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WINTER 2023

*Newham & District
Landcare Group*



Working towards a
healthier environment

PO Box 856, WOODEND 3442

REWILDING
WETLAND RESTORATION
LANGETHY CREEK
THE TRIANGLE
WILDLIFE
RAIN

NDLG ACTIVITIES

By Penny Roberts

On 21 August we held our Annual General Meeting, well attended by members to meet and greet, to accept the usual reports and elect a new committee – listed below, and to hear guest speaker Mark Bachmann talk about wetland restoration projects. The usual splendid supper followed.

We encourage any members to nominate for Committee or assist with projects to ensure N&DLG's important work continues. There were no nominations for President or Vice-President and the committee will rotate the chair for meetings until someone steps up!

This issue has articles by members on new projects - the Triangle renovation at the corner of Anderson and Boundary roads and Langethy Creek; reports on a Biolinks Alliance rewilding seminar, Bachmann talk, Brigitte on fauna scats, and rainfall. Do keep the articles coming and suggest new ones.

Penny distributed a wide range of species for Autumn and Winter planting in May to those who ordered. **Tubestock for Spring 2023** will be available in the first week of October, comprising leftovers from Autumn, late species from Western Plains Flora and late bloomers from our local TreeProject growers. Email notice will be given in late September of what is available – not the full range but there will be canopy trees, understorey trees, shrub and ground layer species. 50c per tube to financial members (\$1.70 to not-paid-up members)

What are your 2024 planting plans?

Do you want subsidised indigenous native tubestock for Autumn 2024? If you are able to think that far ahead and know what you want, please email your list to secretaryndlg@gmail.com. Please help us plan our orders from WPF and TreeProject.

The committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month (Feb-Dec) between 7.30-9pm at the Newham Hall. All members are welcome to attend to be become more involved or raise specific matters. Please advise a committee member if you wish to attend. Meeting start and finish on time... and we enjoy them!



Coming events

Notifications will be sent out.

Keep an eye on the website Events page.

Committee:

Treasurer: Howard Stirling,
howardjanine01@gmail.com, 0432 809 314

Minutes Secretary: Kathy Mexted
10pilots@gmail.com, 0403 927 940

Ordinary members:

Penny Roberts (new members + general enquiries)
penroberts@bigpond.com, 0418 396 837

Paul Carter (Platypus + Koala project)
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Karl Kny karl@kolora.com, 0409 543 061

Helen Scott (website + newsletter)
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Jane Trikojus (Wesley Park + Jim Road)
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Other Contacts

Roadside Management Group (the Weedies)
Sue Massie 5427 0065

Anderson Road Triangle – Karen Hunt

Spray trailer + cameras - Howard Stirling 0432 809 314

Website <https://newhamlandcare.info> Keep checking for events, and updates under What's New.

REWILDING CENTRAL VICTORIA

An Expert Panel Event

By Annabel Sides

I have been using the term rewilding for a long time and to me it has meant to try to bring back to the landscape that once was.

This expert panel event in Kyneton last May gave new insights to the term rewilding, to wilderness and to caring for country. I feel fortunate that this type of event is available in regional Victoria and that I can share information about it via a connected community group like Newham Landcare.

The panel:

- Chris Hartnett: Threatened Species Program Coordinator, Zoos Victoria
- Darren Grover: Head of Healthy Land and Seascapes, WWF Australia
- Paul Foreman: Conservation Strategist and Ecologist, Biolinks Alliance
- Amos Atkinson: Cultural Fire Practitioner
- Dr Tristan Derham: Research Associate, University of Tasmania (UTAS)
- Moderator: Dr Sophie Bickford, Biolinks Alliance Executive Director

The questions posed to the panel included everyone's point of view of the term rewilded and the language we should use as a 'hook' to bring more people into the conversation about ecological restoration, as well as more people to take action to restore landscapes and their ecologies.

All panellists suggested that rewilding, ecosystem restoration, regeneration and a multitude of other terms were not meeting the need to 'catch' more hearts and minds (and more funding) to restore landscapes at the speed and scale required. Also, because of the diverse ecosystems and challenges to them around the globe, there is tension between using some definitions, debate over the definition of some terms, and what is suggested will be achieved via their application in varying landscapes around the world.

