

80
AUTUMN 2026

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



*Gardens for
wildlife*

Coming events

Planning is well underway for events and activities for 2026, with grants applied for and new initiatives. Our new Song Meter Micro 2 audio recorder has been trialled on several properties to reveal an amazing number of birds recorded (see Brigitte's blog in the last issue). We are evaluating being part of Eyes on Habitat, a drone-based mapping project by Upper Campaspe Landcare Network, designed to help us see, understand and strengthen habitat across our Landcare sites.

A new feature for each issue is a bushtucker plant—this one is the Native (or White) Elderberry.

Friday April 26.

'The biodiversity footprint of Australian agriculture and the role of private land conservation', with Dr Carla Arhibald. Register at <https://events.humanitix.com/the-biodiversity-footprint-of-australian-agriculture>

Monday June 15.

'The cultural History of Ngannelong (Hanging Rock)'. Following requests after Barry Golding's presentation on Six Peaks Speak last November for one on Hanging Rock we are pleased to have historian Chris McConville and member Matthew

Nixon doing just that and bringing us up to date with the latest state of play regarding Government actions. Stay tuned.

October.

AGM and launch of the Cobaw Biolink Plan with Ammie Jackson, Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network facilitator. Date to be confirmed.

Plant supply.

It has been a challenging growing season for our wonderful TreeProject volunteer growers.

We have not been able to secure a Biolink Boost grant for this season as it is now only every two years, so we will be applying a small fee for each plant purchased by members to help cover some of the costs we have incurred.

We will have tube plants available for members to purchase at 0.50 cents each. No pre-ordering as people can choose what they want on the day. Please bring boxes or containers.

Distribution days will be 8am-12pm on 25 April and 2 May. More dates will be arranged if needed. Location – 189 Dons Road Newham (Penny Roberts place).

Group contacts

Committee for 2025–26

President: Karl Kny, karl@kolora.com, 0409 543 061

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

Ordinary members:

Paul Carter, millhouse@aussiebroadband.com.au, 0477 271 199. Currently unavailable.

Bruce Hedge, bruceahedge@gmail.com, 0427 888 122 (rainfall).

Helen Scott, orseda@outlook.com, 0412 582 526 (website).

Jess Szigethy-Gyula, jess.szigethy@gmail.com, 0408 678 355.

Jane Trikojus, trikojus_j@fastmail.com, 0413 499 252 (Wesley Park and Jim Road).

Other Contacts

Roadside Management Group (the Weedies): Sue Massie, 0407 029 392.

The Dugan Triangle, Anderson Road: Karen Hunt 0408 135 243.

Spray trailer and cameras: Howard Stirling, 0432 809 314.

Website: <https://newhamlandcare.info>

The committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month (February to November) between 7.30–9pm at the Newham Hall. All members are welcome to attend, be become more involved or raise specific matters. If you do wish to attend, please advise a committee member.

Any articles you wish to submit to the newsletter, or even suggestions for articles, please email our interim editors Helen Scott orseda@outlook.com or Brigitte Kny at bkny@bigpond.com



Clean up Australia Day 2026

A school Clean Up is a great way to inspire children to learn about the impact of litter in their local environment.



Newham Primary school worked in Wesley Park. As Jove (a student from Newham PS) said: *'We cleaned up the park so we could keep it safe. So that animals don't eat trash and get sick. I picked up glitter and shiny things and a dirty straw. We used gloves. We had fruit there and we played in the park. I had a good time with Quinn and Jasper. We clean-up to keep our world safe.'*

In Lancefield, Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network facilitator Emma Stevens organised students from St Mary's and Lancefield primary schools to collect rubbish from Lancefield Park as part of the Clean Up Australia Day 2026. *'What students and I felt when looking at the park from a distance was that it looked pristine; but once we looked closer we discovered a lot of rubbish.'*

The students collected 10 bags of rubbish. Cigarette butts were most common, but they also found electrical tape, inhalers, food packaging, stubby tops and plastic bottles. Plus a massive sheet of plywood.





Recently Newstead organised a presentation by Andrew Skeoch about birdsong. Absolutely fascinating.

