

Annual Report 2016

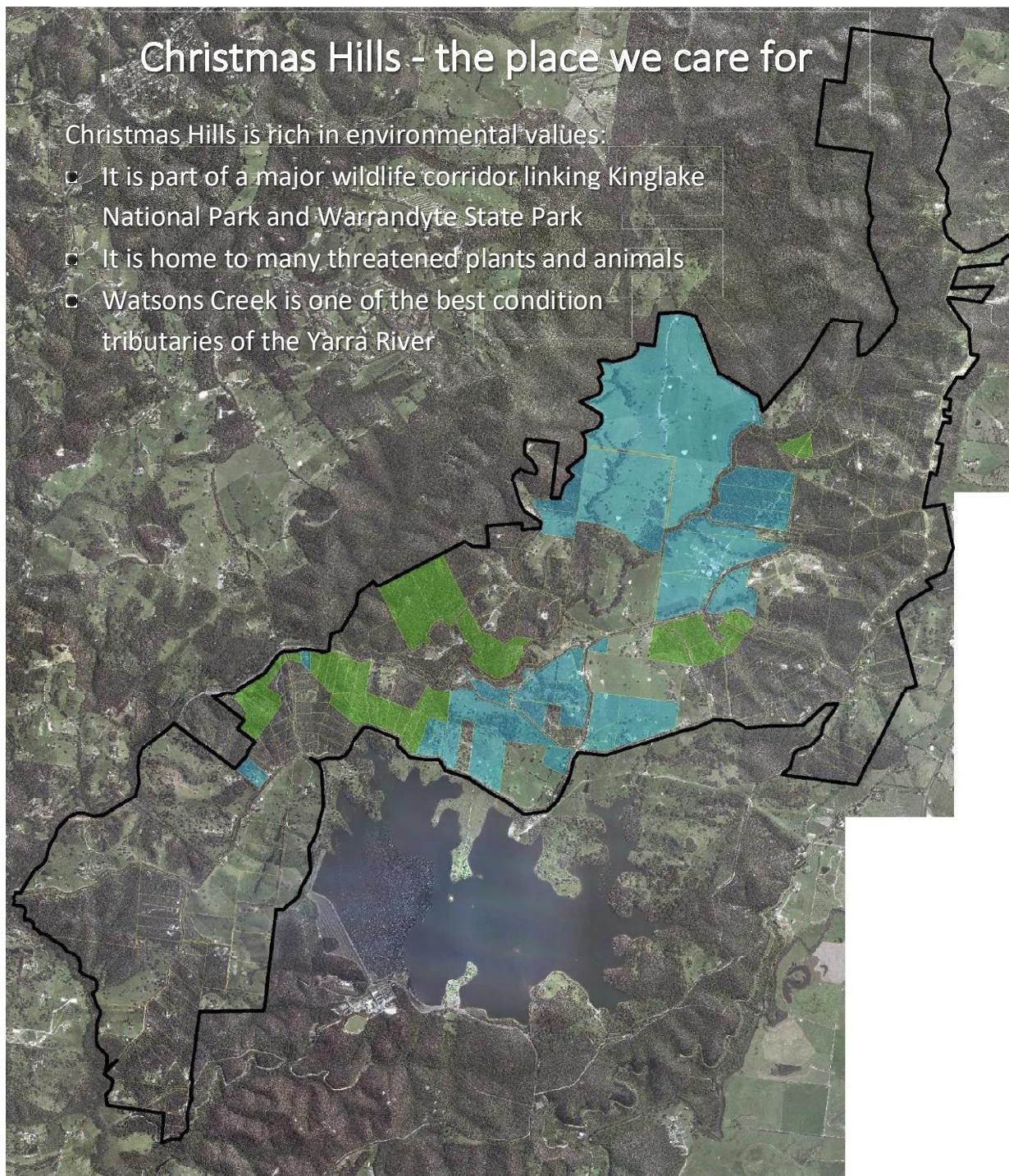


Christmas
Hills Landcare
Group



Christmas Hills
Landcare Group

Background



- The group boundary encompasses an area of 2550 hectares comprised of 248 land parcels, but with probably no more than 180 land owners
- Melbourne Water owns 56 land parcels within the Christmas Hills Landcare Group area – some are leased (blue), the rest are managed for conservation (green)
- Christmas Hills is traditional country of the Wurundjeri people

Formation of the Christmas Hills Landcare Group

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group in its current form came into being following a community gathering in October 2005 designed to assess the level of interest in forming a group.

The good turnout and a couple of trial ‘property visit’ based events late in 2005 made it clear that the level of interest was strong and at the CHLG event in March 2006, a number of people put their hand up to help run the group. Other than a Treasurer, specific ‘office bearer’ roles were not defined and an informal committee of Rob Shackleton (Treasurer), Mark Gardner, Wayne O’Donovan, Margo Heeley, Phil Styles, Bridget Bainbridge and Doug Evans was formed.

Probably as a consequence of the informality of this committee, they rarely met, yet over time the Landcare group continued to grow in profile and membership, projects became increasingly ambitious in scale and complexity, and multiple projects were on the go at once.

In December 2010 the group held its first official AGM to elect a management committee for the group, with Doug Evans, Rob Shackleton, Nicole Noy, Ross Coupar, Mark Gardner, Kylie Moppert and Tina Keene duly elected onto the inaugural committee for 2011.

Each year the CHLG seeks to deliver a series of events and projects that aim to engage landholders in Christmas Hills, connect them to our local natural environmental values, develop their understanding and skills to manage these values, remove obstacles to action, and connect them to each other socially.

Through partnerships of various types, the CHLG is also developing its relationships with other Landcare groups, the shire and other agencies to extend its influence and leverage.

We do all this to help Christmas Hills landholders protect and enhance the rich diversity of natural environmental values we are custodians of here in Christmas Hills.



Strategic direction



Photo by Will Mitchell

Vision

All Christmas Hills landholders working together in a coordinated and collaborative way to care for and sustain the environmental assets we value in Christmas Hills



Mission

To engage with Christmas Hills landholders and establish relationships with and between them, leading to them taking coordinated action on their respective properties that protect and sustain the environmental assets of Christmas Hills

Strategic pathways

To fulfil our mission effectively we need to:

1. Understand what our environmental assets are, why we value them, what threatens them, and what needs to be done where to protect and sustain them. How?

- Access existing information on environmental assets of Christmas Hills
- Access existing expertise on environmental assets of Christmas Hills
- Conduct community-based research to fill information gaps as required
- Document in a map-based plan

2. Engage all the landholders that have a role to play in protecting and sustaining these assets. How?

- Build the profile, respect and trust of the group in the community
- Regular promotion and communications with clear and consistent messages
- Recruit new and retain existing members
- Establish and strengthen personal connections through social activities
- Be inclusive - hold events that appeal to members and non-members alike

3. Help each landholder understand what needs to be done and work out how they can integrate this with their own aspirations for their property. How?

