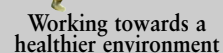


Newham & District Landcare Group



Hanging Rock revisited



Coming events

It is time to **renew your membership** for 2026–27, \$20 per family per annum, unchanged since 2004. Use the membership form on the website or pay electronically (include your name in the transaction) at **BSB:013706 Account No. 4992 33654**

Thursday 6 August.

Experience Landcare: Stories from the Macedon Ranges; a forum for Landcare Week. Woodend Community Centre, 6–8pm with supper. Helen Scott will speak about N&DLG. Book at <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/See-Do/Events-and-Awards/Whats-on-around-the-shire/Experience-Landcare-Stories-from-the-Macedon-Ranges>

Friday 18 September.

Newham Hall. Presentation with Rebekah Ritchie of Upper Campaspe Landcare Network about their Eyes on Habitat, a drone-based mapping project designed to help us see, understand and strengthen habitat across Landcare sites.

Friday 16 October.

Newham Hall. AGM with Ammie Jackson Upper Deep Creek Network Landcare Coordinator, who will launch a new report on the Cobaw Biolink Plan.

Saturday 12 December.

Christmas party BBQ at Wesley Park with the usual great food, fun and egg and gumboot tosses, and some free plants.

A link in the chain: Penny Roberts and the Cobaw Biolink.

So many of us have known and admired Penny for her work in our Landcare group.

Her latest personal project is overseeing the restoration of 36.8

hectares of native vegetation on a second property at Three Chain Road, one of the most significant restoration projects in this part of the Central Victorian Uplands. Discover how Penny partnered with the BushBank Program, Cassinia Environmental and Greenfleet to transform her cleared land into a vital stepping stone in the Cobaw Biolink. Access the case study and video at <https://cassinia.com/bushbank-newham/>



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

Hanging Rock revisited

Newham Hall was the place to be on a cold Friday night on 19 June to hear more about the unique 6-million-year-old volcanic landscape feature that is Hanging Rock/Ngannelong.

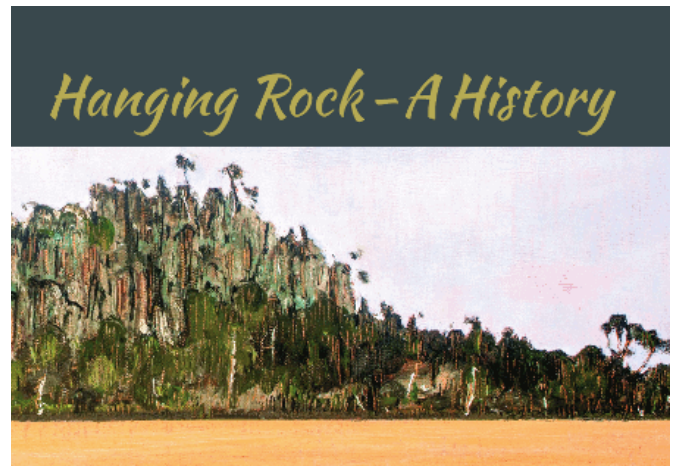
Historian and author Chris McConville discussed a few themes from his book, published in 2017 by Friends of Hanging Rock. They are fully explored in this truly comprehensive work, which is referenced and beautifully illustrated with artworks, photographs, documents and maps. Copies were sold on the night for a special price of \$20 from Landcare – if you want one contact N&DLG committee.

19th century writers did not understand geology as we do now, and the focus was rather on a romantic view of picturesque landscapes and sublime scenery, typified by 19th century photographers like Nicholas Caire, and artists. Chris talked of William Blandowski who looked at the Rock scientifically (often in conflict with other scientists), but also, unusually, about how aboriginal people saw and used it. He is remembered for rare and valuable drawings of local Aboriginal life and included Aboriginal figures in at least one of his scenes of Hanging Rock, as per this example held in the National Library of Australia.



Foot of Diogenes Monument 1855-56 etching.