Did you notice that in the early hours of the morning their chorus is so much different to their songs during the day. Andrew explained that this is actually the time when the birds negotiate their relationships. Apparently the amount of information in a birdsong is just incredible. AND birds can process and send this information 10-times faster than humans.

And of course Newham Landcare has now this snazzy Song Meter Micro 2 and Karl is quite busy visiting members to set it all up and record and identify birds on their properties (see the article on this state-of-the-art gizmo in our last edition <https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/NDLG-no.79-Summer-2026.pdf>)

Coming here to Oz 45-odd years ago was actually a bit of a 'bird-shock' to me. I was used to polite and mostly shy birds that sang in the morning but otherwise totally minded their own business like the European blackbird. Some even visited me at my window at the fourth floor to daintily peck some raisins. And while visiting my grandparents in the country I sometimes heard nightingales and woodpeckers. Sure we had crows, sparrows and sea gulls – but they were waiting for morsels, not stealing them from your plate or BBQ.

And Magpies !! Germany has a similar looking bird, the Elster (*Pica pica*). This bird is known to pilfer shiny things and then carries it to the nest. Yes, when they feel threatened they may swoop occasionally. But nothing like the Australian Magpie. There is not one bicycle rider in Germany that has cable ties on their helmet.

Australian birds rule cities and our lives. We have to adjust and learn to cover bins that cockatoos and 'bin chicken' aka White Ibis don't rummage in our

rubbish for fun or food. We buy a few extra sausages just in case there is a kookaburra nearby to steal them from our BBQ. Our vineyards and orchards are covered in expensive bird netting. Have you ever seen a covered vineyard at the Rhine or Moselle ?? I haven't. And nobody bothers to fortify their veggie garden. Mine here in Newham looks like Fort Knox to stop family groups of White-winged choughs trashing it in 5 minutes.

As far as I know Australia is the only country that declared war on one of its own bird species – AND LOST. In the 'Emu War' of late 1932 a crack unit of the Royal Australian Artillery attempted twice to protect wheat crop in Western Australia from 20,000-odd migrating and marauding emus. The emus won and continue thriving.

The colours could not be more flamboyant in our Australian birds. Lime-green, vivid and electric blue, scarlet reds, bright white and luminous yellow, rock pink, intense orange, bold purple – sometimes lots of those colours on the same bird. If I would wear an outfit like that, I would look ridiculous. Oz birds look just stunning. German birds on the other hand are more 'traditional' with their feathers. The most colourful one is probably the Blaumeise (Eurasian blue tit – *Cyanistes caeruleus*), an adorable little thing similar to our fairy wrens.

In Victoria, a state of only 3% of Australia's land area, we have over 500 recorded bird species, representing over half of all of our bird species. Germany which is 1.5 times larger than Victoria, has approx. 300 bird species.

Let's plant more native species to attract, support and never lose our weird, quirky and wonderful birds.

You can download the guidebook 'Birds of the Macedon Ranges' from the Shire's website at <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Environment/Animals-of-the-Macedon-Ranges/Birds>

**Brigitte's
Wildlife
Blog**

Let's plant more native species to attract, support and never lose our weird, quirky and wonderful birds.



1



2



3



4



5



6

- 1. Eastern Rosella
Image: Birdlife Australia.
- 2. Spotted Pardalote
Image: Australian Museum.
- 3. Rainbow Lorikeet
Image: Birdlife Australia.
- 4. Eastern Spinebill
Image: Wikipedia.
- 5. Gouldian Finch
Image: Wikipedia.

6. (Germany) Blaumeise
Image Wikipedia.

Newham's Bushtucker



Image: Yarra Ranges Council.

Our area between the Cobaws and Mount Macedon is rich in Australian flora traditionally used as food and medicine by Aboriginal peoples who have been in Australia for over 60,000 years.

Over decades Newham's Penny Roberts has propagated, raised, planted and supplied to our members with many of those 'Bushtucker' plants.

One example is the Native (or White) Elderberry (*Sambucus guadichaudiana*), a low understory shrub up to 2m height. It has edible white to translucent berries in autumn.

The berries are nowadays used in jams, jellies, pies and syrups.

The flowers attract many of our native flies and bees and the ripe berries are an important food source for small seed eating birds like the Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*)

Keep a lookout for other Bushtucker plants in future issues.