Dr Tristan Derham noted that rewilding is a term that may be attractive, however it may not be the right term from a research point of view to suit Australian

landscapes. Rather, it is a focus on ecosystem processes and function. One aspect of rewilding is reintroduction or apex predators - like the well-known story of the re-introduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park, or encouraging dingoes back on riparian areas and stations in Australia), but is only one aspect of rewilding. The complexities of Australia's landscape and species distribution meant that anything that increases ecological function can be considered rewilding. Helping restore ecosystems with ecosystem engineers or keystone species like our small digging mammals (bettongs, pottaroos, bandicoots...) is a good example. Much of our landscape is held privately which is a barrier to restoration work.



Releasing a Bettong



Eastern Barred Bandicoot

You can find some definitions of rewilding via the links below:

European Context : <https://rewildingeurope.com/what-is-rewilding/>

North American Context: <https://www.mossy.earth/rewilding-knowledge/rewilding-in-north-america>

Australian Context: <https://www.aussieark.org.au/about-rewilding/>

All panellists were in agreement that language and 'hook' were a challenge to accelerating action, as was funding. The amount of funding available for managing threatened species of plants and animals and restoring biodiversity and habitat is far below what is required.

There was discussion on how it is easier to mobilise action to low effort activations such as in like urban and regional communities planting shelter belts, pollinator plants or nature strip gardening and roadside conservation. However creating large scale landscapes and infrastructure that allows for our species to access 'tree to tree' movement and access place to place food sources is a much larger challenge.

Examples of barriers to landscape restoration for species include roads, private holdings and urbanised segmentation of land and populations for breeding, feeding, seed dispersal and escaping climate change hazards like extreme heat, flooding and bushfire.

Another term discussed was **wilderness**. It was noted that Australia has not been a wilderness for many, many thousands of years. Wilderness refers to land without human habitation.

In Australia the landscape has been managed by First Nations people for many thousands of years, so supporting First Nations people to care for country in the ways that they aspire to, providing spaces to care for country on country, and for elders to share and keep knowledge of how to care for country alive is essential.

Re-introducing cultural practices, like fire management, learning from traditional owners and having first nations-led restoration was acknowledged by all panellists as a key strategy.

It was noted that the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is a terminology and program that seeks to guide restoration across all ecosystems, and all parts of the globe, but that it 'misses' the mark in being a term that inspires people to act for nature.



Restoring Mallee bushland



Restoring Wilderness

The hashtag #generationrestoration is better than the Decade name. Everyone agreed that finding a term in Australia that is sexy enough to move the masses to protect nature and strong enough to use in advocacy at a political level to garner policy, legislative and funding support is required. They are open to suggestions!!

The difference between the approach of restoration organisations was highlighted. Focusing on iconic and 'cuddly fluffy' species gets a lot more traction for funding and public support than a space like a grassland. Chris and Darren both agreeing that a pygmy possum and a koala are better marketing material than a moth or a manna gum so promotion of the cute and cuddly or the weird and wonderful can inspire and mobilise the public to:

- join lobbying of government to invest in saving species habitat (for example saving or restoring koala habitat); or
- to inspire and mobilise behaviour change that saves a species (for example switching off lights so the

bogong moths reach the pygmy possums in the high country in time to stop them from starving).



Mountain Pygmy Possum

favourite quotes from the day

We need collaboration from all walks of life, all people, all institutes and governments ...we need to think bigger, bolder, stronger

If we don't work together now, we are losing the game, losing the race.

*Amos Atkinson
Cultural Fire Practitioner,
in reference to what we need to do to
accelerate at speed and scale.*

Never Underestimate the power of a vision

*Darren Grover
Head of Healthy Land and Seascapes
WWF*

My biggest takeaway

Time is ticking to save our biodiversity – yet there is hope. This lies in as many of us doing as much as we can in our sphere of influence so that we have more people, more often and in more places acting for nature. This could be at a political, large scale, local or backyard level.

Therefore, we should all give ourselves a Hi-5 because we are all part of that everyday action. So, keep planting, keep writing letters, signing petitions and meeting people where they are at to tell your story of contributing to saving nature, it might just inspire them to do the same.

With that sentiment in mind I am sharing two organisations that are working to save our **snow gums**. I thought this may be of interest as it connects to the work many of you have already been doing as part of the MRSC Citizen Science project to locate individual snow gums and stands locally.

Information is at <https://newhamlandcare.info/projects/>

Editor (HS) note: this project found that the lowland sub-species - Eucalyptus pauciflora pauciflora in the Macedon Ranges is in fact in robust health, in contrast to the dieback occurring in the alpine species of the following two sites).