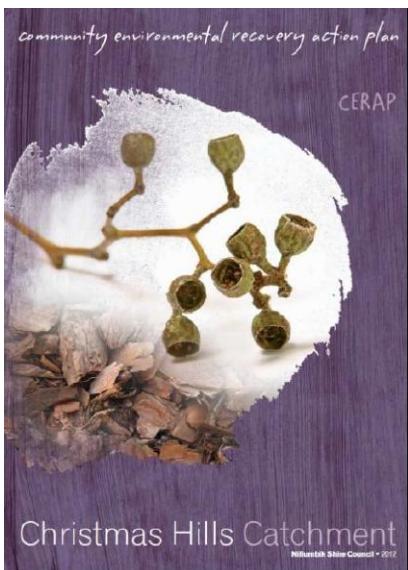
- Communicate the map-based plan of Christmas Hills environmental assets, threats and required action to landholders
- Translate and interpret the group's objectives and action priorities from the plan to property scale

4. Coordinate and support landholders to take action on their property. How?

- Develop landholder knowledge and skills through guest speakers, demonstrations, training, etc.
- Develop and deliver projects to remove obstacles that prevent landholders taking action (such as insufficient time, skills, funds, etc.)

5. Integrate our efforts, and collaborate with others who have a shared interest in the environmental assets of Christmas Hills. How?

- Communicate the map-based plan of Christmas Hills environmental assets, threats and required action to potential partners (eg Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Nillumbik Shire, Yarra Ranges Shire, Wurundjeri, university researchers, prospective sponsors)
- Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with those that can help us



The Christmas Hills Community Environmental Action Plan consolidates information on the environmental assets of Christmas Hills and also guides landholder action in a map-based format.



Chair's report 2016

What a year! Firstly, I'd like to thank the 2016 committee for their energy, focus and good humour during the year, with special thanks to Tina, Sally and Nev who hosted one or more meetings during the year, and ensured we were well fed before each meeting got started.

Due to a changed trapping schedule resulting from a delay in receiving the associated grant, the fox trapping program from 2015 spilled over into 2016, requiring us to hold an event earlier in the year than usual – an afternoon of washing and drying fox stomach contents!

Significantly, 2016 represented our tenth year of helping Christmas Hills landholders care for our local environment, so in February we held our 10th birthday party! It was a wonderful celebration of the group's endeavours, and a fun reward for the 68 people who joined in the games, music, dancing and cake cutting, not to mention the AGM!

Happy birthday Christmas Hills Landcare Group!

The Firescape burn we conducted this year was a big step up in complexity – cross-tenure, 1.5 hectares, and infested with Burgan – that was more time consuming than expected, including the need to hold three Burgan treatment events in the lead up to the burn. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Peter Mildenhall of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade who kept the whole show moving, navigating a myriad of unforeseen obstacles, and culminating in the successful burn in April. Looking ahead, this program is likely to explore the potential for incorporating traditional indigenous burning with the Wurundjeri people.

There appears to be a gradual waning of interest in the Community Fauna Monitoring project which involves landholder using motion-sensing cameras to detect fauna on their property. It has been going for over five years now, and it seems some landholders have run out of new places to set up the camera, and others have not 'caught' anything new for a long time. We will continue to explore different ways to re-invigorate interest in the project.

There is one inspiring story involving a camera that I want to share. Back in 2015, Phil Styles caught a glimpse of a small possum-like animal that had rushed from a bush in his native garden. He took a few photos on a phone, and showed them to me. The photos were not conclusive but the view was it might have been an Eastern Pygmy Possum. Nine months later, we learned that the stomach contents of a fox trapped up the road contained the hairs of an Eastern Pygmy Possum. This inspired Phil and I to set up a fauna camera in a banksia shrub in Phil and Jan's garden, which eventually confirmed that what Phil had seen was an Eastern Pygmy Possum – we had one captured on video! The news of this discovery – our first record of the species locally – further inspired landholder interest in providing specialised nest boxes for this species, and a successful grant application will see 63 nest boxes installed during 2017.

I am also excited by the ground-breaking work we are doing with the Nillumbik Landcare Network aimed at monitoring the condition or 'health' of our forests and woodlands across the municipality using sound recorders and cameras. Stay tuned for more on this in 2017.

Bring on 2017!

Doug Evans

Events run in 2016

What have the foxes been eating? – part 2

The second and final round of trapping for the fox trapping project that began in 2015 finished early in 2016 (more details on page 21). As with the first round, we wanted to find out more about what the local foxes were eating.

In January, 9 people turned up to this event where the stomach contents of the foxes trapped in the second round, were washed and dried, and sent to Barbara Triggs (author of Tracks, Scats and Other Traces) to identify any mammals from hair and bone fragments in the contents.

Despite a lot less people than the similar event in 2015, a much-improved process saw the stomach contents of 48 foxes and 1 cat washed dried and packaged ready to send.

Barbara's analysis found the following:

Remains of:	# of stomachs	Remains of:	# of stomachs
Common Ringtail Possum	6 x fox	Sheep	2 x fox
European Rabbit	5 x fox	House Mouse	1 x fox
Red Fox	4 x fox	Sugar Glider	1 x fox
Cat	3 x fox, 1 x cat	Domestic Dog	1 x fox
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	2 x fox	Deer species	1 x fox
Eastern Pygmy Possum	1 x fox	Bird remains	7 x fox
Brush-tailed Possum	1 x fox	Invertebrate remains	16 x fox
Unidentified possum	1 x fox	Plant remains	32 x fox, 1 x cat



10th birthday celebration (and AGM)

Way back in October 2005 we held a community gathering at the primary school to gauge the level of interest in re-energising the Christmas Hills Landcare Group.

Suffice to say there was, and in February this year, 68 people came together to help celebrate ten years of helping Christmas Hills landholders care for their local environment.

The event started off with a presentation on Conservation Covenants by Ben Cullen, Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Manager with Trust for Nature, and then moved into the CHLG AGM where we briefly reflected on our 2015 achievements, did our annual group ‘health check’ and elected the management committee for 2016.

Then Klancy Roo (courtesy of puppeteer Angie MacMillan) joined the AGM and led people into the adjacent part of the hall to experience an interactive performance featuring Silbar (Angie again) and She Oak (Mandy Pickett).

Silbar and She Oak then led everyone outside where they played a game of pass-the-parcel with intermittent music provided by the band, Neatly Folded Goat. Six lucky people shared the prizes of a framed photo by Nev Ragg, a meat platter of locally shot venison, a selection of books and some chocolates.

The great music from Neatly Folded Goat continued and had people dancing, but was interrupted only for people to enjoy barbecued venison steaks and burgers and then to sing happy birthday and cut the cake!