Chris spoke of farming and town life in the 19th century and the importance of the horse trade to India, mainly for cabs and hansom carriages. The climate has changed since then, when it was wetter and colder with more frequent snow falls.



Newham Hall in 1914 was the place the Country Party had its origins, where 'the first public meeting under the auspice of the recently inaugurated Victorian Farmers Union' was held. By 1917 the union had become the Country Party which by 1920 held the balance of power in the Victorian parliament.

Leisure was important to the community, which agitated for the purchase of land for recreation from the 1850s, resulting in the purchase of Hanging Rock (87 acres) as Crown Land in 1884 and then gazetted as the Hanging Rock Recreation Reserve. Horse races have been run at the Rock since the 1860s, discussed in a chapter called Little Flemington.

From being a water and agricultural common, and recreation reserve, the Rock became a holiday /tourist destination. The book and film Picnic at Hanging Rock certainly boosted this.

Historical disputes and controversy continue today, for example over racing, rock concerts, as a reserve for water versus recreation, tourism impacts and finance. As Chris puts it (pp. 149-50), 'Hanging Rock's varied, often conflicting roles, as a carnival place, sports ground, ramblers' panorama, sylvan retreat, climbers' challenge and gambling arena, point to a series of crises, declines and resurrections.'

A member later asked a question about biodiversity protection – this was not a priority until recently. Newham Landcare ran planting and weed working bees from 2012–19, and their 2013 newsletter canvassed all the issues: https://hrock.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/NDLG_38-2.pdf



Sunset, Bruce Hedge.

Protecting the Rock

The message from Matthew Nickson, a member of N&DLG and Hanging Rock Action Group, was that Hanging Rock is only as it is today due to community action.

Here is his very brief history of local community actions to preserve it for public use.

Since 1857, when Hanging Rock was sold as private land, the local community has always been concerned that it should stay in public hands for recreational use. In 1862 the Newham, Woodend and Rochford District Road Board (the forerunner to the Newham and Woodend Shire Council) wrote to the Government: 'to have the waste land around Hanging Rock permanently reserved for Public use.' In 1865 they applied for 87 acres at Hanging Rock for a public recreation reserve. Again in 1866 many ratepayers signed a petition to the Government 'praying for a grant of land at Hanging Rock to be reserved for recreation grounds.'

After the Shire of Newham in 1883 made a successful deputation to the Government, Hanging Rock (87 acres) was purchased as Crown Land in 1884 and then gazetted as the Hanging Rock Recreation Reserve for 'the purposes of recreation and water use'.

In 1905 at a heated community meeting, over three hundred protested at proposed Race Club concessions by the Shire of Newham and Woodend. The then Minister for Lands stated at the meeting that 'he could not agree with the view that racing was implied in recreation... (and)... the reserve was

not the property of the immediate district but of the whole State and he had to consider the people of the whole State'.

After the 1967 publication of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and the worldwide success of the film in 1975 visitation increased dramatically, and as a result Hanging Rock began to attract commercial interest. A proposal for a theme park with dinosaurs, Egyptian pyramid, an active volcano on the theme of 'the origins of man' was received in 1976 by the Shire Council. After initially being accepted by the Council, it was then rejected due to large scale community opposition.

Again, in early 1989 a planning permit application for a tourist complex, including a zoo with lions on an island in a large lake, located one kilometre from the Hanging Rock Reserve was rejected by Council; again, with large scale community opposition. Then in November 1989, Council purchased the East Paddock as an intended conservation zone to act as a buffer to the Hanging Rock Reserve from surrounding farmland, to be incorporated into the Hanging Rock Reserve as Crown Land. However, this didn't happen.

In August 2013 Council proposed seeking a private investor for potential large-scale development mainly in the East Paddock. It potentially included a conference centre, wellness centre, tourist apartments and expanded interpretative centre. As a response, later that month, a large community meeting was held at the Newham Hall and the Hanging Rock Action Group formed. Members lobbied Government, nominated Hanging Rock for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register, made extensive and effective use of traditional and social

media to have the Council rescind the proposal in May 2014.