Friends of the earth: http://www.melbournefoe.org.au/snow_gums_and_citizen_science

This links to a petition to the State government you can sign. Save Our Snow Gums, ANU: www.saveoursnowgum.org/

And because it's winter, a petition that you can sign to call for Snowy Hydro to continue monitoring snow depths has been created by Protect Our Winters.

Protect Our Winters AUS is the local chapter of an international advocacy agency that was founded by and for those who love the alps, the high country, the snow and winter, be they a local or an international snow sports athlete: <https://protectourwinters.org.au/petitions/snowy-hydro/>

And lastly on the topic of rewilding and it being an international term, the FIFA Women's World Cup Football Rewilded: Playing on Natures Team project is underway. www.fifa.com/fifaplus/en/tournaments/womens/womensworldcup/australia-new-zealand2023/information/sustainability-football-rewilded.

Perhaps the term, as outlined by the Rewilding Central Victoria Panel, is a little off the mark, but when it is being adopted by the biggest sporting organisation outside of the International Olympic Committee, it is seen as having global leverage.

The FIFAWWC is being held across two nations

(AUS and Aotearoa-New Zealand). The event is being held in 10 different stadia, all of which were Green Building Certified for the event. Football Rewilded is an installation on display at all stadia – this is a first for FIFA or any other major event.

The project is expected to have a large reach

With an estimated viewership of 2 billion and an expected attendance of 1.5 million, FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 is a significant international event with a diverse, wide-reaching audience. On this world's stage, we have an opportunity to address issues that impact us all, and to demonstrate how sports can actively contribute to the preservation of our global biodiversity.

It gives ideas for every day actions including getting in touch with your local Landcare group.

You can find out more about Rewilding Central Victoria, An Expert Panel, Biolinks Alliance, May 2023 event and listen to the podcast here: <https://biolinksalliance.org.au/rewildingpanevent>



Editor's note: Annabel is a founder of Green Planet Sport: A World of Sport for a World of Change <https://www.greenplanetsport.com.au/> and luckily for us a member of Newham & District Landcare Group. As a self-confessed nerd I can't resist adding some informative links to Annabel's great article.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/oct/14/re-wild-to-mitigate-the-climate-crisis-urge-leading-scientists>

Scientists urge rewilding to mitigate the climate crisis; it has some spectacular information about how restoring degraded natural lands is highly effective for carbon storage and avoiding species extinctions.

<https://theconversation.com/we-can-rewild-swathes-of-australia-by-focusing-on-what-makes-it-unique-111749>

stresses why Australia is unique

<https://npansw.org.au/campaigns-2/statewide-campaigns/rewilding/>

some useful rewilding FAQs

www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jun/24/beyond-the-fence-what-does-it-mean-to-rewild-the-australian-desert

Because I am passionate about deserts, and this article talks about the fencing dilemma of 'islands' and Indigenous ranger management



WETLAND RESTORATION 101

Guest speaker Mark Bachmann rose to his subject matter at our AGM in July, on his third and much heralded visit to Newham. He reintroduced Nature Glenelg Trust (NGT), the successful not-for-profit charity he leads, which works across South-Eastern Australia to fill gaps in biodiversity and environment. He discussed examples of ecological processes or drivers and the importance of prevention versus bandaaid cures – think of kangaroos now being over-abundant due to land clearing and farmland (perfect grazing for them) and the lack of an apex predator such as a dingo. There are clever processes like reintroducing predators, and the small digging marsupials to renovate soils (the echidna is the only common one remaining), and on better fire management with cultural burning. “There is no such thing as pristine bushland” because such processes are now missing. Emotion tends to overrule science when trying to solve issues like culling and feral pest removal. Mark is passionate about his topic, and providing plenty of examples, with diagrams and photos, he gave us the background and updated research on large scale self-sustaining recovery of wetlands, with water as the driver. He laid much stress on the importance of properly understanding how wetland has been altered from its “original” pre-invasion form, generally by drainage, before reaching conclusions about how best

it can be restored, and the return of native plants and animals can be anticipated. That understanding comes from a grasp of how the older plants in a landscape tell of its past – where the water used to lie, and how much water there was. He explained how short-lived species of plants may be present or absent and therefore of little value in this sort of assessment, determined as they are by recent changes in rainfall. Whereas long term ground water fluctuation or stability will influence those old Red Gums for example, in the long term.

