there might be a platypus in our local creeks and we are aware of dragonflies, mosquitos and leeches – I bet we are largely unaware what is really happening under water and how our deeds and actions are affecting all those little critters living in Garden Hut Creek and Deep Creek.

Students from Newham Primary School under the guidance of Jenny Waugh have been testing the water quality of upper Deep Creek for some years now and these budding young rural scientists have provided valuable data to Melbourne Water’s WaterWatch program. And since beginning 2012 Karl and Brigitte Kny joined the ranks of ‘water-monitors’ and macro invertebrate surveyors.

Let’s start having a look at a really exciting resident of Deep Creek and probably even Garden Hut Creek: the Yarra Pygmy Perch. Since European settlement this tiny little native fish (average size 4 cm) had a pretty tough time coping with increased creek clearance, lack of riparian vegetation, bank erosion, rubbish, predation by introduced fish species, livestock nutrients, non-native vegetation and high salinity as well as decreased water flow (due to pumping for irrigation or stock) as well as creek habitats (as logs in the creek appear to look unsightly). Those little guys are now listed as vulnerable in Victoria but it appears that us here in Newham might actually have a few colonies in Deep Creek and Garden Hut Creek. Pretty exciting news! AND they eat mosquito larvae as well.

Breeding time: Spring.

Likes: abundant creek vegetation and snags, few bits of swampy areas, slow flowing water.

Dislikes: introduced other fish like mosquito fish, redfin, trout and tench; cow poo; willows and/or other introduced tree species.

Life span: approx 4 years.

Brigitte Kny



Yarra Pygmy Perch found in Garden Hut Creek. Melbourne Water are pretty excited about it.

Bursaria spinosa

Bursaria spinosa is important environmentally, providing protection from predators for birds and as a food source.

This erect shrub/small tree, 2 – 4m in height, has small spines along its branches. The flowers are creamy-white, sweetly scented, about 7-10mm in diameter and borne in dense terminal panicles. Flowers are usually seen in mid summer, around Christmas time, which gives rise to the common name of 'Christmas Bush' in Tasmania and South Australia. Flowers are followed by flattened, brown purse-shaped seed capsules that are held for a long time after flowering.

A hardy species, adaptable to a range of sites from riparian to low hills in full sun or part shade, it has been one of the best performers on frosty riparian sites around the Newham district.

Uses: Barrier hedging or as part of a mixed windbreak, protection for smaller birds against predators, nectar source for butterflies, food for caterpillars, nectar and insects for birds.

Plants can become 'leggy' but can be tamed to a more bushy habit, or even hedged in a garden setting, by an annual pruning.

Available NOW at 50c each from Penny Roberts, 5427 0795.



Livin' in the 70s

Come one and come all. I'm just living in the 70s – groove to the vibe, be hip to the scene and hey man, who is that guy in the Afro hair do?

Put on your best paisley shirt, your longest hair wig or did you do the kaftan?

We want you to come and just have fun.

There will be some *Bus Stop*, *Nutbush* and maybe even a bit of *Rocky Horror* !!!

**Our theme dress this year and decorations is 'The 70s' Peace,
love and mung beans**

BYO drinks and food for the common table. You know the drill.

Tea and coffee provided.

Winter Dinner Social. Saturday 29 June 2013. Newham Hall

Time: 6.30pm. RSVP: Penny 54270795 FREE EVENT!