Further extensive input and lobbying from the community to Government led to the purchase of the East Paddock in 2023 from Council by the State Government, as was originally intended in 1989.

This photo below shows locals celebrating the transfer of East Paddock with State MP Mary-Anne Thomas on 15 November 2023.

Can the community relax now? Has Hanging Rock been fully protected for the future? **No, it's future is still undecided.** The development of the Hanging Rock Precinct Master Plan in 2023 offers a pathway to a sustainable future but has yet to be implemented. **It is up to the community to make sure it is.**

Here is the link for the 2023 Master Plan
https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/673357/hanging-rock-precinct-master-plan.pdf

See the website of Hanging Rock Action Group
Hanging Rock Action Group – We want Community Consultation at <https://hrock.info/>. It awaits further updating but has a useful timeline with documents from 1978–2023 and a fascinating list of media from 2013–2023. It links to Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/HangingRockActionGroup/> which has some great photos.

Helen Scott.





'I didn't realise that nature could be so much fun... my favourite thing was making the land beautiful'

Oh WOWWW Emma – another fantastic Field Day for students of St. Mary's Primary School Junior Landcare Group to a Newham property.

The aim of this excursion was to learn about biodiversity, pollinators, biolinks, tree planting and healthy waterways.





I enjoyed going on walks, collecting fish and playing with the dog. I also learnt about different species of animals.

Ella

I learnt that you can scoop up water in a dam and get all the bugs and fish out and put them in clean water to look at them more closely. I learnt that wombat burrows are dry if there are no wombats using them and a bit moist if they are. I loved the dog, Humphrey and watching the kangaroos. I didn't realise that nature could be so much fun.

Katerina

I learnt that you should have half trees and half grass on your property. I loved learning in nature and learning about things I am interested in.

Sunny

I learnt that the soil in a freshly dug wombat hole is a bit wet.

I loved looking for kangaroo bones.

Indie

My favourite thing was making the land into a beautiful thing.

Julian

I loved how we got to see the wombat enclosure and we got to plant trees. I also learnt a lot about different fish species and one of them was a dragonfly fish.

Sophie

I loved scooping in the dam and finding fish and water invertebrates and finding cool rocks and animal bones. I learnt about all the native animals and how to restore the land.

Abi

I loved how we got to see the wombat enclosure and Humphrey the dog. I learnt how to plant trees.

Brooke

I learnt how to catch fish so we could study them and how to plant trees.

Heath

Something I learnt about is how biodiversity works and something I loved was hiking with my friends and also planting trees for the land.

Ava

I learnt that wombat poo is square. I liked finding the kangaroo bones.

Jayde

I found kangaroo bones and learnt that there are water spiders.

Finn

My favourite thing was Humphrey the dog. He is a chocolate Kelpie, Labrador cross.

Will

I loved how we could interact with nature. I learnt about wildlife.

Toby

Brigitte's Wildlife Blog



How awesome is late autumn here in Newham. Finally we don't have to continuously clean gutters to prepare for ember attacks, no howling winds, unbelievable colours on trees and sky at sunrise and sunset, tanks are filling...

In the nearly 40 years we have been here in Newham, I always associated beginning of autumn with the season of the European wasp (*Vespa germanica*). In my opinion they are extremely unlikeable. They crawl into soft drink cans, eat the bacon in your hamburger with the lot, kill native larvae and moths and attack and sting my poor beloved about 50 times while he tries to plant some trees. Plus the queens survive overwinter in our woodpile and during mild winters a whole colony can survive and form mega nests in spring.

