

**AUTUMN /
WINTER 2015**
Newsletter No.44



Production of this newsletter is funded through
Melbourne Water's Community Grants Scheme

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442

A photograph of a rural roadside area. The foreground is filled with tall green grasses and numerous purple and white flowers. In the background, there are several trees with thick, textured trunks, possibly eucalyptus, under a clear blue sky.

Rural Roadsides

DIARY OF EVENTS

OCTOBER

Sunday 11th. Planting at Hanging Rock Reserve

9am – MD, then BBQ lunch (provided, so please let us know of any food intolerances)

East of the entry drive – turn right before you cross the creek. Signage will be out.

Target is 500 plants in the ground to stabilize the creek banks, with the option of cut and painting seedling Holly and Laurels if you prefer.

RSVP: Penny <penroberts@bigpond.com> 0418 396837.

DECEMBER

Saturday 5th. End-of year BBQ at Wesley Park, Newham

From 5.30pm, food for children at 6.30, adults to follow.

Egg Toss and Wellie Throw events before desserts, around 7.30.

Bring a salad or dessert for the shared table.

BYO chair or picnic rug, drinks, egg for the Toss event.



Group contacts

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

Committee members: Howard Stirling, Karl Kny, Doug Dalglish, Jim Sansom and Luke Spielvogel.

Secretary: Helen Scott.

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: Doug Dalglish; 5427 2666.

Website: <http://www.newhamlandcare.info/>

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!

Puggles



The wattles are blooming and we are blessed at last with some warm, still days of sunshine. Many of us will now start burning off large piles of leaf litter, branches and brush that have been mouldering over winter after the Autumn clean-up. But wait! Your pile may be the site of a special nursery burrow for a baby echidna or puggle.

After the mating rains of winter, the female Echidna produces a small, perfectly round egg, which she tucks into her pouch. After ten days, the egg hatches and a puggle is born – a tiny pink thing that is all head and front legs at first. Echidnas do not have nipples, instead they have two areas of mammary tissue called milk patches that secrete milk for the tiny puggle.

After about seven weeks, the puggle has started to grow spines and outgrow the pouch. The mother echidna then places the puggle in a nursery burrow – somewhere dark, cool and undisturbed. Nursery burrows may be constructed almost anywhere, such as at the base of a tree around tree roots, under flat rocks, or under termite mounds. No wonder our burn off piles seem so attractive!



This puggle is about seven weeks old, time for the nursery burrow!

Puggles will spend five months of their young lives in the nursery burrow, sleeping most of the time. The mother echidna only needs to visit her baby every five days or so to give the baby a feed. And boy – these puggles take advantage of feeding time! In one feed, a puggle can drink up to 40% of its body weight in rich, nutritious echidna milk.

The puggle becomes a young Echidna by quite an abrupt weaning process. On Kangaroo Island, home of the most comprehensive and long running wild echidna studies, this little known process was observed as follows. One day the mother echidna arrived at the burrow, nursed the young echidna, and then promptly left. Researchers

believe that the natural inquisitiveness of the young echidna helps it forage for the ants, termites and other invertebrates that make up its diet.

At this time of year, the puggles could be anywhere between three and five months old, which means that they are still in the nursery burrow. Unfortunately there is no way we can tell if we have a puggle in our brush pile. The nursery burrow has a long curved entrance way with a chamber at the back. The mother echidna backfills the nursery entrance when she is not around so there is no obvious entrance hole.

So, how can we avoid killing cute little baby puggles when we do our fire clean up? If there are existing piles to be burnt that have been there since winter, the only way to avoid a potential disaster is to set up another site near your existing pile, start a fire there and move your branches and litter to this fire. The pobblebunks, antechinus and skinks who may be living in the pile will also appreciate you taking the time to do this work.

As always, when caring for the natural world and its inhabitants, the best method is prevention. Burn the leaf litter and branches in Autumn at the same time you are raking, and this way you avoid providing what is a perfect site for an echidna nursery.

