

WINTER 2014  
Newsletter No.41



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Melbourne Water's Community Grants Scheme

# *Newham & District Landcare Group*



Working towards a  
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442





# DIARY OF EVENTS

## OCTOBER

### **Friday 17th. Fish for Farm Dams.**

Newham Hall 7pm for 7.30 start. Supper to follow.

Andrew Clarke, Manager Aquaculture, Fisheries Victoria will present on the opportunities to stock your farm dam with fish both for environmental and harvesting outcomes. Regulations control what fish can be farmed and what are appropriate for various size and location of dams. In addition how the farm dam is fed from local water sources is relevant.

RSVP: Nick Massie (massie@ozemail.com) or Hilary Roberts (hroberts@bigpond.com)

### **Friday 31st. Healthy Farms for Healthy Waterways.**

*Looking for guidance in the management of your property? Interested in funding support from Melbourne Water?*

Newham Hall 7pm for 7.30 start. Supper to follow.

Adam Logan will be talking about a program designed to improve on-farm management practices and support increased productivity whilst helping to improve the health of waterways for the benefit of the wider community. This Melbourne Water initiative complements their existing Stream Frontage Management Program.

RSVP: Penny Roberts (penroberts@bigpond.com) or 5427 0795.

## NOVEMBER

### **Saturday 15th. Grasslands session at HRR.**

Meet 9.30am in the centre of the racetrack. Picnic lunch provided.

Paul Foreman will be exploring the Grasslands central to the racecourse at Hanging Rock Reserve with us. Paul conducted a preliminary assessment last year and his report was included in our newsletter #38 (Spring 2013). This is a chance to improve your plant ID skills and learn about restoration of native grasslands.

RSVP: Penny Roberts (penroberts@bigpond.com) or 5427 0795.

## DECEMBER

### **Saturday 6th. End-of-year BBQ**

Wesley Park, Newham from 6pm.

Join us for all the usual fun – ‘Great Scott Wellie Toss’, the chance to claim the Egg Toss trophy for your mantelpiece for 2015, great food, excellent company. BYO drinks and something for the shared table. BBQ options provided by Landcare (meat/veggie – indicate a preference).

RSVP: Penny with numbers and any special dietary needs for the BBQ.



## Newham Landcare AGM

The build up of excitement for the AGM was palpable as 30 or so souls attended at Newham Hall on 8th August. Obviously word had gotten around that this was THE event to attend in Newham!

With a whirl of activity, members approved reports and financial statements and elected an executive group for the next year.

Congratulations to all elected members for their successful election campaigns. Those of you who failed to nominate, well, there is always next year.

We especially thank local resident Brigitte Kny; a participant in Melbourne Water's Waterwatch Program, wildlife rehabilitator and author of Newham Landcare's sponsored booklet 'Plants, Flowers, Shrubs and Fungi'. Her dedication and curiosity made for an excellent and amusing evening

The 2014-15 Committee will comprise:

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

**Committee members:** Howard Stirling, Karl Kny, Nick Massie and Luke Spielvogel.

**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!

### PLANT PROFILE

Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*).

So named because this is the first of the native lilies to flower in Spring, this common plant flowers on a weak stem some 5-15cm in height. The plant shown was one of many noted in a lightly grazed paddock in Newham. This paddock is notable for its wealth of standing and fallen timber, remnant Hedge Wattle (not very palatable to stock or Wallabies!) and persistent wildflowers. It has never been ploughed and still contains a range of native grasses in addition to wildflowers.





# The secret and endangered lives of Newham's waterways and dams

By Brigitte Kny



Photo: Gooderham and Tsyrlin, 'The Water Bug Book'.

It is pretty much known to us Newham-ites that we live in a very special area. Hanging Rock, the Store, Wineries, the CFA and the Hall, Landcare – just to name a few landmarks and focal points that are obviously prominent.

We also all know that our wildlife is pretty special as well. Don't we have wombats, wallabies, kangaroos, eagles, possums, magpies, koalas, cockatoos, gliders, snakes? Sure, they're still rather common (and occasionally unwanted and not that well-loved) species but we also have rare, uncommon and unusual animals in our area like the Powerful Owl, the Brush-tailed Phascogale, Barking Owls, Peregrine falcons and the Platypus.

All those animals are living above ground and are more or less visible in our daily lives. But have you ever considered that a similar special, rare, uncommon, unusual – even ENDANGERED scenario might be happening in your dams, creeks and waterways?

For example: Several decades ago Newham's Deep Creek had been put on the map for having a thriving population of tiny native fish – the now endangered Yarra Pygmy Perch. And, believe it or not, just recently one of our own made headlines by confirming that the now critically endangered Yarra Pygmy Perch still has some sort of stronghold in our area.

There might also be the possibility that we have another endangered species along our waterways – the Burrowing Crayfish.