Everyone joins in a game of pass-the-parcel

Helping a neighbour with pre-burn Burgan control

Sally Corrigan's property and the adjacent Melbourne Water-owned property were selected for the second Firescape burn. The dense infestation of Burgan was one of the reasons why this site was selected, as we wanted to see what role fire could play in managing Burgan and restoring native vegetation understorey.

However, for a manageable burn, the Burgan needed to be lying on the ground. Melbourne Water engaged a contractor to use an EcoBlade machine to do much of the Burgan treatment, and then CHLG held three events in April and June to manually cut-and-paint the straggler and hard-to-reach Burgan plants.

Over the three events, 22 people armed themselves with appropriate equipment from the Christmas Hills Landcare Group's tool trailer, and then went in search of still-standing Burgan plants.

On each occasion, we retreated inside afterwards where we enjoyed a chat over some afternoon tea.



How to lay pavers – dunnart habitat style

A key objective of the Firescape burn on Sally Corrigan's property is to restore the grassy understorey to improve habitat, especially for the Slender-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis murina*).

The use of concrete pavers to provide artificial habitat on the ground for this species has been successful in the nearby One Tree Hills Reserve. At this event in August, 9 people were shown by Meg Cullen from Nillumbik Shire Council, how to create a suitable dunnart shelter using a paver, some river pebbles and dry grass.

In teams of two, they then proceeded to lay 32 pavers across the burnt and unburnt parts of the Burgan treatment area, with the hope that Sally's place will become a dunnart mecca sometime in the future.

The satisfied but slightly weary crew then enjoyed afternoon tea and a bit of socialising.



Burgan and Fire

In September, the CHLG partnered with the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade to present this event that featured special guest presenters David Cameron, Senior Botanist with DELWP, and David van Bockel from Parks Victoria.

35 people gathered at the Christmas Hills Hall to firstly get an update on the Firescape program from Doug Evans, Chair, Christmas Hills Landcare Group and Peter Mildenhall, Community Safety Coordinator, Christmas Hills Fire Brigade. The update included the objectives of the two burns conducted to date, and some of the post-burn vegetation response.

David Cameron then shared some of his detailed knowledge of the two species of Burgan that occur locally, and their very different ecology, before David van Bockel shared some of his experiences managing Burgan in Warrandyte State Park for over twenty years.

A reminder call was made that we are still open to adding more burn candidate properties from local landholders who are interested in being involved in the Firescape program.

The event concluded with refreshments provided by the brigade, and was accompanied by many more questions and discussions around Burgan and fire.



Native orchids – protecting them, propagating them

13 people gathered at Ray and Di Marsh's place in October to learn about the propagation of native terrestrial orchids.

And they learnt from one of the gurus of this game, and CHLG member, Helen Richards. Life Member of the Australasian Native Orchid Society, Helen has over 40 years of experience growing Australian native terrestrial orchids.

Helen accompanied her talk with a wonderful selection of potted native orchids, all in full flower, and even invited those present to pull apart some of the orchid flowers. All in the name of better understanding the different parts of an orchid flower, and their role in propagation.

Following Helen's informative talk, we headed out onto Ray and Di's property to look for orchids in flower. Not only did we marvel at the diversity of orchids on display, we also selected and marked out a 12m x 12m plot particularly rich in orchids. This plot was later protected from grazing with the installation of a herbivore exclusion fence funded through a grant the CHLG had received.

Then it was back to the house to dine on a delicious spread of afternoon tea.



Bugs alive – discovering our local invertebrates

To wind up the year, 28 people gathered at Pip and Doug's place in December to learn a little about the invertebrates – insects, spiders and other critters without backbones – that call Christmas Hills home.

To help us do this, we benefited from the knowledge and experience of Andrea Canzano, entomologist/zoologist with Monarc Environmental, who demonstrated several different sampling techniques from pond dipping, sweep netting and pitfall trapping to collect a variety of insects and other invertebrates to accompany her talk.

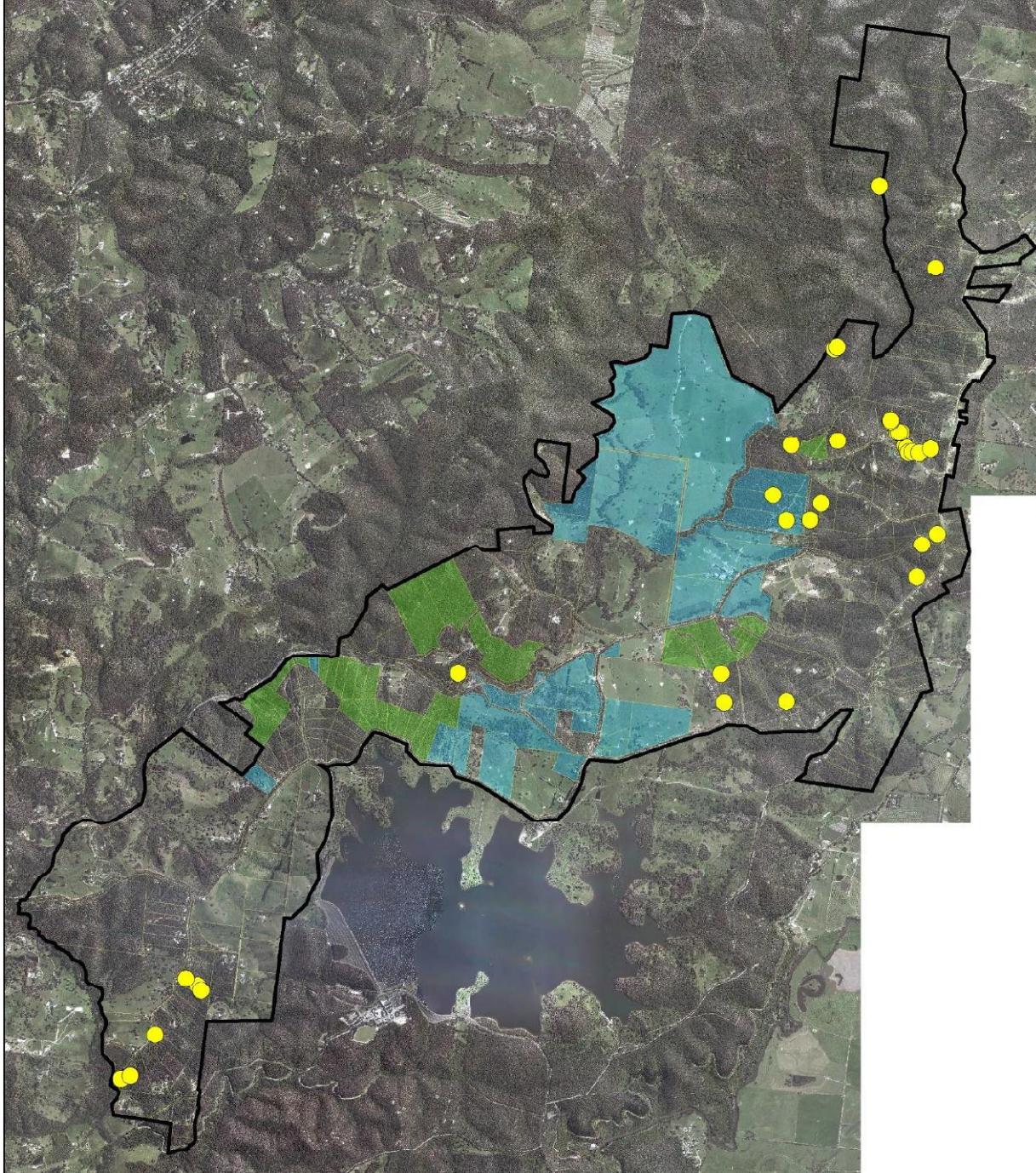
Back at the house, a technology issue was overcome with the help of Tina Keene and her laptop that enabled us to see some of the little critters we had collected through a microscope and on the big screen.