“Restoration is a long game” (as NDLG knows from our Cobaw Biolink project).

Water is an ecological driver – it triggers self-sustaining recovery by harnessing the eco-hydrology of wetlands.

NGT’s approach to eco-hydrological investigations is:

1. Get to know a site – via sources of its old and modern history, and by modern technical tools such as imagery, data layers, GIS, aerial photography, and particularly useful – LiDAR, which shows relative soil depths in 3D. Hutt Bay wetland in South Australia is an example – see <https://natureglenelg.org.au/uncovering-the-hidden-history-of-the-hutt-bay-wetlands-prior-to-the-first-aerial-photography-in-1945/>



View over the 3 main drains backfilled in May 2022 on Glenshera saturated peat slope

2. Get to know the people involved in the area, share the lessons, take them along on the journey. The peatlands of Glenshera Swamp in SA is an example. (pic & caption View over the 3 main drains backfilled in May 2022 on Glenshera saturated peat slope

3. Read and interpret the landscape – eg interpreting flood response of long-lived River Red Gums – see <https://natureglenelg.org.au/its-a-sign-interpreting-the-flood-response-of-river-red-gums/>

4. Articulate and implement a restoration plan – trials are valuable, for example installing geofabric or sand bag banks to block drains leading to permanent works such as dune restoration at Long Swamp in Victoria. (Pic with caption NGT wetland restoration trials)

5. Monitor the eco-hydrological response, for example by aerial and satellite imagery.

6. Share communication at every step of the process, not just at the end – by email newsletters, project updates etc – the NGT website at <https://natureglenelg.org.au/> exemplifies this. There are articles on all the projects here.

Mark spent most of his talk on current restoration efforts, at the expense of peat lands – a topic maybe best now covered in a fourth visit sometime.

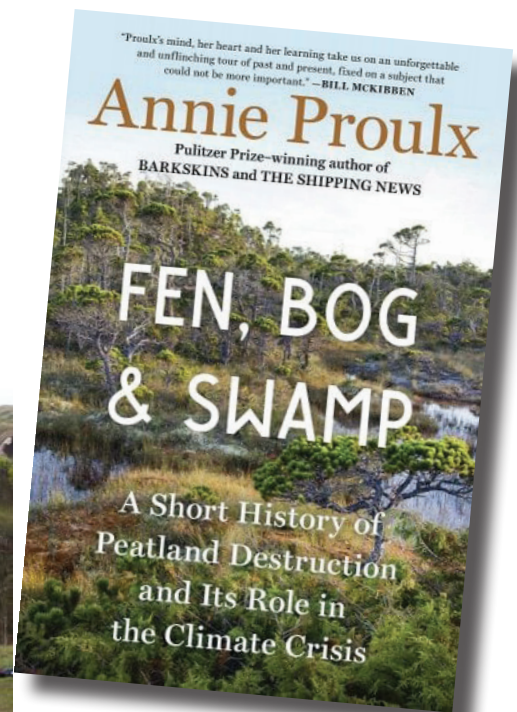
Briefly, across the world, peatlands (including the sphagnum bogs of our alpine and sub-alpine regions) cover just 3% of the land's surface, but store 42% of the Earth's soil carbon, and peat degradation as a result of artificial drainage is estimated to be responsible for

6% of global carbon emissions. Wetland hydrological restoration is the key tool to lock that carbon back up by re-inundating peatlands. They are nature's secret weapon when it comes to tackling climate change.

Too late for the newsletter, Mark has kindly shared all his slides illustrating his talk, including peatland information. There are many wonderful photos of remedial works and results. You can see them on our website - well worth a follow-up look: <https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Nature-Glenelg-Trust-wetlands-update-and-peatlands-talk-to-NDLG-21st-July-2023.pdf>

Mark donated a new book for our library by Annie Proulx called *Fen, Bog and Swamp: a short history of peatland destruction and its role in the climate crisis*. (cover photo)