For nature questions or comments, email Tanya at: t.loos@bigpond.com

Rural Roadsides – ‘Conserving shared treasure’

On 24 July we hosted an evening to kickstart a campaign to both raise awareness of, and re-visualise rural roadsides as a landscape web of indigenous flora and fauna.

Alice Aird introduced the event by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land. Using this as the theme she hopes that by starting a movement we can be better custodians of our rural roadsides, conserving their beauty and biodiversity for future generations. She spoke of work being done by various Landcare groups, the increasing threats to roadsides, and the need for a robust and effective Roadside Management Strategy which balances the priorities of biodiversity protection, road safety, and fire management.

Ideas for follow-up using Landcare and community resources and enthusiasm, include pilot demonstration projects that involve surveying, mapping and weeding; photographic competitions; roadside tours and biodiversity treasure hunts.

The first guest speaker was Michelle Patrick, the Natural Resources Officer at Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Michelle gave a useful and informative presentation called ‘Roadside management in Macedon Ranges’. She defined roads and road reserves, then outlined the difference between rural road reserves and nature strips, road management and responsibilities, native vegetation legislation and local planning policies, the importance of roadsides, and what can and can’t be done on roadsides.

Councils are responsible for major arterial roads within townships, minor roads, unmade road reserves. All road reserves are classified as crown land. VicRoads have responsibility for freeways and other major arterial roads between towns.

Roadsides are important ecologically. They retain native vegetation and allow natural regeneration, reducing fragmentation and improving linkages between larger patches of bushland reserve. They are important as bio-links and wildlife corridors, by adapting to and mitigating climate change i.e. species migration.

Legislation and Local Planning Policies include:

- Planning Scheme – CI 52.17 – Native Vegetation: Permitted clearing of native vegetation: Biodiversity assessment guidelines (Sep 2013).
- Vegetation Protection Overlays – 9 schedules in Macedon Ranges. Two are specific to road reserves for wildlife and habitat corridors.
- *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* and *Federal Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Acts* for rare and threatened species.

Some of Councils strategies, plans, and actions include:

- Weed and Pest Animal Strategy.
- Annual roadside weed program.
- Road Management Plan (*however we note that the draft Roadsides Management plan of 1994 was never progressed and is not covered in the 2009-14 Natural Environment Strategy*).
- Vehicle Hygiene Manual.
- Signs for significant roadside vegetation.

What landholders can do on road reserves:

- Weed management – working with Landcare Groups or in partnership with Council to manage weeds and pest control.
- Firewood collection – local laws permit required. It is important to retain hollow bearing trees and logs as wildlife habitat.
- Grazing and fencing – local laws permit required.
- Tree planting and regeneration – local laws permit required.

What landholders cannot do without contacting Council is:

- Remove native vegetation without a permit.
- Create driveways or access from the road to the property without a permit.
- Fencing.
- Mowing.
- Slashing.

There were plenty of questions such as the meaning of weed signs, and the need for data on kangaroo numbers. It was clear that public information and education is lacking, especially for new residents. For example there are no guidelines available on the MRSC website explaining landowners responsibilities on their nature strips or adjacent roadsides. Michelle did say that the next Shire Gazette would include information on these matters.

The second speaker was Dr Steve Krstic on the Importance of Roadside Conservation in Landscape Conservation Strategy. He said that 'Tragedy of the Commons' was a more apt title – look at his picture of a road through the WA wheat belt. The only native vegetation left is a tiny patch and a narrow roadside strip.



In 1977 the Land Conservation Council identified three sites in the current Shire of Macedon Ranges as being of 'roadside sites of botanical significance' – two because of relict population of sub species of snow gum known as *Eucalyptus pauciflora pauciflora*, associated with other endemic species. The Land Conservation Council recommended conservation of these roadsides as a sample of a total ecosystem, not just one species.

Steve described with photos how in 40 years these sites (one being Mumfords Road) have degraded – shrub layer, wildflowers and grasses gone, and he pulled no punches in quoting apathy and 'the inherent inertia of the government and the public' (Recher 1990) as the responsible causes.