Photo: Richard Hartland.

Designing for wildlife—

have we got our priorities right?

By Helen Scott



Steve Murphy poses this question in a delightful article in his October 2025 blog titled *Planting gardens to attract birds, butterflies and Blue-banded Bees*.

<https://www.recreatingthecountry.com.au/blog/planting-gardens-to-attract-birds-butterflies-and-blue-banded-bees>

Steve is a friend of N&DLG, having led us on property field walks discussing the ideas in his books *Recreating the Country* – described in our newsletters in 2024 (no.73) and 2011 (no.28).

Considering gardens as ecosystems within a larger environment I thought I would muse further on the article. We often focus on revegetating large areas/paddocks but gardens, like roadsides, can link fragmented natural areas with vital 'stepping stones' across both urban and country landscapes.

Steve firstly considers the aesthetics and practicalities of a garden for wildlife, then lays some ground rules. Starting with their basic needs, designing for wildlife should provide safe places for them to live, hide and feed at all levels in the garden. At the ground level these refuges are usually logs, large rocks or piles of cobble sized

rocks, twiggy fallen branches for perching, fallen limbs, tussocky plants, native herbs, some groundcovers and leaf litter. Reliable 'carpeting' groundcovers are suggested, along with some beautiful native daisies for colour that would suit a mass planting in a small or large garden, a rockery or restored grassland. Grasses are important for food, shelter and habitat.

Steve on plant families: 'A key design feature for 'my wildlife clients' will be a mixture of plant families that make wonderful food and habitat plants, keeping in mind that a variety of flower shapes & colours, edible leaves and berries will be a big drawcard.'

Here are his 16 native shrub plant families, **with 28 genera shown in bold**. He suggests choosing a least seven shrub species, each from a different plant family, to maximise food and habitat for birds and insects.

- **Acacias** (*Mimosa* family) – pollen-rich flowers used by a variety of native bees. High production of pollen and nectar is alluring to many insects.
- **Banksias, Grevilleas, Hakeas** (*Protea* family) – brush-flowers produce nectar for a long season. Many species are useful for both birds and insects because of dense flowers loaded with nectar and pollen. The prickly hakeas like the Bushy Needlewood, H.



One of my native grasses and wildflowers patches

decussata will be particularly safe and popular for small birds at nesting time.

- **Boobiallas, Eremophilas** (*Figwort* family) – medium to tall dense shrubs, white flowers (Boobiallas) with violet and pink flowers (Eremophilas) that are attractive to small insects. Also fleshy, less flammable green and grey leaves and edible berries for birds.
- **Callistemons, Leptospermums, Melaleucas, Kunzeas, Thryptomenes** (*Myrtle* family) – bright flowers rich in nectar, with a variety of forms from dense to open.
- **Correas, Boronias** (*Citrus* family) – bell shaped (correas), nectar rich, scented (boronias), flowers favoured by small honeyeaters, native bees, butterflies and moths.
- **Daisies** (*Asteraceae* family) – Hardy, small shrubs with bright colourful flowers, that attract a wide variety of insects
- **Goodenia** (*Goodenia* family) – hardy small shrub with bright yellow flowers, over a long period, that attract butterflies and Blue-banded Bees.
- **Heaths and Beard Heaths** (*Erica* family) – hardy small shrubs with nectar rich bell-shaped flowers attract Honeyeaters. Beard Heaths can grow to 3m and attract a wide variety of insect pollinators.
- **Hop-bushes** (*Soapberry/Maple* family) – small to medium drought hardy shrubs that produce a small, colourful papery hop-like fruit that attracts various insects.
- **Indigoferas/Daviesia/Pultenaea** (*Pea* family) – pretty, small shrubs that support other plants by adding nitrogen to the soil.
- **Kangaroo apples** (*Tomato* family) – A short lived fruiting shrub that is food for fruit eating birds like silvereyes and rosellas
- **Sweet Bursaria** (*Pittosporum* family) – white flowers at Christmas attract small insects and insect-eating birds
- **Saltbushes** (*Goosefoot* family) – Groundcovers and bushy, dense, often sprawling shrubs, ideal for wrens all year and fruit eating birds in spring
- **Tree Violet** (*Violet* family) – Yellow, bell-shaped violet scented flowers attract insect and fruit eating birds in late summer

- **Westringias, Mint-bushes** (*Mint* family) – reliable in harsh, dry conditions with long-flowering food source for bees, beetles & birds
- **Grasstrees** (*Flax* and *Aloe* family) – insects, birds, and ground-dwelling mammals use them for food and shelter.