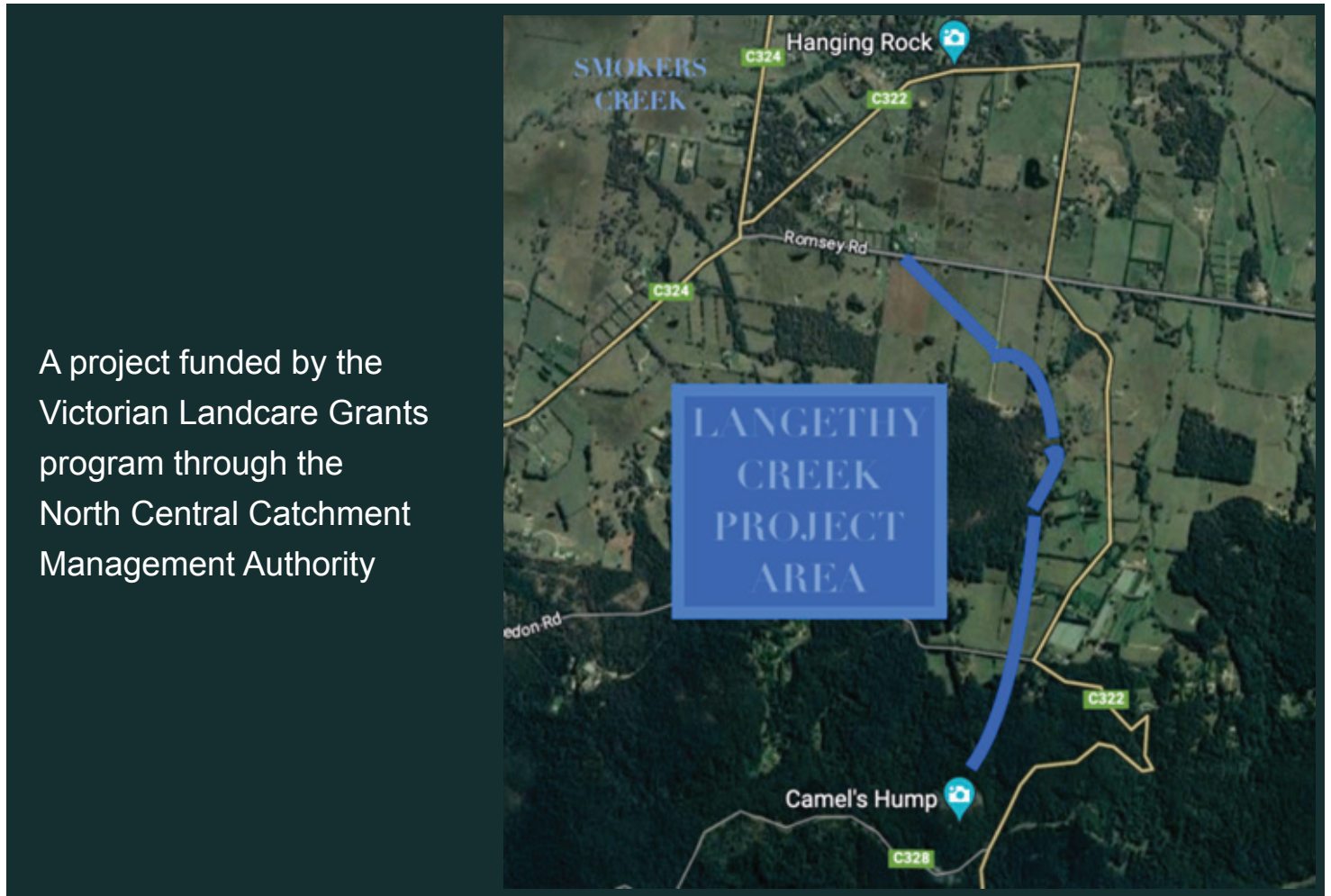
He also issued an invitation to anyone from NDLG to their Spring event at Walker Swamp Reserve in the Grampians in October – stay tuned. Great news is that the fundraising target of \$500,000 was reached by 30 June, to enable completion of land purchase to expand the Reserve.



NGT wetland restoration trials

LANGETHY CREEK PROJECT

Enhancing the Cobaw Biolink : Langethy Creek rehabilitation project.



A project funded by the Victorian Landcare Grants program through the North Central Catchment Management Authority

The Langethy Creek is a little mountain stream that runs north off Camels Hump on Mt Macedon before it joins Smokers Creek southwest of Hanging Rock. Smokers Creek forms part of the Upper Campaspe river system which is managed by the North Central Catchment Management Authority.

This project explored the many strands of land management and biodiversity enhancement practices that we should consider in order to protect biodiversity across grazing farmland, through bushfire events and by engaging children in creative exploration of their relationship with the natural world.