Steve then drew data from his thesis for Master of Natural Resources (UNE) which involved a detailed study of roadsides around the Macedon Ranges-Cobaw Biolink area. It was titled 'The Role of Roadside Vegetation in the maintenance of functional connectivity for forest and woodland birds in the fragmented landscape of the Central Victorian Highlands.'

The photo below shows the Macedon Ranges – Cobaw Ranges Biolink viewed from the Camels Hump. This area does have vegetated patches and roadsides even though only about 15%



vegetation cover remains. This aerial shot illustrates how the vegetation provides 'structural connectivity' for animals and birds. 'Functional connectivity' is a measure of how effectively the animals and birds utilise the linkages, or move through the landscape.

Using maps showing low, medium and high roadside conservation values, transects (study areas of farmland, corridor, forest) and statistical data, Steve's study results showed that endemic Forest and Woodland birds do use the roadsides of the area to and do maintain the functional connectivity of their populations between the Macedon Forest and the Cobaws. If populations are connected, allowing gene flow, they stand a greater chance of survival than small isolated populations. Background landscape, that is open farmland, is too hostile for forest and woodland birds.

If we wish to see large numbers of wild birds of different species and no feral birds then we need:

- Large old trees with large crowns and densely spaced and structurally complex vegetation
- Low numbers of weeds (exotic vegetation) in all layers of vegetation
- Well connected fragments of habitats.

Steve then used Monument Creek Road as a case study of the large amount of work, time and money expended to regenerate, concluding "Yes – you can do it. But be prepared for a long haul, much frustration, a lot of hard work, no thanks – Good luck !!!!"

The audience expressed appreciation for the value of the Steve's scientific evidence in arguing for the importance of roadside conservation. There was discussion on the order of width needed – 30 metres is suggested; extending roadside vegetation by planting inside properties to create a protective buffer for the remnant roadside vegetation, and on the complexity of management issues such as weeds and fire regimes. The use of fire as a management tool for both prevention of destructive bushfires, and for regeneration, of indigenous groundcovers and bulbs for example, was discussed. Native grasses are much less flammable than introduced pasture. Steve pointed out that by the time the fire restrictions come off, it's usually too wet for a slow burn. Prescribed control burns are sometimes too hot and destructive – particularly in the Box Ironbark forests. Michelle said Council has looked into the issues – concluding that fire could be very useful, but not for every situation; many things such as fences and other assets, fire control, and road safety need to be considered.

Helen Scott thanked the speakers, and in doing so invited people to "talk madly" (they did) over supper, comment on the ideas pasted as "thought bubbles" around the room, and look at the photos of some of the beautiful local roadside flora. The last of 50 guests (a full hall) departed at 10.30pm; this and emails requesting follow-up activities since mark a successful event.

Let's see more roadsides worthy of these signs.

Helen and Ian Scott. August 2015.



Book Review

Yes, you can manage your property for fire risk and retain biodiversity

Landscaping for Bushfire: Garden Design and Plant Selection

This is straightforward 64 page CFA publication, with lots of illustrations, that walks you through the principles involved in minimizing fire risk to your home by careful choice and placement of plants and hard surfaces in the 'house zone'.

It contains sections on planning and design, the importance of maintenance and a plant selection key.

It reiterates that there are no 'fireproof' plants and 'extreme weather conditions' are just that.

Understanding fire behaviour and being able to assess the risks around your home – and reduce them – will hopefully also reduce those 'conflicted' or 'confused' feelings. It has for me.

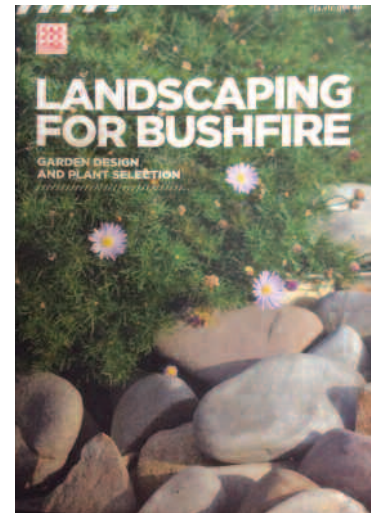
I can have multi-layered vegetation, natural mulch and large woody debris... just not in the house zone.