The above is a list of shrubs, but note also the importance of other families such as *Sedges, Rushes, Lilies* and *Grasses*.

I am a keen Newham Landcare member and a passionate gardener on our 6 acres on the north slope of Mt Macedon. It was a bare grazing paddock when Ian and I arrived in 2004, apart from 2 huge *Eucalyptus obliquas*/Messmates. We have revegetated with a large variety of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers as shelterbelts and garden beds, native grass patches and ground covers, a rockery, bulb beds and some exotics near the house – for example the magnificent Chinese Elm or *Ulmus parvifolia* 'Frosty' as summer shade canopy. It is also alive with birds who use water dishes below.



We have productive fruit trees and vegetable gardens, which are also good pollinators and habitat for small critters. Nets however are essential if we want fruit!



Exotics like Salvias are a magnet for Honeyeaters.



I was very chuffed to realise our place has all the genera that Steve has suggested, except for Grass Trees. **Bonus** – so many have been available from our Landcare group. I now tend to propagate/pot my own, particularly my favourite Snow Gums.

A habitat garden aims to support many species, so as well as birds and insects I would add other wildlife fauna – reptiles, frogs, and mammals. The

kangaroos can be a tad voracious but we have found that once plants are established (with guards or fencing for example) they survive.

We don't seem to suffer from possum raids, maybe due to lack of roses! Our Jack Russell terrier sorts out the rabbits and rats, doesn't chase birds and has



New beds in 2011 with guards, plants now fully grown.



been subjected to some tough love with snake aversion training.

Our prolific bird life is such a joy, and in February Karl set up the Song Meter recorder for us, described so well in Brigitte’s blog in the last issue.

To our amazement we have 15 of the bird foraging guilds with a very large list of bird species, some of which we were not aware of. Superb Fairywrens are our most recorded.

We love how our patch began as an artificial space created for pleasure, contemplation, shelter and fantastic views but has achieved some wild, natural elements that are suited to a larger variety of birds, reptiles and insects by providing food, water, shelter, and breeding sites. I am convinced of the happiness/mental health benefits even if the ageing body is now a bit challenged. A garden can never be static, so plants get shaped, replaced or removed.

Some of you may wonder about the risk of fire with so much planting. Answers can be found in our Summer 2025 newsletter, in an article discussing a field day at our place with CFA experts and ecologists discussing how to manage



biodiversity with fire risk. <https://newhamlandcare.info/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NDLG-no.75-Spring-2025.pdf>, p7-9. We also have a bunker – hopefully only used to store valuables as we leave on a catastrophic forecast day.

I would love this article to be a conversation starter, so do send your stories or comments.

Addenda

There are references under Wildlife held in our Landcare library at



<https://newhamlandcare.info/library/> – e.g. our presenter friend Tanya Loos’s book *Living with Wildlife: a guide for our homes and backyards*. CSIRO Publishing, 2025. 190p. And of course, Brigitte’s entertaining Wildlife blog in each newsletter issue.

Our Shire’s Backyard Biodiversity project for urban areas has lots of ideas and guides and assistance to help make gardens more wildlife friendly and be part of local biolinks. Kyneton’s pilot project is completed, Gisborne is set for 2026.

<https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Environment/Backyard-Biodiversity>

For an inspiring read, this article on woody meadows transforming urban spaces in Melbourne appeared in *The Conversation* on 14/11/2025: <https://theconversation.com/we-planted-two-woody-meadows-a-decade-ago-to-see-what-would-thrive-now-the-concept-is-popular-across-australia-269611>

It has a link to a well-illustrated brochure on urban revegetation called *Woody meadow guidelines*, produced by the University of Melbourne. <https://woodymeadow.unimelb.edu.au/factsheets/guidelines/> (11.6mb)



Local legends of the central west –

Karl Just



Karl Just is a botanist and zoologist who has over 20 years experience in the ecological industry. He runs his own consultancy, specialising in flora and fauna surveys, and is actively involved in environmental

advocacy and ecological restoration projects across Victoria. He is a good friend to N&DLG having completed member property surveys, and reports for us – for example on roadsides, Snow Gums research, nocturnal fauna survey.