The delivery of pizzas brought a break in proceedings as hungry people helped themselves to something to eat before sitting back down for Doug to do his annual presentation of what the cameras saw during the year. The presentation comprised a selection of short videos that summarised what the CHLG motion-sensing cameras had captured on private properties during 2016, with 57 different fauna species recorded - 18 mammals (12 native), 35 birds (34 native), 3 reptiles and 1 amphibian.

Just before winding up the evening, we went outside to check the light trap (a white sheet with a light shining on it) to see what nocturnal insects we may have attracted. The conditions were against us however, with only a small moth braving the cool wet, weather.



Projects run in 2016



**Motion-sensing cameras
were used in 35 locations
on 19 properties**

Community fauna monitoring

Helping landholders connect with their local flora and fauna continues to be a core objective for the Christmas Hills Landcare Group. The group sees these positive experiences and insights as a key step in engaging landholders to take action on their own properties to care for their local environment.

The group's ongoing Community Fauna Monitoring program is the primary means we use for creating these connections. Built around making available to landholders the group's motion-sensing infrared trail cameras, landholders are invited to set up a camera, along with a scent lure to attract fauna, to help them find out more about the fauna that occurs on their properties.

In 2016 their use by landholders was locally coordinated by Nev Ragg, Kevin Heeley, Kay Armstrong, and Doug Evans, with cameras used on 19 different properties in 35 different locations.

With an emphasis on using the cameras near water over summer we detected a new annual record of 57 different fauna species - 18 mammals (6 introduced), 35 birds (1 introduced), 3 reptiles and 1 amphibian.

Notable 'captures' include the Eastern Pygmy Possum (*Cercartetus nanus*), Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*), Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) and the Slender-tailed (Common) Dunnart (*Sminthopsis murina*).

The following grainy pictures are stills taken from actual videos captured by the cameras.

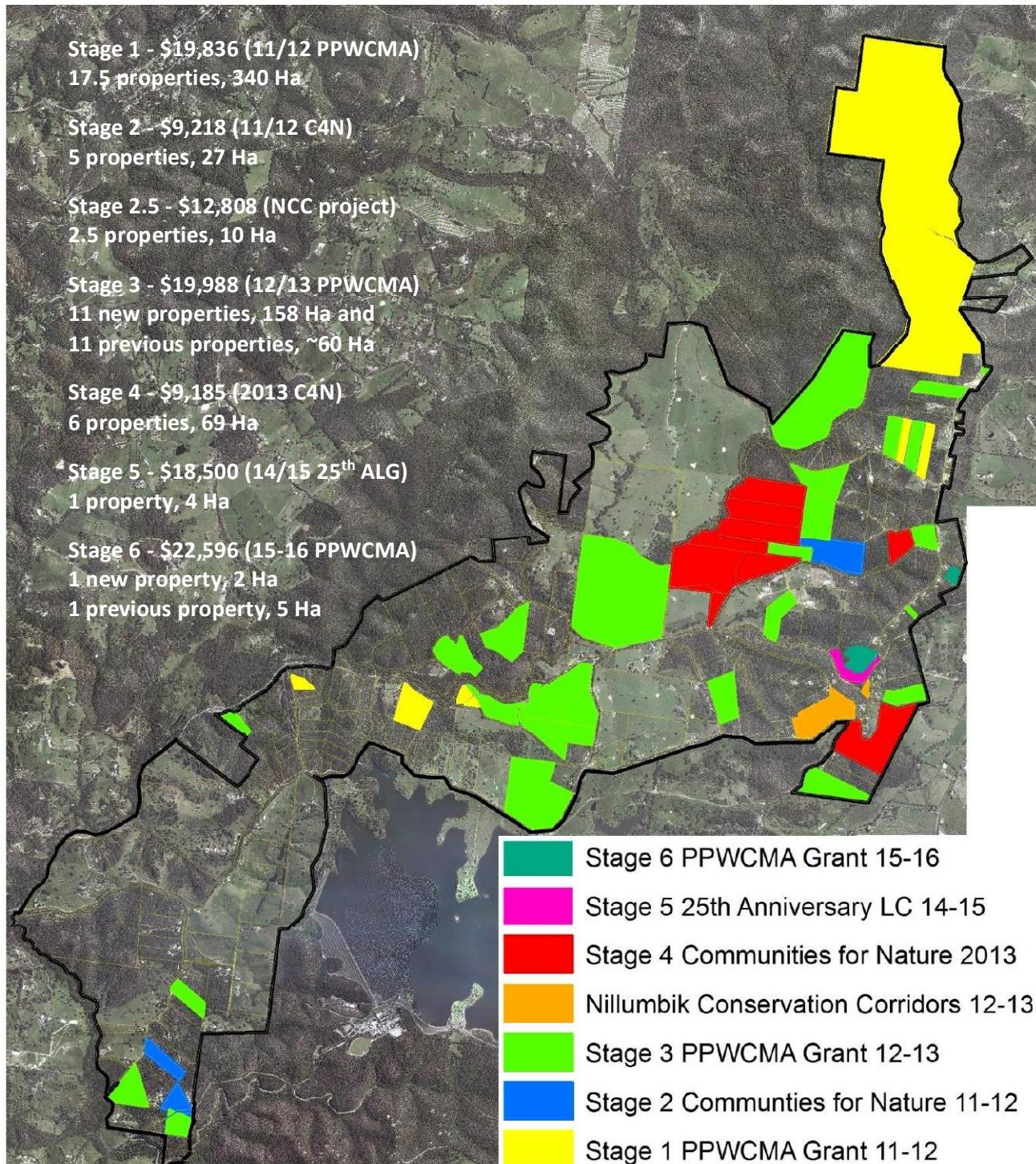


Lace Monitor



Slender-tailed Dunnart

Projects



Total to date:
\$112,031 to treat
woody weeds on
44 properties covering
615 hectares

Woody weed control

The invasion of native vegetation by woody weeds is one of the major threats to the quality of native forest and woodland habitat in Christmas Hills. Species such as Blackberry, Boneseed, Sweet Pittosporum, Cootamundra Wattle, Sallow Wattle and Radiata Pine can form dense infestations that alter the vegetation structure and restrict natural regeneration of native species thereby reducing its suitability as habitat for native fauna.