The shelter belt that has been established around the house will slow wind speed and filter embers and reduce the risk of the house catching fire... but I have removed the lower branches from the She-oaks so a grass fire won't move up into the foliage. Vegetation 'screens' are an important part of mitigating risk. You don't have to live on a dirt pile or in the middle of a vast paddock!

In Autumn 2013 Owen Goodings (CFA – Statewide Team leader Vegetation Management) talked us through this publication as part of a presentation on bushfire mitigation.

It is available on line on www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare > prepare your property > House & garden

Did you miss the presentation in April 2013 – would you like us to repeat it before the coming Summer? Let me know: penroberts@bigpond.com



Well we have done it again and completed our AGM responsibilities in less than 7 minutes. Unfortunately we had to finalise proceedings without a President or Secretary stepping forward to take up these essential roles.

Penny Roberts has just completed her second term of three years and needs a break, so we hope to find a replacement soon. Anyone looking for a short term challenge is welcome to apply!

Doug Dalglish and Jim Sansom are returning to join the Roberts, Nick Massie, Helen Scott, Karl Kny, Luke Spielvogel and Howard Stirling on the committee. Fran Spain has stepped down after a long stint– thank you Fran for your big contribution over the years.

We were very privileged to have Dr Gerry Gill enchant us with a series of stories, poems and recollections about the coming of Europeans to Central Victoria in the period 1835 to 1852 and their initiation of major, ongoing environmental changes and their cataclysmic impact on the aboriginal population and. All his stories revolved around an old, but well preserved surveyors' map of Central Victoria supported by many drawings of life and landscapes from that time.

The 60 members and visitors would all deem themselves lucky to have experienced the evening.

The slide show can be seen on the Newham District Landcare web site, thanks to Helen Scott.

A field trip around the Newham District and Hanging Rock, led by Gerry, will be planned for some time in the next year.

Is it possible to have biodiversity and to manage for fire risk?

Most definitely YES.

This is what Newham Landcare members Ian and Helen Scott and Penny Roberts learnt from Connecting Country's 'Living with Fire and Wildlife' workshop on a 110 acre bush block in Box Ironbark country near Yandoit on Sunday 2 August 2015.

Learning by experience was the order of the day. By taking practical steps to better manage vegetation, minimise fire danger and maximise biodiversity (flora and fauna), we learnt how to interpret landscape on different sites around the property. But first, about 20 participants from various parts of central Victoria introduced ourselves by describing in a word what we felt about fire management on our properties. The most repeated comments were "conflicted", "confused", and "ready to leave".

We then listened to three experts before walking to the three sites which were "in the bush", "bush modified" (regenerating, with fences to exclude pest animals), and the "house zone" with vegetable/flower gardens and hard landscaping.

Owen Goodings (CFA – Statewide Team Leader Vegetation Management) explained the way fire behaves. As he put it, ideas on fire management are "a contested space". His basic point is that fire behaviour changes depending on the arrangement of fuel, the way it is layered – at the surface, close to the surface, elevated/mid story and at the canopy. He explained how fuel differs because of its volatility. In assessing these hazards we learned about important concepts:

- **Zoning:** Three main zones at increasing distance from buildings were described. Within the near zone up to 20 metres from buildings, hard surfaces such as paths predominate, and food may be produced. In the intermediate or "Modified" zone, from twenty to forty metres from a building, vegetation is modified and selected for low volatility and low density. In the furthest "Bush" zone from 40 metres onwards, vegetation is connected for biodiversity. These assessments also depend on slope, and whether the vegetation is grassland, woodland or forest.
- **Vertical connectivity:** If burning vegetation is arranged closely, lower layers will preheat and then ignite upper layers, making the fire more intense.
- **Horizontal connectivity:** A dense tree canopy, or dense surface fuel cover provides continuity of fuel, which will preheat and ignite vegetation downwind more readily than when there are gaps between plants. It was surprising to appreciate that although we were in what looked to us like high-risk vegetation, it was sufficiently sparse and disconnected for risk to be relatively low.
- **Horizontal separation:** Avoid having shrubs near the house, especially tubs near windows. Trees of low volatility e.g. Blackwoods (*Acacia melanoxylon*), can be used as a barrier to wind and thereby moderate fire speed, radiant heat and catch embers.

