

Environmental News

Edition 49

www.casey.vic.gov.au/environment

Possum Magic

A group of 13-year-old girls from Beaconhills College in Berwick are proving that you are never too young to make a difference.



Tens of millions of Victoria's native wildlife perished in the 2009 Victorian bushfires and ten of Australia's most threatened species were affected, including the Leadbeater's Possum, Victoria's faunal emblem.

Elly Robertson and Ellie and Mollie Travica live very close to the affected areas so understood the impact of the Victorian bushfires well. Along with their fourth group member, Emma Falkenberg, they learned that there was a tiny marsupial now on the brink of extinction, its situation made even worse by the devastating bushfires.

The girls formed a group called HELP (Helping Endangered Leadbeater's Possums) and identified three critical areas needing immediate support – food, shelter and habitat.

HELP is raising awareness in the local community to get as many nesting boxes sponsored as possible. The girls have a wristband drive running at Beaconhills College which is also being supported by

Healesville Sanctuary. So far, they have directly and indirectly sponsored more than 70 nesting boxes, equating to more than \$10,000.

The challenging project has taught the group a great deal. 'Not only do we think more creatively and positively about issues but we have developed a more active interest in the community and the future. We have thought a lot about the future and, by working with various organisations, have learned about complex environmental, sustainability and conservation issues', Elly said.

In October, the girls were awarded Grand Champions in Future Problem Solving, an international educational program focussing on the development of critical thinking skills. The competition empowers students to take responsibility for implementing positive solutions to community problems.

'The Leadbeater's Possum is uniquely important. It is only found in Victoria in three small colonies. The species could never be replaced. Hope for this endangered species lies in the hands of young people like us who care enough to make a difference', said Elly.

Some other actions the group has taken for the project include:

- Attended a bushfire recovery forum
- Interviewed for ABC TV's Stateline program
- Joined volunteer group Friends of the Leadbeater's Possum
- Featured on Network Ten's children's program Totally Wild
- Participated in a Wildlife Emergency school holiday program at Healesville Sanctuary
- Attended a research activity with Parks Victoria
- Lobbied State Government for the Leadbeater's Possum to be considered to feature on motor vehicle registration stickers

For more information on the HELP group go to www.helpbp.com.

Casey Residents Making Small Changes to have a Big Impact

Mr Atila Barta from Endeavour Hills recently wrote to us telling us about the green actions that he has implemented in his home and how others can improve their green credentials. Here are some great tips:

- Compost at home
- Remember to use the half flush button on your toilet to save water
- Reduce your shower time and frequency
- Mulch all garden beds to reduce water loss
- Re-use grey water
- Share home grown produce with others
- Increase your roof insulation
- Install energy saving light globes
- Install water efficient showerheads

Growing a Green Web

The City of Casey's 2009 Growing a Green Web program has had a successful planting season with 21 schools and community groups working together to improve their local environment by planting 20,000 indigenous plants around the City of Casey. Planting sites include Rutter Park in Tooradin, Harold Keys Reserve in Narre Warren, Sweeney Reserve in Berwick, Kurll Park in Narre Warren North, Betula Reserve in Doveton and Powerline Park in Cranbourne.

In addition to the Growing a Green Web program, the City of Casey received funding through the Living

Links project and has planted an additional 10,000 indigenous plants along Eumemmering creek and Troupes creek.

The aim of these plantings is to provide habitat and wildlife corridors throughout the City of Casey for a range of indigenous species.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who shared their time and put in a great effort.

If you would like to be a part of the Green Web program in 2010 please contact Casey's Revegetation Officer on 9705 5200.



Friends of Warneet Environmental Group



The Friends of Warneet Environmental Group was established in 1981 and have been working together to protect the environmental values of the Warneet area by controlling weeds and increasing and protecting biodiversity. Friends meet informally to carry out works in their area. There are approximately 20 members of the group with interests ranging from bird watching to commenting on strategic plans and strategies.

If you are environmentally-minded or enjoy working towards a common goal and wish to become involved in your local bushland reserve please contact the City of Casey's Revegetation Officer on 9705 5200.