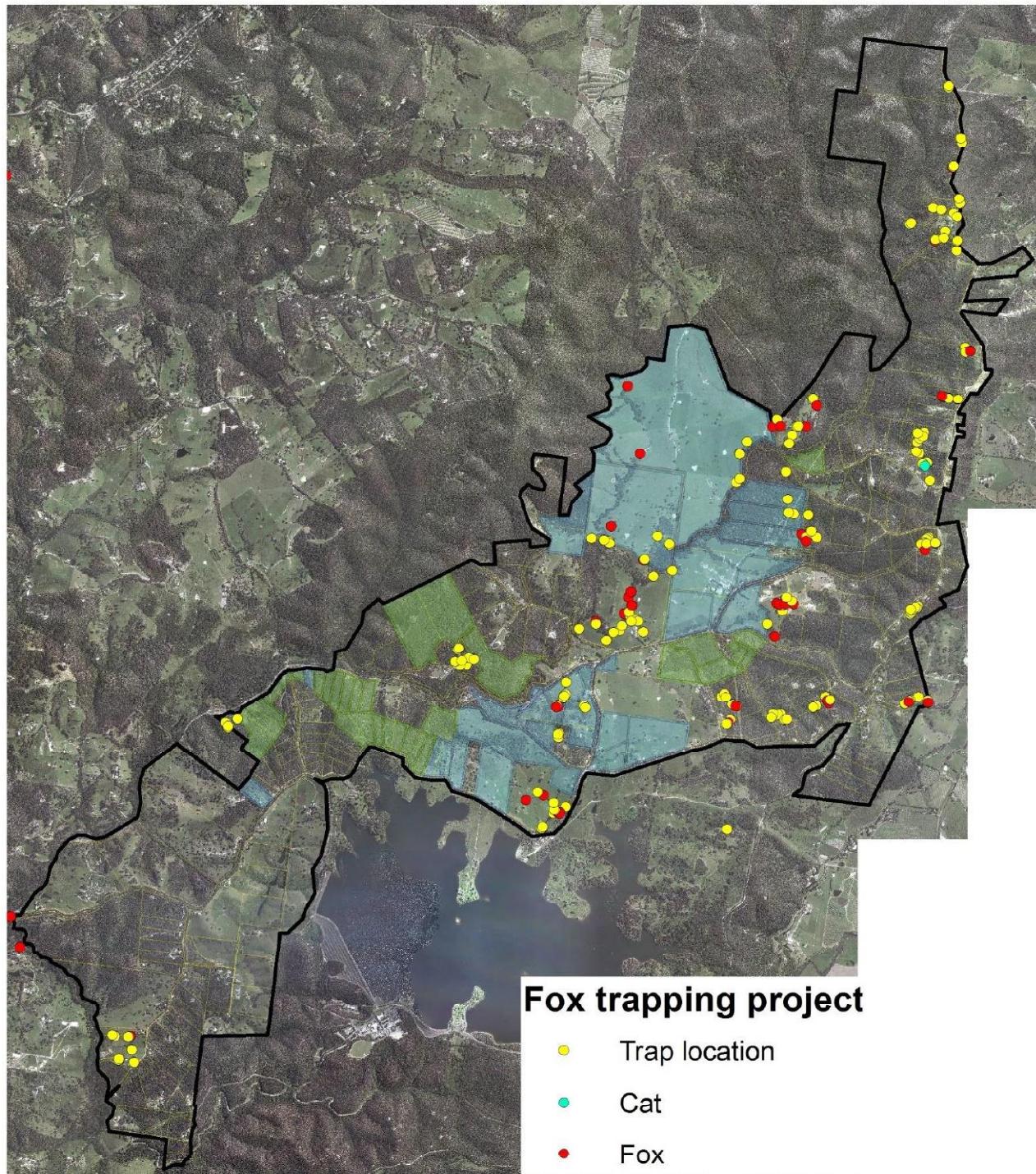
The Christmas Hills Landcare Group helps landholders tackle these weeds in several ways – seeking funds to engage a skilled contractor to do larger scale weed control works, holding weeding working bees with the Christmas Hills Tool Trailer to help neighbours, and developing landholder skills in weed identification and simple control methods.

This is an ongoing program that leading into the year had undertaken weed control work on 43 properties covering 608 hectares. During 2016 Indigenous Design Environmental Services were engaged to do weed control work on 1 additional property treating another 1.7 hectares, and a further 5 hectares on 1 previously treated property. This was funded through a grant secured through the PPWCMA's Community Grants.

The involvement of additional properties to help fill the gaps is typically sought through an expression of interest process.



Projects



**24 properties
1622 trap nights
47 foxes and 3 cats trapped
7 different native mammals found in stomachs**

Fox trapping program

Many species of local fauna, including the Brush-tailed Phascogale, and Common Dunnart, and ground-nesting birds such as the Brown Quail, fall within the ‘critical weight range’ for foxes, so fox predation on these species is assumed to be a serious threat in Christmas Hills.

To better understand what local foxes were eating, CHLG engaged the services of Peter Voutier of Feralex to undertake two rounds of fox trapping on 24 properties.

The first round was conducted in July/August 2015 when foxes are pairing off and preparing to establish dens. 138 soft-jaw leg-hold traps were set and checked daily on the 24 properties for a total of 987 trap nights that resulted in the capture of 9 foxes and 2 cats, with 1 cat sent to the pound.

The second round was conducted from the 14th December 2015 to the 13th January 2016 when young foxes are dispersing from the dens to establish their own territories. 126 soft-jaw leg-hold traps were set and checked daily on the 24 properties for a total of 635 trap nights that resulted in the capture of 38 foxes and 1 cat.

The stomachs from the second round captures, and an additional 10 foxes collected by the trapper from nearby One Tree Hill Reserve, were removed and the contents washed and dried at a CHLG event held in January 2016 where 9 people participated.