David Cheal (Fire Ecologist – ex-DEPI and now Federation University) made the point that there is no such thing as a pristine or intact landscape, as it was before human interference. All bushland has changed. Understanding that, we need to arrive at and balance our land management priorities recognising our own values, using evidence and facts rather than opinion. David said we should recognise the up-sides and down-sides, observe, record our actions, rejoice and share in successes and learn from failures. How many of us have lost plants that were not right for our patch, or planted at the wrong time?

There are various lists of native plants called fire-resistant but the CFA does not endorse any as such. Some examples of plants that are not very flammable, often because of high salt or water content,

would include:

- Succulents/Chenopods, Bluebush (*Maireana sp.*) and Saltbush (*Atriplex* and *Rhagodia sp.*), Pomaderris, some Acacias, Eremophilas, Myoporum, Brachychitons (Kurrajong/Bottletree).

Flammable plants are those with bark that is papery/ribbon/loose fibrous, or volatile/aromatic oils such as:

- Family *Myrtaceae* (some Eucalypts, Melaleuca, Callistemon), *Rutaceae* (*Boronia*, *Philotheca*), Mint bushes (*Prostanthera*), some *Cassinias*, and exotic grasses/weeds.

Julie Whitfield (Field Ecologist, ex-DEPI and now Amaryllis Environmental) described the alarming level of species decline going on all around us; endangered species are at a crisis point. She explained how the creatures we are aware of represent a small percentage of species that are present, particularly the invertebrates. She described the way that several species are entirely dependent on just one other species for their survival. This interconnectedness means that whilst we acknowledge the decline of one species, we fail to read the effects on other co-dependent ones.

Morning tea and lunch helped us not to freeze. After lunch we broke up into groups and chose locations N, S, E and W of the house to test our new knowledge in identifying risk, fuel levels and arrangement, biodiversity values, actions we would take or avoid, in managing the zones. The experts assisted in these deliberations, and each group shared its findings.

We left with session notes and handouts and useful follow-up web-based resources, feeling much better informed about land management practices that will minimise fire danger and maximise biodiversity on our properties.

Connecting Country (Mount Alexander Region) Inc is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that aims to increase, enhance and restore biodiversity across the Mount Alexander Shire and its surrounds in central Victoria. It has a great website <http://connectingcountry.org.au/> with events, workshops, photos, resources and much more – you can join for free or sign for an e-newsletter. Resources from this workshop will be listed.

There is more summarising the day, with photos and links to resources, at <http://connectingcountry.org.au/education-resources/education-program/2-august-2015-living-with-fire-and-wildlife/>

Helen and Ian Scott. August 2015.



Workshop participants

Ecology for Australia – one blog at a time –

Ian Lunt's Ecological Research Site

Thanks to Karl Kny for alerting me to this site at <http://ianluntecology.com/>

Dr Ian Lunt is an Associate Professor in Vegetation Ecology at Charles Sturt University who says

“The purpose behind my blogs is to increase ecological literacy in our communities. I create short stories to link great work by enthusiastic and dedicated researchers – especially young, early career researchers – with enthusiastic, inquiring and dedicated readers.”

One of my favourite posts from his site is:

Forgotten woodlands, future landscapes, 13/10/2013

<http://ianluntecology.com/2013/10/13/forgotten-woodlands-future-landscapes/>

Two hundred years ago the woodlands of she oak and honeysuckle, lightwood and cherry clothed the flat plains and the rolling hills across many parts of south-east Australia. Today we call these trees Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*), Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*), Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*) or Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*), and Wild Cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*). They were particularly common on basalt soils, and on granite hills – Melbourne up through central Victoria, and supported masses of birdlife. Not any more.