Don't do anything rash. Those beasts are vicious and evil and ferociously defend their nest even at night. Find more info at

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/pest-insects-and-mites/priority-pest-insects-and-mites/european-wasp>

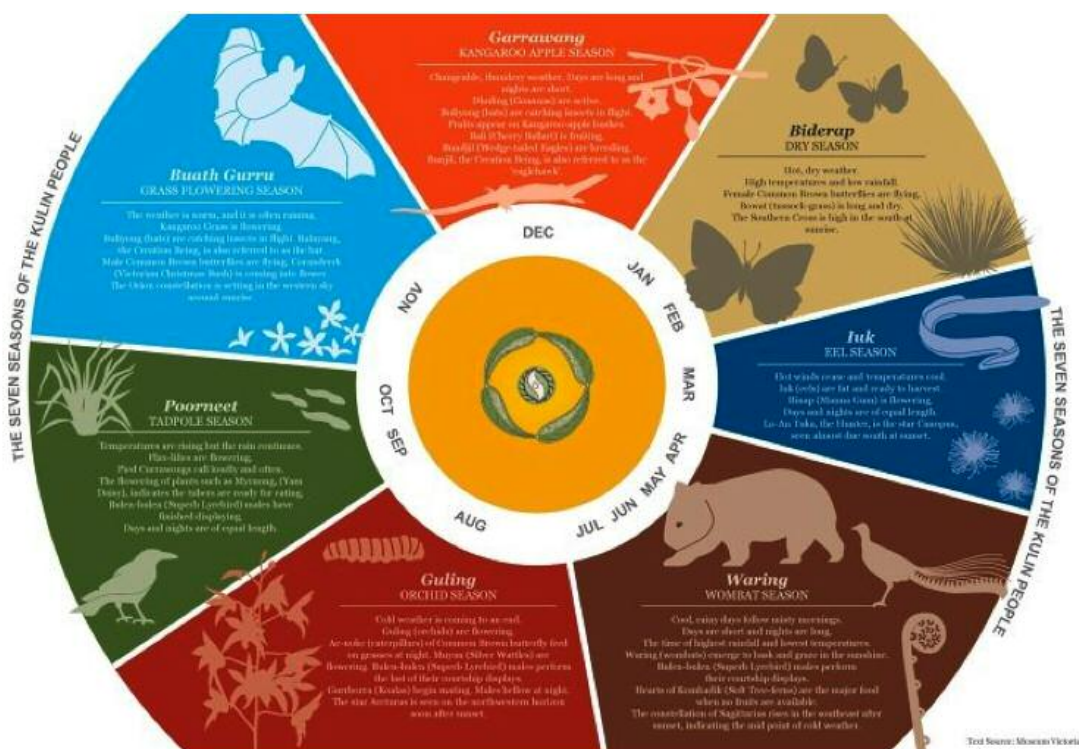
I just love the description of this season by the traditional owners. According to the Kulin Nation Seasonal Calendar (they have observed the unique natural cycles of Country for thousands of years through their Seasonal Calendars) we have now entered the *Waring* (wombat) Season between April and July.

The *Wurun* (manna gum) flowering is ending, mornings are misty and the nights grow longer. Wombats emerge from their burrows seeking sunshine, and migratory birds arrive from Tasmania.

The hearts of *Komba'derk* (soft tree ferns) at Mt Macedon are ready for eating, providing a significant food source in the absence of fruit more readily available in warmer weather.

Waring Season is the longest of the Wurundjeri seasons, marked by rain, cool weather, long nights, and short days. I am looking forward for our next season of the Kulin Nation Seasonal Calendar – *Guling*, Orchid Season (August).

From Royal Society of Australia. Image created by Greenaway Architects for Nagara Place (RMIT University).