So we are pleased to share this video by Victorian National Parks Association made in late 2025, featuring Karl whose lifelong connection to the forests of the central west has shaped his work, his passion and his understanding of this remarkable landscape in which we live. Karl explains why proper protection, long-term funding and strong conservation laws are urgently needed to safeguard wildlife, water catchments and the health of our landscapes.

Topics covered:

- Central west Victoria forests – including the Cobaws
- Wellsford Forest and box–ironbark ecosystems
- Wombat Forest threatened species
- Mount Macedon snow gums
- Rare and newly discovered plants
- Habitat corridors and climate refuges
- Water catchments and forest protection
- Conservation, ecology and biodiversity in Victoria
- The importance of national parks

You can see it on YouTube at

[youtube.com/watch?v=WcqJK_GrcH0&msocid=39b401770af911f1917fbbbbbabb84d36](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcqJK_GrcH0&msocid=39b401770af911f1917fbbbbbabb84d36) or

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcqJK_GrcH0

You can also see this video of his presentation for Wombat Forestcare’s ‘You, me & Biodiversity’ program at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSSQ-1SgA4Y&t=13s>

He also discusses threats to Wombat Forest such as mining, burning programs, invasive species.



Restoring native grasslands

‘In western Victoria’s volcanic plains there’s 0.5 per cent [of native grasslands] left,’ says 82-year-old Ms Raulings. Her book, *Endangered Grasslands — Rescuing the Native Grasslands of South-Eastern Australia* features her delicate pencil drawings.

The picture across much of southern Australia is almost as bleak. Though now protected by environmental laws, conservationists say remnant grasslands are still being destroyed. Many exist only because they occur in reserves, such as cemeteries and railway sidings.

Until recently, the push to re-establish native grasslands has been focused on restoring or

building native landscapes along roadsides and in public spaces, such as a gazetted reserve in industrial Altona. As some of us have argued to Councillors and CFA in the past, natives are usually far less flammable than exotic species, so music to our ears is that re-establishment of native grasses alongside roadsides is coming under discussion, following February’s disastrous Victorian bushfires.

But native grasses are gaining popularity across a range of agricultural systems, which this article and ABC’s Landline episode discuss.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-02-28/native-grasslands-victoria-endangered-restoration-seed-demand/106391114?>



Bruce's rainfall report – first quarter 2026

Well, what weird, wonderful, Woodend weather... WOW! Here, in all its glory is the summary for Woodend and Newham BOM stations, 11km apart in the middle of N&DLG country for first quarter, 2026.

The final totals for 2025 were 725mm for Woodend, and 596mm for Newham, both below the long term averages.

January dawned dry. Here at Newham, we recorded ZERO rain for the whole month – all 31 days of it. VERY unusual, especially for a 31-day month. Woodend had a quick thunderstorm burst which dumped 5.8mm, but it fizzled out towards the East – Karl Kny recorded only 1.2mm for the whole month, too, on Monument creek. The Autumn break came early. We had a nice fall of 23mm on the 9th, and 33mm on the 28th, with a few other falls adding up to 89.4mm for February, the best for many years. Woodend, surprisingly, had 'only' 61.4mm but that was still below the long-term average of about 100mm to the end of February. March yielded 100.6mm in Woodend, but only 83.2mm at Newham, and the Year-to-Date is unusually in Newham's favour with 172.6mm at Newham, and 167.8mm at Woodend.

The long-term outlook is for a return to El Nino, and drier outlooks than average across the Southeast of Australia. The other long-term certain outlook is total uncertainty – get out and plant your brassicas and garlic!!!!

Editor's note.

A couple of your committee members contributed data to Macedon and Mt Macedon Landcare's 2025

project *Weather and the Macedon Mountains: Building community knowledge*. In March 2026 climatologist Neil Plummer completed the document *The weather and climate for the Macedon Ranges*, to be launched on 7 May. You can download it at

<https://www.mmmlandcare.org.au/weather-the-macedon-range>