This post alerted me to become more interested in *Banksia marginata*, especially upon hearing that 12 years ago, members of the Baynton Sidonia Landcare group became worried about the fact that they knew of just two places in the district that *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia) trees grew and that in one of these places, some trees had been vandalized. At a recent Connecting Country Landcare Forum (19 June 2014) Clare Claydon of the Baynton Sidonia Landcare group gave a talk called ‘Saving the Silver Banksias of Baynton Sidonia’.



*The last of the Mt Alexander Honeysuckles (*Banksia marginata*). Photo. by Gerry Gill*

Clare told the story about how they “discovered” six more sites where Banksias grow in the district, how they have raised and distributed several thousand seedlings using seeds from all these sites and how Baynton Banksias are now growing across an area from Sutton Grange in the west to Pipers Creek in the east, thus saving local Banksia genetics from extinction.



Banksia marginata have grown well at our place on the north slope of Mt Macedon – sourced in 2007 as tubestock from Granite Ridge Indigenous Plants, then near Cobaw.

It is a variable species both in habit and habitat. Shrub or tree from 2 – 12m high.

Leaves to 8cm long, 1.5cm wide, lower surface white, margins with or without teeth

Flowers mainly February – July. You can find more plant lists and descriptions at NDLG website under Links.

A few more of Ian Lunt’s posts on the same site are:

Can livestock grazing benefit biodiversity? 21/11/2012

A recent Victorian study found that grazing by stock and kangaroos promoted the diversity of native plants in fertile, well-watered sites, but reduced diversity in dry, unproductive areas.

Fire and rain: what makes a woodland? 1/10/2011

Ecologists wrestle with the question, “to what extent do disturbances such as burning and grazing control vegetation patterns, compared with abiotic factors such as climate and soils?”

To improve ecological literacy, I must seduce your friends 27/04/2014

Social media can take ecology and conservation to the world. But endless messages on Twitter and Facebook make it hard to *leave* social media platforms and *read* shared materials. We all share links without reading them. Sharing without reading may boost empathy among the converted, but it can’t raise ecological literacy. Blog stories have to be captivating, memorable, fun, motivating, accidentally educational and – most of all – short.

A great GPS for your mobile phone 15/6/2014

Free, simple to use app for Android phones and iPhones called Avenza PDF Maps. Instructions in blog.

Shaping Stories to Save the World 17/7/2015

His opening talk on video at the ‘Biodiversity Across The Borders’ conference in June 2015, hosted by Federation University in Ballarat. Called ‘Shaping Stories to Save the World’ suggested ways to make our messages more engaging.

You can view several posts gathered under a topic, for example Fire, Grassland, Nature photography, Regeneration, and many more. Sign up to receive emails when a new story is posted.

For more blogs on ecology and natural history in Australia, you can follow the **Best Australian Ecology Blogs** on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/Best.Ecology.Blogs>

Helen Scott. August 2105.



A journey with Landcare

Our journey with N&DLG intensified with a headlong rush in 2010, only weeks after we purchased our 140 acre property in Cobaw. It was evident we needed to re-vegetate the land as it had been cleared and grazed over many years, leaving only small pockets of remnant bush. The property was a perfect candidate for the bio-link between Mt Macedon and the Cobaw Ranges that Newham Landcare was helping to establish and promote.

With this in mind, we enlisted Penny Roberts to help us understand the characteristics and biodiversity of the three EVCs (Scoria Cone Woodland, Grassy Forest and Valley Grassy Forest) that existed within our proposed planting area. Along the way we became familiar with the flora treasures, some quite hidden; numerous stands of kangaroo and wallaby grass, stretches of native wild-flowers, the buffer zones of the Hennebergs and Whitebridge roadsides laden with significant vegetation, and delicate shrubs such as the Honeyopts.

In consultation with Penny, who was the driving force behind the PPWCMA Community Grant application, we made a plan to plant 2000 natives local to our area. After a flurry of mud-maps and plant selection lists, we marked off a 10ha section on our north boundary for regeneration and a 2km corridor, varying between 20–70 metres wide, along the eastern boundary for re-vegetation. Fencing, weed-control and spot spraying began in earnest.