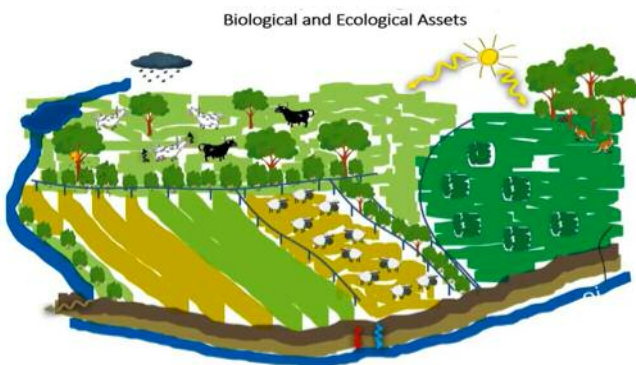
The biodiversity footprint of Australian agriculture

Jess Szigethy and Alice Aird

On 24 April, Dr Carla Archibald gave a talk at Newham Hall which explored a simple but important question: **in Australia, how much wildlife habitat is impacted by the food we produce?**

Carla is a Lecturer in Environmental Sustainability at Deakin University and an ARC Early Career Industry Fellow. Her research focuses on how food systems and biodiversity are connected and developing practical solutions that benefit people and nature.

As landowners and consumers, the talk gave us a valuable glimpse of leading edge research in Biodiversity Footprinting. This method of quantifying the biodiversity impacts of Australian agriculture provides baseline data and is an essential first step to effectively manage biodiversity conservation on farms in the future.



Dr Archibald's team uses GIS* mapping and social research to understand how agriculture both supports and impacts wildlife habitat across Australia.

The remote sensing and data analysis methods the team uses are inevitably complex. While the details of Carla's research were challenging to fully grasp, and a broader presentation of her findings to date might have been enough for most, it was excellent to see that such biodiversity footprinting methods are being developed and to get an idea of how it's done.

** GIS mapping refers to the use of Geographic Information Systems to visualize and analyze spatial data on maps. It combines data with geographic information to reveal relationships and patterns that may not be obvious from raw data alone.*

We learned that a scientifically sound, trusted system for tracking biodiversity impact is needed to provide concrete data to be able to influence governments to regulate farming practices for biodiversity. We also heard that large agriculture companies are motivated (to varying levels) to demonstrate their green credentials. A trusted method of assessing their performance and progress on biodiversity could encourage more biodiversity action. Wouldn't that be something!

With biodiversity monitoring we can pin-point which commodities and regions are putting the most pressure on species. Monitoring can inform what species are most impacted and what actions may be most beneficial. For example, sheep grazing has been found to particularly impact wombats. There was a cool map showing the habitat impact sheep grazing has on wombat habitat across its range in Australia (and some complicated bits that a few of us lost attention over). After a lot of data crunching, a number can be calculated for **square metres of a wombat habitat impacted per kilogram of wool produced in a particular year**. This is the unit which Carla's team calculates to quantify native fauna habitat. In this way high, medium and low quality fauna habitat, in this case for wool production, can be quantified using that all important single figure of $m^2/kg/year$.

This unit of $m^2/kg/year$ generated a lively discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of presenting data in a per annum format. There was still some doubt about whether the result was cumulative over years or simply a measure of impact in a certain year. Nevertheless the discussion gave some valuable insight into the dilemmas and complexities of data collection, modelling and presentation of data.

It was evident from data to date that different foods have very different footprints on nature (from studies of over 1,300 Australian species and 38 agricultural commodities) and that some species are more sensitive than others. A notable 65% of species studied (861 out of 1,333) had 50% or more of their suitable habitat overlapping with agricultural land.



Biodiversity footprinting can help identify the species which are most disturbed, on average, by each agricultural commodity. It has been found useful to select a focal species to monitor and conserve. This focal species may be the most affected species or simply a species of particular interest. Carla presented the example of lamb production, as it is a common agricultural commodity in our region. The Diamond Firetail, a small finch which is dependent on native grass-seed for its survival, is the species most impacted by sheep grazing right across Australia. Managing sheep grazing in such a way as to protect the long-term survival of the Diamond Firetail is very likely to allow other native fauna species, that also depend on this native grassland habitat, to persist and thrive into the future. In our area the Diamond Firetail is fairly rare, so another species that shares similar habitat could become the focal species, for example the Red-browed Firetail which is common in this area.