Weird looking clay or dirt 'chimneys' near dams, drainage lines, springs and creeks could indicate their presence. And if you love to eat yabbies – please please PLEASE don't eat the catch from your place. Us non-scientific mortals could easily eat a whole colony of an endangered species as they are pretty hard to



A burrowing crayfish burrow or 'chimney'.  
Photo: Brigitte Kny.



differentiate between the common yabbie and the endangered burrowing crayfish species.

While the animal itself is pretty much predator-proof as it lives most of its life underground – its environment, living space and habitat can be easily destroyed by the hoofs of cattle and sheep as well as land clearing / drainage and the absence of riparian vegetation. These burrowing crayfish are especially at risk while moulting, visiting the surface, mating or looking after the young.



Not just cattle and sheep access to dams, creeks, drainage lines and waterways (which compacts the soil) is a threat to the burrowing crayfish, but also the absence or clearing of riparian vegetation and ploughing. So too are fertilisers and pesticides as well as general waterway pollution from cars, faulty septic tanks and dumping of rubbish.

Leaving fallen trees and logs in creeks will change currents and water flows in a way that helps carve deeper pools. Those pools are vital for the survival during summer of native fish like the Yarra Pygmy Perch as well as the platypus and the Burrowing Crayfish, and all those amazing macro-invertebrates that are still found in the creeks and waterways, drainage lines and in dams of Newham's and Hanging Rock's wider areas.

Establishing protective riparian zones around our waterways, drainage lines and dams and removing introduced tree species and re-planting with native indigenous species does change nutrient levels that favour our native macro-invertebrates.

And you never know – maybe one day one of us might discover a new underwater species in our protected dams or waterways – the incredible Newham-ites noteworthy.



*Photos: Brigitte Kny.*

## Newham Primary students' Environmental Studies at camp



Grade 3-4 students attended the YMCA Lady Northcote Camp at Rowsley, near Bachus Marsh. This adventure camp offers a typical range of outdoor activities such as canoeing and archery.

It is in an area that has suffered significantly from erosion through poor farming techniques and is now undergoing change and revegetation through Landcare working with the YMCA camp owners.

### **Some student observations at the camp.**

*On the second day of camp, Grade 3/4 did some environmental studies. First was an erosion experiment. Erosion is a big problem for farmers because it can move the soil away.*

*We poured water on an eroded slope and we timed how long it took for the water to get*

*down the bottom of the slope. We discovered that a grassy slope slows water by about ten seconds more than just dirt on its own.*

*First we observed how long it took for the water to reach the bottom, it took 10 seconds. We rushed off to collect leaves, rocks and sticks to put in the path of the water to slow it down. This made a mini-model of what really happens when Landcare plants trees to stop erosion.*

*Our team, The Kangaroos, got 1.01 minute and The Dingoes got 55 seconds.*

*The other environmental activity was bird watching, we saw 19 different types of bird, the other group saw 20, we lost by one bird!*

*Thank you Landcare for helping pay for the bus trip so we can learn about the environment.*

**By Heather, Phoebe, Mitchell and Caelan.**



## Spring planting – yet another Communities for Nature grant activity



It was a glorious Spring day and 27 souls came to the planting at Hanging Rock Reserve on 14 September. This was a short session – only 2 hours planting – yet we still managed to plant 550 tubestock into pre-augered holes. Some of the plants went in immediately adjacent to the creek and we used folding wire frames and plastic guards – but this time we are also used an approach that has been trialled by Melbourne Water. Two ‘Wallaby exclusion zones’, each with a perimeter of 50m, were set up using star pickets and rabbit mesh and plants within these zones were left unguarded. Uneven ground presented some challenges when it came to pegging down the bottom of the wire securely... but otherwise all went to plan and these small areas were planted relatively densely. The two areas chosen were the sites of burn piles this Winter. These were hot fires that could be expected to kill off any seed in the upper soil layer and leave it bare and liable to weed invasion. The pile of ash was spread over a wider area before planting.

Image shows the watering crew. Mulch will be spread over the whole area over the next week but on the day was placed around each plant to make them more visible.

An unexpected treat was a visit by Michelle Wyatt and William Terry, from the Macedon Ranges Environment Unit (organised by Friends of Hanging Rock), to talk about the Shires nesting box program and the Environmental Management Plan that will be prepared for the reserve.

Nesting boxes specific to a number of the smaller mammals (eg. Feather-tailed Gliders, Brush-tailed Phascogales) will be installed on public reserves within the Shire, including Hanging Rock Reserve. Monitoring will be done by a camera attached to an extendable pole – no more ladders!

A number of motion sensor cameras have been placed around the reserve. Images to date include a range of native animals, but of concern is the number of pest animals ‘captured’. Foxes, rats, rabbits and even a deer!

**Of greater concern is the number of domestic animals that should have been at home, not hunting or exploring in the reserve – both cats and dogs.** Whilst our plantings are not at risk the wildlife is, so please spread the word about this problem.