This project protected and rehabilitated 1.35 km along

Langethy Creek, which provides a vegetation link between the 2427 hectare Mount Macedon Regional Park and significant remnant vegetation in and around Hanging Rock Reserve. It addressed historical land clearing, waterway degradation caused by stock, and loss of biodiversity in the area. These on-ground works have added value to the development of a functional connection between the Cobaw State Forest and Macedon Regional Park - known as the Cobaw Biolink.

The Langethy Creek project was conducted over three properties from 2022 to 2023 and consisted of on-ground works and a series of 6 Community Engagement Events (field days, talks and workshops).

On-Ground Works

Weed control, revegetation and fencing to exclude stock along Langethy Creek were conducted on three properties, all very different in elevation, slope, aspect, vegetation type and weed profile.

Eleven hectares of remnant native vegetation over two properties were enhanced through treatment of woody weeds (broom, blackberry and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and selective revegetation. On the highest elevation property, we focused our efforts on a sheltered fern gully with a small number of remnant overstorey species which were overwhelmed by an extensive infestation of mature holly “trees”. We strategically removed only some of the overstorey hollies to allow light in so that the blackwoods, manna gums and messmates we planted can in time grow tall enough to protect the shady gully microclimate. Partially removing the holly overstorey also allowed light to reach the ground for the understorey ferns and shrubs we planted to thrive. The owners are committed to progressively removing the hollies and planting with indigenous species over time.

1.37 hectares of highly modified cleared flat land on the third property had broom and gorse weed control works done followed by revegetation along Langethy Creek.

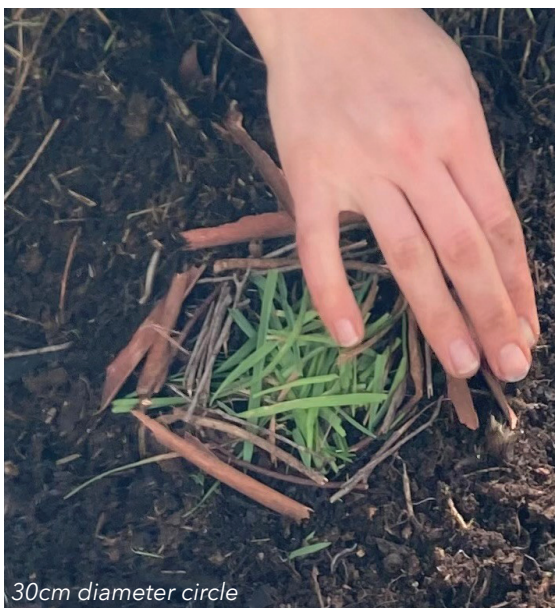
Planting days at the participating properties were great fun, working alongside new people as well as known locals, exploring new country and getting our hands in the dirt. And a well-earned shared lunch and conversation at the end of a few hours’ planting is always a great reward.

Community Engagement Events

Events 1,2 & 3 were talks by Geoff Williams from the Platypus Nature Conservancy. The Langethy Creek project was launched with the Platypus as our aspirational project icon at a community event at the Newham Hall in May 2022. Geoff conducted a further two talks with students from Braemar College campus (on Smokers Creek) and at Newham Primary School accompanied by his trusty taxidermy platypus Patrick that all could touch and marvel at. He is an engaging speaker who tickled our curiosity about platypuses (not platypi!) and infected all with his enthusiasm about how we can revegetate and simply modify our rivers to make them more suitable for platypuses as well as native water rats (Rakali) to re-inhabit. (See article in Newham Landcare newsletter https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NDLG_66-Autumn-2022.pdf pp. 3-5).

Event 4 was a children’s arts and nature workshop called Nature’s Playmates

Facilitated by Charlotte Roberts and Jess, primary aged kids gathered in the forest to do a 5-senses walk (exploring sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste) followed by the creation of a 30cm diameter circular design on the grounds using insitu bush materials and their own innate creativity. It was lovely to see the kids scurrying around totally engrossed in this process. Each child then gathered the others around their design and did sound and rhythm interpretation of what the design meant to them and orchestrated the other children to accompany them. This was



30cm diameter circle



Children's art and nature workshop

then shared with their parents and quite a few parents said they would like to do this themselves! Another newsletter article with photos and comments is at https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NDLG_66-Autumn-2022.pdf p.10)