One of Carla's PhD students is working on an app linking biodiversity footprints to food products on the supermarket shelves. She has calculated the habitat impacted by 65,000 food products in Australian supermarkets and we saw some interesting data, the form of which was quite difficult to interpret at this stage. The project goal is to develop a user-friendly app. that you can look up when shopping to find out, for example, which sweet biscuit brand makes a smaller habitat impact. The data presented showed a high fauna habitat footprint for the egg industries and this promoted a lively discussion. It appears the high figure is mainly due to production of chicken feed (pellets consisting of grain, meat and other inputs). A question was asked about why salmon appeared to have a much lower impact than eggs. We learned that, as we expected, the salmon meat industry also has a very high fauna habitat footprint, also due to

The 'woven woollen network'.

the production of feed, but as the salmon pellet feed is produced overseas Carla and her team couldn't map it accurately. There is further research on the go, so we'll watch this space with interest for comparisons of the biodiversity footprint of various protein sources – animal and plant-based – down the track.

There was an unexpected bonus at the end of the talk which brought the topic closer to home. Carla turned briefly to the role of private landholders in the conservation of biodiversity. She asked us to put up our hands if we wanted to respond to the question: **What conservation actions am I doing on my land and what do I appreciate about the natural environment/nature?** She then threw a ball of wool to someone with their hand up; whoever caught it spoke, then holding the wool, threw the ball on to the next person with their hand up, whoever caught it answered the question then threw it on again. There was energy and excitement as we heard members of our Landcare community passionately describing some of the actions they are taking for nature at their place. We looked around and saw a 'woven woollen' network of people linked by their care for nature – as Carla called it "a conservation network, all working towards the same goal".

As Helen Scott wrote in the last issue, by considering our gardens as ecosystems within a larger environment, biodiversity can be cultivated in each place creating stepping stones helping to link our fragmented natural areas. As Carla's research reinforces, whether we are farmers or not, whatever we grow or produce at our place, the impact on nature of our land management makes a difference. Landcare supports us all to consciously take actions that provide habitat and increase biodiversity. That way we create a mosaic of stepping stones for many species across the landscape.

Protecting threatened species and repairing the landscape in Deep Creek

Volunteers in the Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network have been key players in on-ground partnerships protecting waterway health and threatened species and are leading the creation of a significant Biolink corridor project to restore habitat in a fragmented landscape and help koalas and other wildlife to safely move along Deep Creek.

The Yarra Pygmy Perch is an endangered small-bodied native fish, which is under threat from habitat loss, competition and predation from introduced fish and a decreasing availability of water. Melbourne's last remaining wild



Yarra Pygmy Perch (Nannoperca obscura).
Image: Native Fish Australia website.

population exists in the Deep Creek catchment, a waterway that regularly dries into isolated refuge pools that are highly dependent on rainfall and groundwater during the summer.

Volunteers from the Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network have been working with Melbourne Water to track the condition of refuge pools over dry periods and ensure they provide the critical levels to support the fish's survival. This monitoring program acts as a warning signal that triggers an emergency response when water levels drop perilously low, which has occurred three times over the last decade. This typically involves trucking in thousands of litres of water to top up pools until the next rainfall event. The groups have also assisted with mapping the distribution of the fish through the catchment with environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling.

This year's survey of critical Yarra Pygmy Perch habitats has shown an increase in the size of the population, showing these strongholds continue to support the species especially in drier seasons.

Along with taking action to protect the Yarra Pygmy Perch, the Landcare network has progressed to developing a Biolink project that aims to improve the connectivity of habitats in the fragmented landscape surrounding Deep Creek.

Many native species still exist in the Maribyrnong catchment but are substantially confined to remaining pockets of remnant woodland, forests and grasslands that have been disconnected and isolated from each other. This disconnect makes it dangerous or impossible for some species to travel

between pockets of habitat, leading to smaller populations with poorer genetics, and puts them at greater risk of destructive events such as drought, fires or floods.