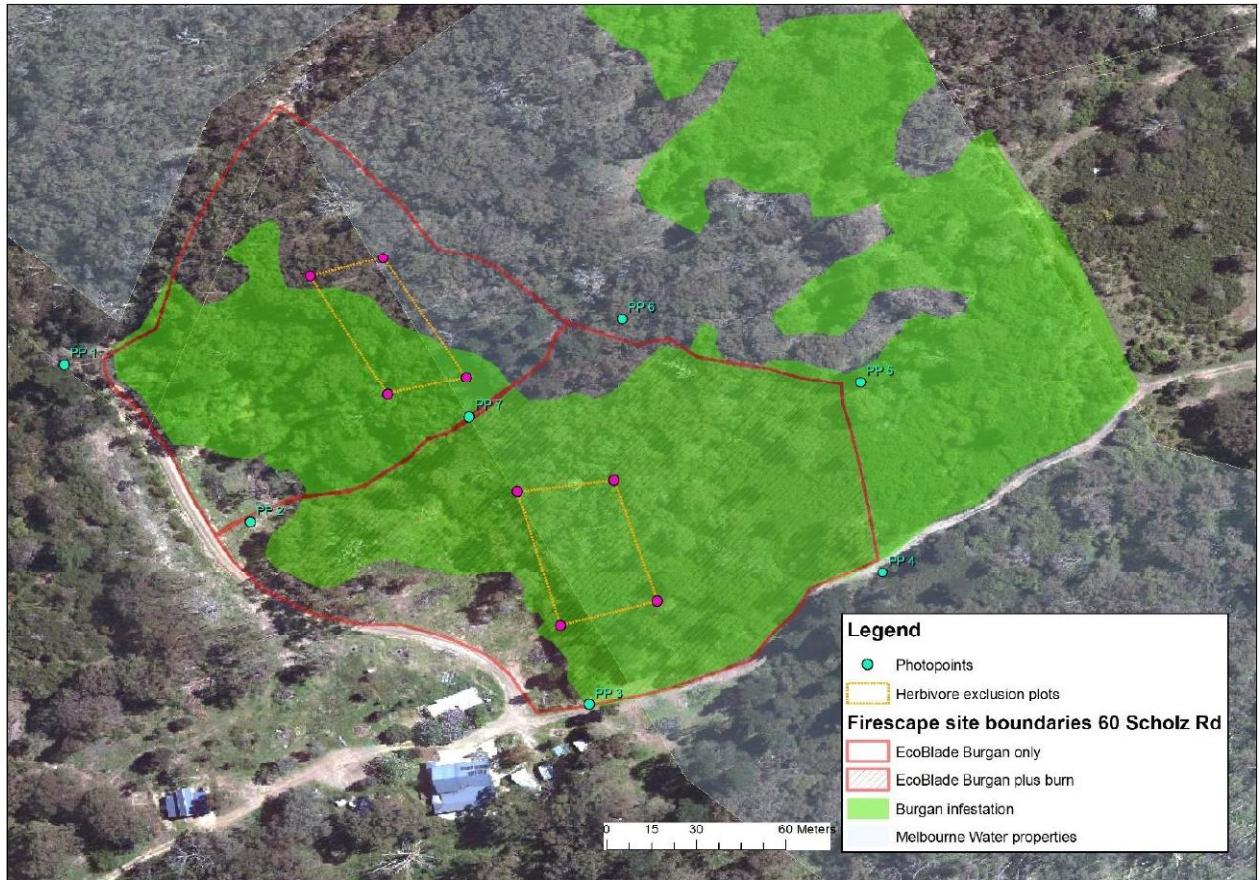
Again, the contents were sent to Barbara Triggs, author of “Tracks, Scats and other Traces” for mammal hair identification, and a report on the stomach contents analysis from both trapping rounds was prepared and shared on the CHLG website.

The most notable finding was the remains of an Eastern Pygmy Possum, our first confirmed record of this species.

This project was funded by the National Landcare Programme through the PPWCMA Community Grants.



Projects



1. PP5 – before burn and Burgan



3. PP5 – 3 days after burn



2. PP5 – after Burgan felling before burn



4. PP5 – 38 weeks after burn

Firescape – ecological burning

Firescape is a pilot program of the CFA designed to assist private landholders consider the use of fire in management of their property. CHLG saw this program as an ideal opportunity to build skills in ecological burning, and has partnered with the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade to deliver a series of planned ecological burns for our landscape.

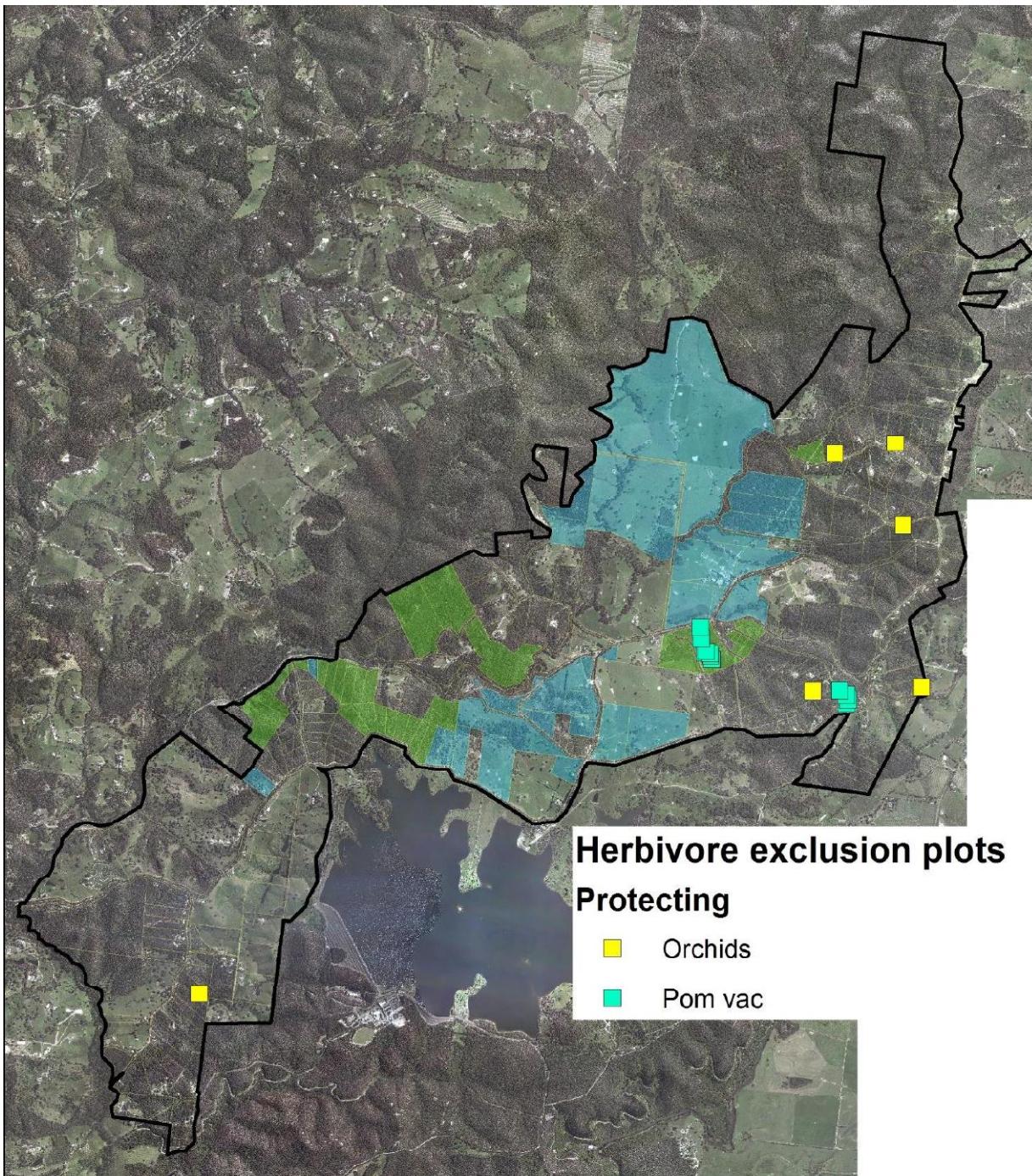
Following 2 community workshops in 2014, and a small demonstration burn in 2015, in 2016 we worked closely with Melbourne Water (MW) and CFA District 14 to undertake a larger and more complex burn in April. This burn covered 1.5 Ha that straddled Sally Corrigan's property and adjacent MW-owned land, and was treating an area heavily infested with Yarra Burgan (*Kunzea leptospermoides*). The aim was to restore the diverse grassy understorey observable in nearby good quality bush that is prime habitat for dunnarts, and reduce the fire risk to the nearby house.