Talks by Geoff Williams of the Platypus Nature Conservancy

Event 5 was a field day run by David Cheal, ecologist, and associate adjunct professor at Federation University, Ballarat. David's expertise is in fire ecology, bushfire behaviour and how to reduce bushfire impacts in forest and agricultural landscapes. He suggested low flammability native species and planting configurations for stock shelter that will also reduce wind speed and bushfire impacts. An article was written about this field day in Newham Landcare's Winter 2022 Newsletter (https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NDLG_67-Winter-2022.pdf pp.4-5)

Event 6 was a field day run by Jason McAinch, the Private Land Conservation Officer with Macedon Ranges Shire Council. Jason is responsible for providing advice to land managers about regenerative grazing and related biodiversity management practices. Key information was 1) pulse grazing followed by a suitable non-grazing interval enables grasses to recover and productivity to increase, and 2) increasing native vegetation biodiversity plantings can increase farm output if designed properly. An article was written about this field day in Landcare's Spring 2022 Newsletter. (https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NDLG_68-Spring-2022.pdf pp.11-14)

As one of the property owners, it was a delight to be involved in crafting and implementing this project which links personal and small-scale property concerns with a greater landscape awareness. It enabled me and others to work physically and envision how "little old" Langethy Creek feeds into bigger Upper Campaspe River systems that one day could support Platypus populations again. We explored how grazing properties can be managed regeneratively to increase both native biodiversity connections and farm outputs with plantings that reduce the impacts of future bushfires. Finally, the Nature's Design workshop was a potent taste of what is possible not just for our children but ourselves. It tapped into the playful child within us all which is a source of renewal and conversation with this place that we look after for future generations of all life-forms.

Many thanks to Penny Roberts who is responsible for the grant application and recording, and to the volunteers who helped on the field days.



Plantings at The Triangle

THE TRIANGLE

Stage One is Complete

By Karen Hunt

A neglected, forgotten piece of Council Land situated on the corner of Anderson & Boundary Roads, is now looking loved and cared for thanks to members of NDLG and interested neighbours!

The first stage has been completed where about 400 plantings have gone in around the dam to create a woodland environment. Thanks to a grant from Earthwatch, the Newham Primary School students were also involved in the first planting under the project banner of KTK DAL (Kids Teaching Kids Distinct Area Landscape). This aims to give students a voice on environmental issues and thus educate the community on the importance of looking after our environment and biodiversity.

I have been adding more plants up until recently when it has become too wet to do much more. The success rate so far is excellent so the Spring will hopefully see quite a few plants jumping out of their bags!

Special thanks go out to Michael O'Connor who did the initial slashing and clearing of Gorse and weeds, and my neighbour Chris Barker who has followed up with ongoing cutting and mulching. Both have offered to continue on with this which is just fantastic. Hopefully this will assist in combating the infestation of so many weeds. Weed demolition enabled the group to access and assess planting areas and many spent Tuesday afternoons In April and May continuing weed control and burning of debris.



The young workers



Weed Clearing

The next stage will be to clear the fence line on the Northern Boundary and prepare for more plantings. We have put in for a grant to assist us with spraying and clearing of the Gorse and Hawthorn (thanks to Penny). This will be a Spring project when access is more favourable.

While working around the dam, I have been accompanied by an elegant Ibis, a Duck family, many Wrens and a couple of nosy Plovers (Masked Lapwing) checking the scene out! It would seem that 'Bird's The Word' and news is spreading fast amongst our feathered friends on the future of their new abode.

When you're driving by, take a peek at how different the site already looks! In time it will become a botanical haven filled with bird song, and boasting a lovely view of Hanging Rock, a place to sit and relax.

If you would like to be involved please contact Karen Hunt at karenhunt405@gmail.com or Penny Roberts at penroberts@bigpond.com

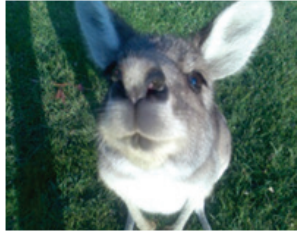


Then : Before



Now : July

Brigitte's Wildlife Blog



Three or so weeks ago a distant cousin visited us here at our place. And of course, like every German person who comes to Australia – she expected to see kangaroos at McDonalds, koalas in the carport or wombats grazing peacefully in the backyard plus venomous spiders and deadly snakes everywhere. While those things are happening occasionally – they are not quite the norm.

We have an amazing variety of wildlife here in the Shire. And yes – I totally agree with our distant German cousin that it is a pity that we don't see our native animals regularly during daylight hours and that often.