The Deep Creek Biolink project has focused on the area between Newham and Romsey, using Deep Creek as

the connector between multiple properties, establishing new patches of vegetation to bridge the gap between existing remnant habitats such as Cobaw State Forest and other similar projects – including the Cobaw Biolink and Mt William Range Biolink.

It also forms the basis of a more ambitious plan – connecting Melbourne to Echuca through the Maribyrnong and Campaspe rivers. Over the long term this project will provide better habitat and facilitate the movement of koalas, platypus, brush-tailed phascogales, woodland birds and provide ecological benefits to many other species.

With the assistance of the Biolinks Alliance, the Deep Creek Biolink has gathered the interest of a number of landholders with properties that back onto the waterway. Farm plans have been developed with ecologists advising on targeted habitat restoration that reduces the barrier for animals to move along the landscape and provide ecological services to properties.

As the project has been planned out and farm plans have been developed, on-ground actions are already underway. A series of presentations and workshops have been rolled out to encourage landholders to sign up for the Biolink project. Various local landholders have hosted site visits to showcase the physical reality and benefits of habitat restoration along the stream frontage, as well as school excursions that have inspired young students to learn more about the life in and around our waterways.

The Junior Landcare program facilitated by Emma



Stevens has organised a number of interactive lessons and planting activities along Deep Creek with local schools, kickstarting the work needed to restore the forests and grasslands that used to wind through the catchment and encouraging the next generation in ways to take care of country. Small scale nurseries set up by Deep Creek Landcare Group volunteer Ken Allender and Bolinda Primary School are providing locally grown plants to help with the revegetation and restoration works.

Visit Biolinks Alliance

<https://biolinksalliance.org.au/deep-creek-biolink> to find out more information on the Deep Creek Biolink project, and Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network

<https://www.upperdeepcreeklandcare.org.au/> for



the latest news and support available for landholders and community.

By Richard Akers (Waterwatch Coordinator, Customer, Community & External Affairs Melbourne Water).

Bruce's Rainfall Report

As usual, the Autumn rain was up and down and all over the place. We started April with a low total of only 42mm in Woodend and 23mm at Newham. It was looking a bit grim, with warmer temperatures evaporating the dam, and pumped irrigation to keep the gardens going. May provided a bit of respite with almost average falls in Woodend and Newham with 69 and 77 mm respectively. June started with announcements of *El Nino* being confirmed, and drier conditions forecast through until Spring, at least. A couple of promising rain systems fizzled out in the first half, then came a promising significant event towards the end of June. It ended up with a big fall giving total rain in June at 173mm for Woodend and 161mm for Newham. The respective Year-to-end-of-June figures brought totals to above average at 452mm and 433mm

THEN IT CONTINUED COMING DOWN !! Writing on 5 July, we had 117mm over the 6 days at Newham, and at long last the catchment is saturated, and the dam has risen 70cm, giving great peace-of-mind for the coming season. Peter Yates in Woodend comments that 'While there has been some flooding and lots of fallen trees, we seem to have avoided major flooding so far, probably due to the fact that the downpours have been interspersed with a few rain free days, allowing the creeks to drop a little before filling up again.' Dunno what *El Nino* will bring, but at least the subsoil is damp/wet for the first time in many months.

Here's to a damp Spring— yeah, well the weeds will explode, won't they?? 'We'll all be ROONED, said Hanrahan....'

Members' plant supply

For well over a decade, we have obtained many, many thousands of indigenous plants in tubes for our incredible members and community to plant into our wonderful local environment, which enables us all to enjoy and embrace where we live. This commitment continues our efforts to enhance, expand and nurture the active and ongoing Cobaw Biolink Project.

The Plant Sub Committee will again this year approach TreeProject (TP) to supply the bulk of our member plant orders for the autumn 2027 planting.