MW engaged a contractor to use specialised machinery pre-burn to fell much of the Burgan, and treat the cut stumps with herbicide to prevent regrowth, to provide the primary source of fuel for the burn. We also wanted to compare the response of felling the Burgan with and without a follow-up burn.

Firefighting personell and vehicles from Christmas Hills, Panton Hill, St Andrews and Research Fire Brigades, as well as Melbourne Water were all involved. After the burn, pine trees were felled, two herbivore exclusion fenced plots were created – one in the burnt area and one in unburnt – and 32 concrete pavers were laid as artificial habitat for dunnarts. The fencing was funded through a grant secured through the Victorian Government's Threatened Species Initiative Community Volunteer Action Grants.



Projects



**8 properties
6 mixed orchid plots
12 Round-leaf Pomaderris plots**

Protecting special plants

Grazing pressure from native and introduced mammalian herbivores such as rabbits, wallabies, deer and kangaroos is recognised as a key threat to a range of native plants that occur in Christmas Hills. Heavy grazing can prevent flowering and seeding of smaller plants, or prevent seedlings of larger species from reaching maturity, significantly impacting on their reproductive success and long-term survival.

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group is using herbivore exclusion fencing to protect small plots of special plants - to date these have been a variety of local orchids, and the Critically Endangered Round-leaf Pomaderris (*Pomaderris vaccinifolia*).

In 2016 CHLG used funding secured from a PPWCMA Community Grant to install a 12m x 12m fence around an orchid-rich plot on each of three properties, to add to the three other orchid-rich plots fenced in 2015 funded through an earlier PPWCMA Community Grant.

Also in 2016, CHLG use funding from a Victorian Government Threatened Species Initiative Community Volunteer Action Grant, along with funds provided by Melbourne Water, to fence nine 10m x 10m plots (2 on a private property, and 7 on a MW property), and one 25m x 25m plot (MW property) to protect patches of Round-leaf Pomaderris – often a large mature specimen surrounded by numerous seedlings. These added to the two plots fenced in 2015 on the private property using funds through the Nillumbik Conservation Corridors project.

Ongoing photopoint monitoring will be used to assess the effectiveness of the fencing on growth and reproductive success of these special plants.



Management committee

At the AGM held on the 21st February 2016, the 45 or so members in attendance voted in 6 of the incumbents to the Management Committee for 2016:

Doug Evans – Chair
Nicole Noy – Treasurer
Sally Corrigan – Secretary
Mark Gardner – Vice Chair
Tina Keene – Membership Officer
Nev Ragg – ordinary Committee Member

Kylie Moppert stood down at the end of 2015 and did not re-nominate.

The committee met six times during the year and its decisions are guided by the group's vision, mission and strategic pathways established in August 2011 (see pages 4 & 5).

In 2016 the committee focussed on:

- organising the 2016 program of events
- assessing funding opportunities and determining projects to pursue funding for
- financial management
- strategies for recruiting new members
- ideas for 'freshening up' the camera program
- working closely with the Nillumbik Landcare Network and its Conservation Action Planning work, in particular options for forest and woodland condition monitoring
- working closely with the Nillumbik Conservation Corridor project



Membership

Memberships remained at a similar level to 2015 numbers (note: due to a few late renewals, the 2015 figure in the graph below has been revised upwards from the version in the 2015 Annual Report). One new member joined, but several 2015 members had not renewed by 31st December 2016. The following are the financial members for 2016:

Bridget Bainbridge	Jane & Peter Russ	Neroli Merridew
Chris & Tina Keene	Joan Stephens	Nev Ragg & Janet Meade
Colin & Denise Berry	John Devling	Nicole Noy & Ross Coupar
Darren & Narelle Trippett	John & Moira Robertson	Paul & Jenny Mitchell
Darren Bennet & Vanessa Reid	Judith Ellerton	Paul Danelutti
Deb Wadsworth	Kay & Rod Armstrong	Peter Benda & Sonja Pedell
Diane & Ray Marsh	Kaye and Hugh McRae	Rob Shackleton & Linda Joyce
Doug Evans & Pip Charlton	Kevin & Margo Heeley	Robyn Adams & Dianne Simmons
Douglas & Helen Bell	Kylie Moppert & Mark Gardner	Sally Corrigan
Garry & Mandy Lovell	Liz & Peter Laver	Sarah Hammond & Rhys Morgan
Greg and Angie MacMillan	Liz Clarkson	Tony & Brigid Bell
Helen Richards	Michael Shead & Nicole Vallack	Viv Murphy
Jackie Hamlet	Mick & Suzanne Craine	Warwick & Carol Leeson
Jan Cranwell & Phil Styles		

Joining the Christmas Hills Landcare Group means meeting neighbours, building relationships, gaining knowledge and skills, accessing projects designed to assist you, helping each other, working together, and showing your support for what we do.

If you own or manage land in Christmas Hills, we would love you to join us! It only costs \$20 for your first year – you get a member's gate sign, a community benefit card for the Yarra Glen IGA, and are added to the email list to get you in the communication loop - then it is only a \$10 annual renewal fee.



Please encourage your neighbours to join, and don't forget to renew your membership!