In 2011, we trialled a planting session with Hilary, Penny and members of our family at the bottom of the property, alongside the seasonal creek near Whitebridge Rd (*pic. above*). It was to be the first in four successive Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grant plantings in this area. After a back-breaking morning, only 95 plants were in the ground as the drought hardened earth, barely softened by the recent rains, defeated the auger. Even so, after painstakingly slow growth over the next four years, the result today is a rewarding sight (see photos). The plants are flourishing with



most of the guards removed, and they are well on their way to combating the erosion of the creek bed.

Planting continued, this time for the PPWCMA grant, on Mother's Day 2011. Over 30 Landcare members were involved that day, and the following day, to get 2000 plants in the ground. The site was large, but successive waves of arrivals managed to cover all of it with an ocean of green guards. Our thanks go to; Fran, Nick and Sue Massie, Ian, Mel, Mal,

Meg and Oliver, Doug, Frith, Andy, Jessie, Tessa and Tom, Keith, Chris, Vanessa and Alex, Jo, Elijah and Arabella, Penny and Hilary, Wanda and Paul and John, who quietly appeared, worked for a few hours and then disappeared. Some stayed for the feast in our shed. When we think back on that weekend we still marvel at, and appreciate, the time and help that so many people offered us.



For the past four years, we have returned to the site on Mother's Day with our family to inspect plants, remove or repair guards and weed – *a much better gift than chocolates or flowers!*



Progress has been varied, but the successes far outweigh the failures. Tree Violets, from seeds harvested from the neighbour's fence-line, have flourished in the last two years. Unfortunately, the Cassinias did not survive the annual frosts and floods of our particular site, but the robust Snowgums and the regal Blackwoods have been our champions. After a slow start, many of the trees are now reaching our heads. Near the creek we have had a flush of growth this year, bringing with it the disarming scent of the Sweet Bursarias, the gorgeous flower display of the Hakeas, the generous fall and spread of the Sedges, Lomandras and Poas, and the green and copper fullness of the River Tea-Trees.

Since 2011 we have planted many more natives on different parts of our property. This Autumn, with the help of Axel, our French wwoofer, we planted another 2400 grant plants, bringing our total to just over 9500. Over the years we have planted various ways, with more or less preparation. We have discovered that with less attention at the start, growth is slower, but the end result is much the same as the times we planted with prior mowing/grazing and spot spraying. It seems the plants don't need us much, but we surely need them.

Since 2011 we have planted many more natives on different parts of our property. This Autumn, with the help of Axel, our French wwoofer, we planted another 2400 grant plants, bringing our total to just over 9500. Over the years we have planted various ways, with more or less preparation. We have discovered that with less attention at the start, growth is slower, but the end result is much the same as the times we planted with prior mowing/grazing and spot spraying. It seems the plants don't need us much, but we surely need them.



A rare find at Newham – sub-alpine landscape species

Over 10,000 years ago, during the last glacial maxima, the landscape around Newham was sub-alpine and remnant flora reflecting this history can still be found.

In Spring 2014 NDLG commissioned Karl Just to undertake two flora surveys, along sections of three Chain Rd at Newham, to document the botanical values in the hope that formal knowledge of the conservation values present would result in their protection by MRSC.

The surveys did indeed confirm the conservation value of these roadsides... now all we need is a MRSC Roadside Management Plan and the will to implement it!

'The study area supports high quality examples of lowlands plains vegetation communities that have been heavily cleared across the region. Remnants as diverse and intact as the Three Chain Roadsides are becoming increasingly uncommon and require ongoing maintenance and protection.'

A range of significant plant species were recorded – these included one species listed as endangered at the Federal and Victorian level and one species listed as rare in Victoria. In addition, six species found are considered to be uncommon or depleted in the region.

But the REALLY exciting find was a specimen of Alpine Shaggy-pea (*Podolobium alpestre*).

*'This represents one of only two natural populations of this species outside its stronghold in the montane to sub-alpine areas of eastern Victoria (the other is NW of Beaufort). This is a remnant of the previous sub-alpine landscape that characterised the area during the last glacial maxima over 10,000 years ago – as are the populations of Lowland Snowgums present (*Eucalyptus pauciflora* subsp. *pauciflora*).'*

