

TOOMUC LANDCARE newsletter

Proudly sponsored by Melbourne Water

Spring 2013



This Newsletter

It has been 2 years since our last newsletter, so this is a great opportunity to reflect on some of the great results the community has achieved over the last several years. Dozens of kilometres of fences have been erected within the Valley, many tens of thousands of native trees and shrubs planted and countless thousands of weeds destroyed. All of this has been achieved with good humour and community spirit which is rare these days. Please encourage others to participate. New members are most welcome. Contact Joy at 5942 7298.

Website Now Up and Running!

Toomuc Landcare now has its own website. It was time to catch up with technology and create a resource for everyone in the area. The website was designed to give people a far greater picture of what the Landcare group is up to and to give regular updates on the progress of projects. It will also pass on information and skills. For example there are plans of how to make your own bird boxes.

By far the items that we are getting the most

positive feedback on are some of the pictures and videos. Don Petty has been placing cameras around Chambers Reserve and we have been able to get some remarkable vision of the local wildlife; especially of male lyrebirds doing their unique mating song and dance. Everyone is staggered that this is happening right at our back doorstep.

Come and have a look yourself at:
www.toomuclandcare.com.au

Operation 100



Over the last 18 months, thanks to the combined effort of several schools and some very active individuals the dream of placing 100 nest boxes throughout Toomuc Valley is nearly a reality. Already there has been some great success stories. Don Petty has had Eastern Rosellas nesting within metres of

his shed. The breeding pair moved in within a few weeks of the nest box being erected. They successfully raised 2 young within the season.

I personally have 6 nest boxes located within 100 metres of our house and all have possums living in them. We have Ringtail Possums, Brushtail Possums and a breeding pair of Sugar Gliders. It just shows how high the demand is for the nesting hollows in our Valley. We have put many different types of nest boxes to attract a great range of both bird and mammal species. The most ambitious project however has been the

placing in Chambers Reserve of several nest boxes suitable for the Powerful Owl. A pair has been in the area for several years but because suitable hollows are lacking have not been mating. Check out the website for more photos of the boxes or download plans to build your own:

www.toomuclandcare.com.au



Alex and Don risking life and limb setting up the nest boxes!

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Upcoming Events

LOOK OUT FOR THE PHOTO COMPETITION!

In the next few weeks we shall announce a competition for the best photo taken at Chambers Reserve and within Toomuc Valley, details and entry form will be available via the website.

PLANTING

10am - Sun 15th Sept
At: John & Kathy Lorimer's
180 Leppitt Rd. BBQ afterwards

Membership Now Due!

Your \$10 annual fee is now due and payable to our Treasurer Joy Carberry Ph : 5942 7298

Your membership fee insures you when you participate in our projects. You are also entitled to use our equipment and obtain some herbicide. By joining you can also have your property assessed for possible grants for both fencing and plantings which can be worth thousands of dollars. You don't have to be Green to join, just care.

What Bird is That?

The Rainbow Lorikeet is a member of the parrot family. What makes it different from most parrots is its tongue. Most parrots tongues are like a little finger that helps them when they are cracking open seeds. However the lorikeets family has a brush tongue which it uses to extract nectar from flowering plants.

Very noisy and sometimes aggressive to other birds, it can be heard feeding in the top of flowering gum trees. When nectar is not available it will sometimes come in to feed on seed in bird feeders. Originally not that common in these areas, it has benefited from the increase in the planting of native flowering trees.

For more information on this and other birds in the area you can obtain 'Birds of Cardinia' by downloading a copy from the website.



Rainbow Lorikeet

Did You Know?



MALE GALAH

The Galah is very hard to identify between sexes - they both look the same. However if you are lucky enough to get close to them you will notice some have brown coloured eyes and some have pink coloured eyes. The boys have brown and the girls have pink.

KOOKABURRAS

Kookaburras are the largest member of the kingfisher family.



Back from the Brink!



We have some great news; for many years fauna surveys have not identified the presence of bandicoots north of the Princes Highway. The last confirmed sighting was of a dead bandicoot found on Bourke Creek Rd some 10 years ago.

Toomuc Landcare has been sponsoring Alex Maisey who has been setting cat traps in Chambers Reserve. The traps aim to help reduce the number of feral cats that have been killing the native wildlife.

There was great surprise on Alex's face when several weeks ago he found a healthy bandicoot in one of his traps. Since then vision of a bandicoot has been captured on one of the cameras set up within the reserve.

This is a very encouraging sign and also shows how important it is to try and reduce the devastating impact that both foxes and feral cats have on our wildlife.

Check out the vision on the website.

Field Nats come to Chambers



One of the several species of bats caught over the weekend

Last summer many locals were treated to a real surprise when a group of Field Naturalists from The Victorian Field Naturalists Group spent the weekend surveying the fauna at Chambers Reserve at the head of Toomuc Valley.

This dedicated group of people have special permits so they can trap and record native wildlife in the area.