Members who are seeking plants must place your orders prior to 23rd September 2026. So please start thinking about the numbers and species you would like to order. We will be sending an email to members in the next few weeks.

TP is a not for profit organisation that uses urban and rural communities working together to put trees back on the land. Their network of trained volunteers grows indigenous seedlings for rural landholders and Landcare groups who need their help with revegetation. The seed is sourced from as close as possible to the area in which the planting will occur. Over 3 million plants have been placed into the environment by TP since its inception.



Their team of volunteers, including some of our members, contribute their time and hard work to propagate and care for seedlings of Indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses in their own backyards.

We will also utilise Western Plains Flora to access species not available through TreeProject.

For those wishing to plant this spring, we will have quite a few plants available that have been held over through winter from the last growing season, that were not sufficiently mature to plant. We will forward a list of these plants in September.

Please communicate with Penny Roberts penroberts@bigpond.com (0418396837) and Howard Stirling howardjanine01@gmail.com (0432809314).

Newham's Bush Tucker

Another of our Australian flora traditionally used as food and medicine by Aboriginal peoples who have been in Australia for over 60,000 years is the Native Raspberry (*Rubus parvifolius*). Here in Victoria the small-leaf bramble (*Rubus parvifolius*) is highly frost tolerant and is an excellent habitat and food plant for birds and our small wildlife.

It is a scrambling, prickly shrub with wrinkled, bright green leaves and produces small pink flowers (Oct–Dec) followed by sweet, juicy red berries (Dec–April).

Indigenous Australians traditionally used Native Raspberry primarily as a seasonal food source and for medicinal purposes. The sweet red berries were gathered and eaten fresh, while the leaves were brewed into a tea for various ailments.

Thank you Penny Roberts for propagating and making us aware of those little gems.



Images: Mornington Peninsula Image Landcare Network.



Birds need protection

Jane Trikojus

One day I saw a raptor flying along with a crying bird in its talons and realised secrecy was as important as food for little birds.

Honeyeaters, fantails and wrens love our birdbath, sheltering beneath thorny roses, lilacs and a Tuscan cypress. There are many twigs where they can perch hidden from above.

It is an earthenware flowerpot saucer on a 60 cm high stand – we try to keep it clean and filled with fresh rainwater.



This garden has a good range of indigenous and exotic trees, shrubs, vines and flowers to hide in. Some birds, like the red-browed finches, rely on crowd confusion when feeding in the open but like to then dive into hiding. The most popular tree is the 300-year-old swamp gum (*Euc. ovata*) with hollows for pardalotes and rosellas. We've found a wren's nest in a laburnum tree, a honeyeater's nest



in sticky weed among roses and another in an ornamental grapevine on an innerspring mattress frame. There are the inevitable mud nests of blackbirds out of sight in the pruned box balls.

The dam attracts water birds – ducks, herons, a spoonbill and cormorants but we need more reeds and rushes for nesting. Ibis and purple swamp hens stand on top of an arch we put up for a climbing rose. Magpies nest in the tallest trees in Wesley Park and visit here for nesting materials.

We realised there were scrubwrens when we uncovered a fat baby in a ball of bark under a pile

of branches. These dry prunings had been placed under a large cypress tree and had kept their leathery leaves. The scrub wrens have since come into the carport near the back door and made nests in baskets and in a collection of dried flowers.



When we arrived eleven years ago the grey shrike-thrush had nested in the back carport but it subsequently came close to the back door and we put up a high shelf where it has successfully raised babies.

One night, blackbirds which had nested on a cupboard just outside the door were running in the dark screeching and we thought an owl or rats must have taken their young. There are at least two omnivorous brush-tailed possums in the swamp gum. A currawong periodically comes hunting for nestlings and a feral cat has been seen next door.

We share a fence with Wesley Park where Landcare's bird monitoring device detected 77 species.

All these observations made us aware and understand more about the different needs for shelter and nesting sites for small birds and have resulted in a more interesting garden.