Ok - maybe if you stay at our place you might see more wombats than what's normal in Newham. This is Baxter - he had a few difficulties accepting that he was 'released' and liked to hang around his human parents.

After our cousin's initial disappointment the first day, Karl and I took her out on a walk next morning and showed her what's happening with wildlife here. And we took along the MOST important book everyone should have and study:

Tracks, Scats and Other Traces – a field guide to Australian Mammals by Barbara Triggs. Known in our household as “The Book of Turds”. (I still have her totally frayed and glued-together and much read 1997 edition. This book is an absolute staple in our daily life.)

Coincidentally at the end of last year the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network organised “A layman's guide to fauna survey” workshop with ecologist & zoologist John Harris at our place.

While it's not really everyone's cup of tea to stare at excrements, John's talk was fascinating and our walk after was a lot of fun.

Well – that is if you enjoy turning over bits of wind-blown and forgotten slabs of corrugated iron and instead of an irate copperhead snake find a mega city of HUGE aggressive bull ants that send us all stumbling back to a safe distance.

Another find under a pile of forgotten stuff was a blue-tongue lizard. Our first shouts of delight quickly turned to dismay when we realised that Bluey was totally covered in ticks.

Sorry no – I don't have any photos; I was too busy freaking out, getting itchy, running to the house to get our tick-removal tweezers and supervising the total and thorough destruction of those yucky creatures.

Weird pellets in the new grove? Scratches on trees? Bald areas high up on eucys? Huge patches of blotchy white poo underneath a majestic tree?

Just look around or up for unusual signs and indicators and you'll find that us Newhamites are incredible lucky to have a remarkable assortment of native animals in the region.



above: These are Wombat scats. Their weird cube-shape poo and how it was formed had scientists all over the world researching for ages. Check out the below ABC article. By-the-way - wombies like to deposit their poo quite often higher up on fallen trees or rocks. Territory marking? Don't know, could be another research topic.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-21/wombats-square-poo-research-how-consistent-cubes-made/102000530>

above: Regurgitated bird pellets. Put on your food safety gloves and crumble the pellets up to see what has been on the menu.

On the bottom is what the Kookaburra regurgitated, on the right is a pellet of the Pied Currawong. They like berries.



above: Common Brushtail Possum scats. Their poo looks slightly similar to that of the koala but without the pointy end.

Put on another set of food safety gloves, crumble the scats a bit and have a sniff. Koala scats have quite a strong eucalypt smell.

Brushy poo is more stinky and is also found away from the base of a tree while koala scats are closer to the base.



left: This smooth spot on the bark high up in a tree is probably a landing place for Sugar Gliders.

Sugar Gliders have their favourite gliding route through the forest as well as favoured landing spots.

RAINFALL REPORT

Bruce Hedge

Well, after 43 mm in March, a good autumn break was on the cards. And April didn't disappoint - 84mm at Newham, meant we went into winter with a filling dam and full tanks. Bliss!

Reports of an El Nino developing were everywhere, but Australia's measurements weren't confirming the formation as certainly as the Northern Hemisphere's measurements and subsequent record heatwaves across the whole region.

We ended up with "only" 49mm in

May, but then June produced a near record here with 154mm for the month. On the 8th, alone, rain fell in almost every hour, ending up with 67mm for the day. Most unusual.

At the end of June, Newham/Cobaw had had 408mm since January 1st, and Woodend was on 391mm.

July 2022 to June 2023 produced a year of ups and downs. The period July to November was exceptionally wet, as we remember, with a total of 677 mm falling here at Newham. Then it became dry-ish from December to the end of March, with a total of 108 for that period.

With April to June figures included, the sum for that last financial year is 1072mm --- "a lovely set of numbers!" Especially with a possible El Nino on the horizon.

Writing this near the end of July, only 36mm has fallen, but we're actually near the long term average for the year so far. I've given up reading doom and gloom Northern Hemisphere scenarios, but have upgraded my sprinkler systems and bought a new fire fighting pump. With full tanks, a near full dam, I feel confident for this year, but who knows what might be in 2024-25. Here's to a damp spring!



After completing a workshop, I was putting my camera gear in the boot of the car.

It had been raining and the lights threw the most beautiful light up the street. I said to my colleague, 'Oi. Can you just stand in the middle of the road and jump?'

It was a beautiful crisp damp evening and worth the short time it took to get my camera out again.

Kathy Mexted