Group Health

Each year the Christmas Hills Landcare Group undertakes a group ‘health check’. This is a self-assessment based on feedback from members, typically conducted at the AGM.

Rating scores are based on a 5-point scale where 1 = “Very poor”, 3 = “OK”, and 5 = “Excellent”

Group health element	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	10/11	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Vision / direction – How clear is your group about where it is going and what it is trying to achieve in the longer term?	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
2. Purpose / role – How clear is your group about its purpose and the role it plays in achieving its goals?	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5
3. Action Planning – How good is your group at planning, designing and delivering activities that help it achieve its goals?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
4. Leadership – How good is your group at attracting, inducting and changing over people in leadership roles?	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4
5. Management structure and systems – How effective is your group’s management structure and its internal systems? (such as decision-making, managing finances, communicating to the rest of the group)	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
6. External profile – How well known and respected is your group and its goals by your local landholders and wider community?	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4
7. Financial resources – How strong is your group’s financial base and how good is your group at attracting financial support when required?	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	5
8. People resources – How good is your group at attracting and retaining members?	4	3	4	4	3	5	5	4	4
9. Information resources – How good is your group at accessing the information it needs, either its own knowledge base or finding it out from external sources?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
10. Networks – How well-connected (eg partnerships, regular contact, etc.) is your group to other groups and organisations that can help it to achieve its goals?	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5
11. Confidence – How confident is your group to try new approaches or methods, and/or tackle new issues?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
12. Human capital – How good is your group at using and developing the skills and experience of its members?	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5
13. Social capital – How strong are the social relationships between members of your group, and how good is your group at building and maintaining these relationships?	3	3	4	5	4	4	5	5	5
14. External support – How easy is it for your group to access external support when it needs it?	3	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	5

Partnerships

The CHLG aims to form mutually-beneficial partnerships with others who share our objectives.

Nillumbik Conservation Corridor (NCC) project

This four-year project involving nine Landcare groups and a Friends group aims to improve habitat for threatened species in Nillumbik, but came to an end in June 2016. Through this project this year we funded protective fencing for two additional plots of *Pomaderris vaccinifolia* on Tom Browning's property. We also had some 'pollinator baiting' occur on several properties that are potential hosts for re-introductions of rare orchids being propagated by the Royal Botanic Gardens as part of the NCC project.

Significantly, potted specimens of *Caladenia rosella* attracted a pollinator wasp at Mark Gardner's property.



Pollinator wasp visiting potted *Caladenia rosella* on Mark Gardner's property

Nillumbik Landcare Network (NLN)

CHLG is a member of the Nillumbik Landcare Network, supported by a part-time Landcare Facilitator, Colin Broughton, employed by Nillumbik Shire Council. In 2016, the focus has been on developing a method for long-term monitoring of forest and woodland health, including incorporating into two of our grant applications funding for cameras and sound recorders for this purpose. This has also involved developing relationships with Museum Victoria and Victorian National Parks Association. Through the network, we also provided input into the council's roadside weed management planning.

Nillumbik Shire Council

With the cessation of the Nillumbik Conservation Corridor project in June, CHLG partnered with the council on a grant application for which the project management component was directed to council to help continue employment of Meg Cullen, NCC Project Coordinator, for a day a week for 12 months. This grant also funded protective fencing for *Pomaderris vaccinifolia* on a Melbourne Water property in Christmas Hills, and for two plots following the Firescape burn at Sally Corrigan's place, some woody weed control, and catering for the volunteer firefighters at the Firescape burn.

Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

During 2016 CHLG continued to work closely with Peter Mildenhall from the brigade on the Firescape program, including the ecological burn at Sally's place and the event "Burgan and Fire". The burn at Sally's also involved working with the CFA District 14, the Shire, Melbourne Water and the Bend of Islands community to plan and conduct the Firescape burn.

Promotion

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group maintains its profile through five main means:

Website - where we post newsletters and project and event details:

<http://portphillipwesternport.landcarevic.org.au/Christmashills>

Note, our website is hosted on the Victorian Landcare Gateway which underwent a major overhaul in 2016. We are still learning how to use the new version, and all the documents that we had on the previous website are yet to be loaded onto the new version.

Facebook – where we post items of interest and reach out to a new audience. At the end of 2016 we had 79 people who like our page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Christmas-Hills-Landcare/151667101570175?sfrm>

Newsletters - occasional emails to all members to keep them informed of upcoming events, project opportunities and other news of relevance.

Gate signs – for each member to illustrate their support and to show the extent of our membership in the community.

Sandwich board – to show passers-by that an event is on and demonstrating we are an active group.



During 2016 we submitted an article for publication in the Summer edition (January 2017) of the Victorian Catchment and Landcare Magazine that showcases our approaches to connecting people to nature.

Finances

	Opening balance 1 st January 2016	Plus receipts	Less expenses	Transfers*	Closing balance 31 st December 2016
Group funds					
Memberships and donations	714.91	580.00		0.00	1294.91
Ritchies	212.12	65.11		0.00	277.23
Admin	489.25	1,418.00	-592.35	0.00	1,314.90
Events	1,195.40	1,300.00	-902.39	0.00	1,593.01
Group funds total	2,611.68	3,363.11	-1,494.74¹	0.00	4,480.05
Project grant funds					
Rabbit control	2,133.54				2,133.54
Fauna monitoring	1,761.43				1,761.43
ACUP 1080 subsidies	454.00				454.00
Fox project	13,761.27		-13,186.31		574.96
Orchid project	0.00	2,534.00			2,534.00
Firescape	746.24		-11.90		734.34
Pygmy Possum & Owl boxes	0.00	3,340.00			3,340.00
Nillumbik-wide monitoring	0.00	3,750.00			3,750.00
Woody weeds stage 5	1,801.68		-108.89 ²		1,692.79
Woody weeds stage 6	0.00	22,598.00	-22,706.89	108.89 ²	0.00
Grant funds total	20,658.16	32,222.00	-35,905.10	0.00	16,975.06
TOTAL	23,269.84	35,585.11	-37,399.84	0.00	21,455.11
					Cash book balance 31st December 2016
					21,455.11
					Bank balance 31st December 2016
					21,455.11

* Transfers represent minor over/underspend on projects transferred between similar projects or Group funds.

¹ Group funds expenses include:

- Insurance, postage, and memberships of the VFF FTLA and VLN
- 10th Birthday and AGM event – entertainment, catering and prizes
- Tool trailer registration

² Funds were transferred from ‘Woody Weeds Stage 5’ to cover overspend in ‘Woody Weeds Stage 6’



Christmas Hills
Landcare Group



Landcaring occurs in many ways – when this large old hollow-bearing stag tree fell, member Phil Styles reminded people that fallen logs with hollows are still important habitat.

Neighbours caring for our place.....

<http://portphillipwesternport.landcarevic.org.au/Christmashills>

(Cover photo by Nev Ragg)