*Some call it home.*



*Typical nose hole left in woody debris by an animal.*

## **HABITAT VALUES: Coarse woody debris**

Fallen timber is just one component of 'habitat'. Others will be covered in future newsletters but it seems timely to consider fallen timber as we approach the fire season and are cautioned to 'clean up around our properties' (*Star Weekly*, 9 September) and I have been approached twice in the last month by persons willing to 'clean up' the fallen timber on my property for me. 'Cleaning up' in preparation for the fire season (to me) means clearing the gutters, removing leaves and fallen small branches from the house area, keeping the lawn around the house mown and reviewing the accumulated clutter around the back door. It means keeping the property free of Gorse, blackberry and Broom. It means trying to get rid of Phalaris and replacing it with native grasses that pose minimal fire risk in comparison. It means trimming the lower branches of the She-oak forest I have established. It does NOT mean clearing fallen tree trunks and large branches.

The Darraweit Guim fires of 2012 were fast moving grass fires over difficult terrain. Big logs are slow to catch fire and slow to burn and these coarse woody debris forms part of the architectural structure of the ground layer of native vegetation and has an important role in the provision of habitat for wildlife.

These are the trunks or large boughs of fallen trees that remain for many years, filling a host of ecological functions as they slowly break down.

- Fallen timber provides refuge for every major group of vertebrate animals, as well as invertebrates, in Woodlands.
- Lizards and invertebrates use logs as feeding, breeding and sheltering sites.
- Echidnas choose fallen timber and the cavities beneath them for shelter.
- These large woody debris provide habitat for teeming masses of micro-organisms,



*Breaking down – safe hiding places, a source of insects for food, creating mulch.*



*Lichen, moss etc. growing on a fallen trunk*





*An echidna hunting for ants.*



*Fallen tree – provides protection for seedling plants from Wallabies and Kangaroos.*

including bacteria, that are at the bottom of the food chain, as well as many invertebrates (insects, spiders etc) which in turn provide food for gliders and birds and reptiles.

- They provide nesting hollows for a number of ground-dwelling animals and hibernation sites for other animals
- Coarse woody debris encourage the growth of moss which holds moisture, releasing it slowly, and also helps to prevent weed invasion
- They prevent the erosion of otherwise bare soil (water and wind, and especially drainage run off where site or environs have been modified)
- They act as a trap for leaf litter and other detritus to provide moist, fertile areas

The dynamics of coarse woody debris input and distribution have been grossly altered across the landscape due to centuries of clearing for agricultural activity, mining and logging. Australia has an appalling animal extinction

record and rate – and loss of habitat is one principal cause, with loss of large woody debris being a component of that.

So next time you think about clearing those large woody debris think again, and perhaps leave them for the small critters that call them home.

*Logs represent classic carbon sequestration – large woody debris they hold carbon as a slow release nutrient rather than wasting it into the atmosphere through mulching or burning.*



*A dead tree – a wonderful resource for wildlife!. Don't cut it down, and when it falls down let it be.*



*Almost gone – nutrients into soil, natural mulch, still a food source.*



# PAUL MAHONY VISITS NEWHAM LANDCARE

Prepared by Jim Sansom

Why would the Newham Landcare Group want to hear a talk from a strong advocate for animal welfare?

Aren't these sorts of people a bit carried away, one-eyed and over the top when it comes to their rather narrow point of view about animal rights?

Lets face it, beef and fat lamb production is a major part of Australia's rural enterprise!

**Well Paul Mahony was different.**

On 29 August we heard a thoroughly researched, measured presentation arguing the science and logic about a strategy to provide sufficient food for all people on planet Earth well into the future. A strategy that at the same time would cut greenhouse gas emissions to a safe level and ensure the protection and enhancement of natural ecosystems around the globe.

**Wow! Yes! This does sound like the sort of stuff a landcare group should be listening to!**

The only problem is that to achieve all this would require a major shift in Australia's culture, economy and thinking about food production.

To produce one kilogram of food (meat) via the animal route is grossly inefficient. The resources required for one kilo of animal based food would be enough to produce about 15 kilos from plants. A reduction of vast areas needed for grazing would make land available for carbon absorbing forests.

**But what about the necessary protein in our diet?**

Paul tells us that where as beef for example gives us 270 gm of protein per kilo, soy beans provide 396 gm per kilo. In fact the huge range of bean and pea type of plant (the legumes) is more than adequate for human food needs.

Paul then compared the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted by animal based food production and plant based food production.

**Emissions intensity** is the amount of greenhouse gas resulting from making one kilogram of end product. For instance it takes 3 kilos of emissions for one kilo of steel and 16 kilos to make one kilo of aluminium. All plant based foods produce less than one kilo of emissions for each kilo of end product while for one kilo of beef well in excess of 100 kilos goes to destroy our atmosphere. This is because cattle 'burp' methane, a gas which is some 25 times more potent in its greenhouse effect than carbon dioxide.

Paul's thought provoking talk was full of factual, scientifically based material to challenge us. Our thanks go to him for coming to Newham and sharing his knowledge.

More information from Paul's research can be found by googling 'Terrastendo'.