Image from: Anis Dzedins, Friends of Warneet Environmental Group

2009 CASEY CLOTH NAPPY EXPO - A SUCCESS



The 2009 Cloth Nappy Expo was held on Saturday 10 October at Balla Balla Centre in Cranbourne. There were 16 stallholders selling all kinds of cloth nappies, nappy wipes, green cleaners, organic clothing and sustainable toys. Two hundred visitors to the expo helped to make the day a success, with a great shopping atmosphere.

Many visitors saw Modern Cloth Nappies for the first time, and there was opportunity to find out all about cloth nappies. Cloth nappies are cheaper for parents, better for the baby and better for the environment. Every disposable nappy thrown away is still sitting in landfill today, and will still be for hundreds of years to come. Cloth nappies are an easy system to use and studies have shown that using cloth instead of disposables can save up to \$5,000 per child in nappies, with less than an extra ten minutes of effort per day. That's a small price to pay for such a huge saving!



Top photo: Deniz Yildirim of MiniTribe with Ellen Kearns and Vicky Tait. Bottom Photo: Narelle and Darryl Snowden with baby Amber, Mel Jenkinson from Baby Beehinds and Melinda Bito from Eco Toys.

What's The Fuss About Bottled Water?

There have been plenty of news stories in recent times about banning bottled water and discouraging the purchase and reuse of bottled water. So, what is all the fuss about?

Australians spend over half a billion dollars on bottled water each year. It is estimated that about 200 ml of oil is used to produce each litre bottle of water, including the production, packaging, transportation and refrigeration. As a result, at least 50 million

litres of oil is used in the manufacture and distribution of bottled water in Australia every year.

Transporting bottled water is also a significant generator of greenhouse gases and the refrigeration needed for bottled water also causes emissions, and bottled spring water can sometimes put unsustainable pressure on natural aquifers.

Many water bottles become litter or end up in landfill. Only a small portion is

actually recycled. Australia only recycles approximately 36 percent of PET plastic drink bottles.

If that's not enough reason to avoid bottled water; how about the unnecessary cost? The cost for one litre of bottled water is up to 2,500 times the cost of tap water.

To join the Bottled Water Alliance visit www.bottledwateralliance.com.au.

Chisholm Goes Bush Tucker

Written by: Sue Potter and Nicole Kramer - CLM students

A new and exciting opportunity presented itself at Chisholm Institute Cranbourne, this year. Horticulture and Land Conservation students now have a designated area to establish a sustainable Koori Bush Food Garden on site. The Koori Bush Food Garden will form an integral part of the Institutes new orchard which was built earlier this year.

Produce harvested will be used in Chisholm's training restaurants at Rosebud (Casuarina), Frankston (Bunurong) and Dandenong (Birches). Seed and cuttings collected will provide a great opportunity for students to propagate food plants in the future as a healthy alternative and an additional food source to commercially grown crops, which will be on offer for sale to the local community.

Horticulture and Land Conservation students and teachers see the project as a fabulous way of promoting indigenous foods as sustainable food sources and easy to grow garden plants to industry and

the general public. The Koori Bush Food Garden is also to be seen as a platform to explore and develop relationships with the traditional owners of the land.

Information sharing links have already been developed with representatives in the City of Casey, some local bush food gardens such as the Eumemmerring Food Garden in Doveton, and the garden has the support of Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. Further relationships will be developed over time to enhance the research and educational potential of the Koori Bush Food Garden, as well as introducing more new and unusual plants.

A grant of \$1,000 has been successfully secured through the City of Casey's 2008/2009 Conservation Initiative Grant in order to produce durable and informative name plates for all of the garden's plants. For further information relating to the project please contact Chisholm Institute Cranbourne on 5990 7172.