The weekend started on Friday afternoon with the setting up of special nets that are designed to capture the tiny little carnivorous bats. The nets are placed across open areas where the bats like to hunt for insects. They are made from a series of fine fishing lines which the bats can't detect. When they fly into them they slide down the fishing line and into the bottom of the net. Next a series of mammal traps of different sizes and in different types of vegetation were laid out to try and capture a broad range of native mammals. During this process the Field Nats. came across a large tree goanna, a species which has not been seen in these areas for years.

After dark a spot lighting walk was organised. There was so much interest in the walk that approximately 50 local residents turned up to participate! We broke off into several groups and spent just over an hour looking for nocturnal critters. Due to weather conditions it was not a



Antechinus (marsupial mouse) munching on someone's finger!

great result but the week earlier in a similar walk we saw Ring Tail Possums, Brush Tail Possums, Bobuck Possums, Sugar Gliders, Yellow Bellied Gliders, Greater Gliders and Powerful Owls.

The next morning both the bat nets and the mammal traps were checked. It is important to do this as early as possible to cause as little stress to the animals as possible. The bat traps had several species of different types of bats that were popped into little canvas bags so they could be measured and sexed later on. These little bats are only the size of a small mouse but are very efficient hunters and eat a large number of flying insects. On a warm night you can sometimes hear their high pitched chirps.



Setting up bat traps

Bush Rats and Antechinus were found in the mammal traps. In some areas their numbers were low, probably due to foxes and cats in the area. Each animal was weighed and sexed before being released back in the same spot where they were first caught.

Afterwards it was back to the picnic grounds for breakfast and to watch the bats' details being recorded. This was an extremely interesting opportunity to see these strange little animals up close and to have explained the subtle differences between the different species. The bats are held in a cool dark place during the day and then are released at night at the same place they were captured.

Late Saturday afternoon was spent setting up the traps and nets again for the nocturnal critters. Don and Sue Petty opened up their house to everyone involved and put on a fantastic BBQ.

During the night one of the more interesting things was the analysing of a Powerful Owl's pellets that had been discovered during the day. The pellets are created when the owls eat their prey and cannot

digest the bones and fur from the animals properly they regurgitate them and spit them out. From the bones the Field Nats told us that the owls had been feeding on Yellow Bellied Gliders, a fairly large possum. Overall a great night was had by all.

Sunday morning was a repeat of the previous day checking of nets and traps. Again the traps had caught a combination of Bush Rats and Antechinus in fairly small numbers. However the bat nets had a lot more bats in them this time, probably due to the relocation of a few of the nets that did not yield too much the night before. After the recording of the details the animals were released and all the traps were collected and the nets pulled down.

During the whole weekend the thing that really struck me was the passion the field naturalists had for the animals and the bush and how willing they were to explain and share their knowledge. They were also impressed with our local community's involvement. The information they have gathered is extremely valuable as it now gives us a benchmark to see whether the local population of animals is increasing or decreasing. If we put in place certain programs to try and reduce feral animals in the area we can hopefully see many of the local fauna species increase in numbers and diversity. We hope that the Field Nats. make our Reserve a regular on their calendar.

If you would like to know more about the program and see more pictures of the weekend please have a look at our website www.toomuclandcare.com.au



Setting up mammal traps



Warming up with breakfast and a fire



Lyre Bird Survey

For the last three years, usually on a cold and bleak morning in the middle of winter, a brave (or crazy) group of people meet up at Chambers Reserve well before the sun comes up. Moving off in small groups to pre-determined points throughout the bush armed with compasses and notepads we sit and wait.

As the sun comes up the bush starts to come alive with the sounds of bushlife. What we are listening for are the sounds of the male Lyrebirds making their territorial call from their roosting tree.

By plotting the time and direction of the call we are able to establish the number of male lyrebirds in the area, and therefore an indication of whether the population is increasing or decreasing.



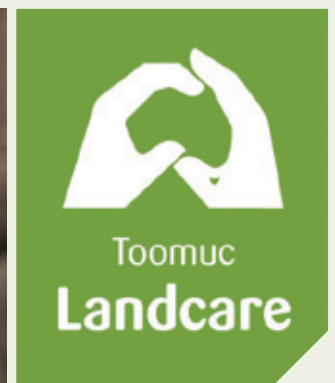
Female lyrebird feeding her young last year in Chambers Reserve

After the collation of the data it seems to show that the population is static. The large number of feral cats and foxes in the area is probably the reason that the population is not increasing.

By about 7.30am it was all over and the team met back at the picnic ground where we were treated to a hot breakfast and a warm fire. (Special thanks to Don's sister who stayed behind to keep the kettle boiling).

This year it was very encouraging to see so many new faces at this survey who are all happy to be involved in the future. If you would like to be a part of the next survey please respond to our email invitation.

You don't have to be green to join, just care!



www.toomuclandcare.com.au

For further information regarding Toomuc Landcare:

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