Bush Food Species for Your Garden

- Bush Tomato, Desert Raisin (*Solanum centrale*) A wonderfully rich, earthy alternative to dried tomatoes
- Brown Plum Pine (*Podocarpus elatus*) Berries have a distinct plum - pine flavour
- Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) Harvested for its wonderful lemon flavoured and scented leaves
- Midgenberry (*Austromyrtus dulci*) Produces lovely softly scented speckled fruit
- Mountain Pepperbush (*Tasmannia lanceolata*) Seed and leaves are harvested as a substitute for traditional black pepper
- Muntries (*Kunzea pomifera*) Highly sought after cinnamon/apple flavoured fruit
- Riberry (*Syzygium leuhmannii*) An excellent ingredient for jellies and sauces
- Ruby Salt Bush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*) Bright red salty sweet berries that can be eaten fresh or prepared

WEEDBUSTING AT CANNONS CREEK



Now the weather is warming a little, everything in the garden is growing, including the weeds!

Whilst you are cursing the weeds in your vegetable patch, spare a thought for the weeds invading Casey's precious remnants of natural vegetation.

The first week in September was Weed Buster Week and the Cannons Creek Foreshore Committee held what Chairman Russell Spier described as a 'Weedathon' targeting Boneseed (*Crysanthemoides monillifera*) and Flax Leafed Broom (*Genista linifolia*).

A continuous 'Weedathon' is what we need to reduce the invaders that are taking over our natural bushland remnants; and the later we leave it, the more likely weed plants are to have set seeds. This means a bigger task as you need to take the weed plant away, rather than just pulling it up or cutting and poisoning it and leaving it to compost naturally on site, which can be done early in the weed season.

You can get your free copy of Casey's Weed Identification Guide by contacting the City of Casey on 9705 5200 or visiting www.casey.vic.gov.au to see what weeds you have growing in your area.

See our regular column Take Action on Weeds for more information.

Article contributed by and photo of: Don Jewell

OVERLOADED GREEN WASTE BINS

Many Casey residents are carrying out extensive pruning and lawn mowing this spring, which is causing issues during kerbside collection.

Casey is urging residents to remember that the lifting arm on the green waste truck can only lift 80 kg in weight. Any bins heavier than this will not be collected as they cannot physically be lifted by the truck.

As there are over 75,000 pick-ups to be made each collection, it is not possible for the contractor to return and collect the bin; even if it is lightened by the resident. Residents then have to wait until the next fortnightly collection.

Lawn clippings cause the most issues. This material has a high water content and compacts in the bin very easily. A full bin will weigh well over 100 kg and even a partially full bin could easily exceed the 80 kg limit. If a bin is hard to push it could be over the limit. It may be necessary to hold some of the material back for the next collection.

In order to avoid the problems of overloaded, heavy bins residents should not place soil, stumps, rocks and building materials in the green waste bins and lawn clippings should be kept to a reasonable amount. Green waste material should

also be loosened to reduce the effects of compaction.

If you have any issues please contact City of Casey Customer Service on 9705 5200.



take action on WEEDS

with Don Jewell

Are you concerned about the natural environment? Some of the problems we face seem huge - but weed removal is something everyone can make a contribution to in their local area - even children. "Think global, act local," the saying is.

Instead of detailing a single weed, for this Spring-Summer season, we are listing a number of common weeds that invade our native bushland and farmlands. For details on their exact identification, and the best method of eradicating them, please refer to Casey's free Weed Identification Guide.

A selection of common weeds to target:

Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*): a declared noxious weed. Upright bush with yellow daisy flowers and green berries (turning black as they ripen). Pull up small ones, cut large plants off just above ground and poison.



Flax leaved Broom (*Genista linifolia*): spreading bush with yellow pea shaped flowers and flat hairy pods (poisonous). Very common on roadsides and invading bushland. Similar treatment as for Boneseed.

Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*): highly invasive creeper with green berries that turn red in summer. Spray with herbicide or dig up the roots which can regrow, and remove the berries.

Angled Onion (*Alium triquetrum*): green strap-like leaves and a white flower. Grows from a bulb and smells strongly of onion. Common on roadsides, gutters and drainage. Spray or dig up plant, including bulb.

Contributed by Don Jewell, Community Member, Conservation Advisory Committee

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