

Annual Report 2019

Christmas Hills
Landcare Group

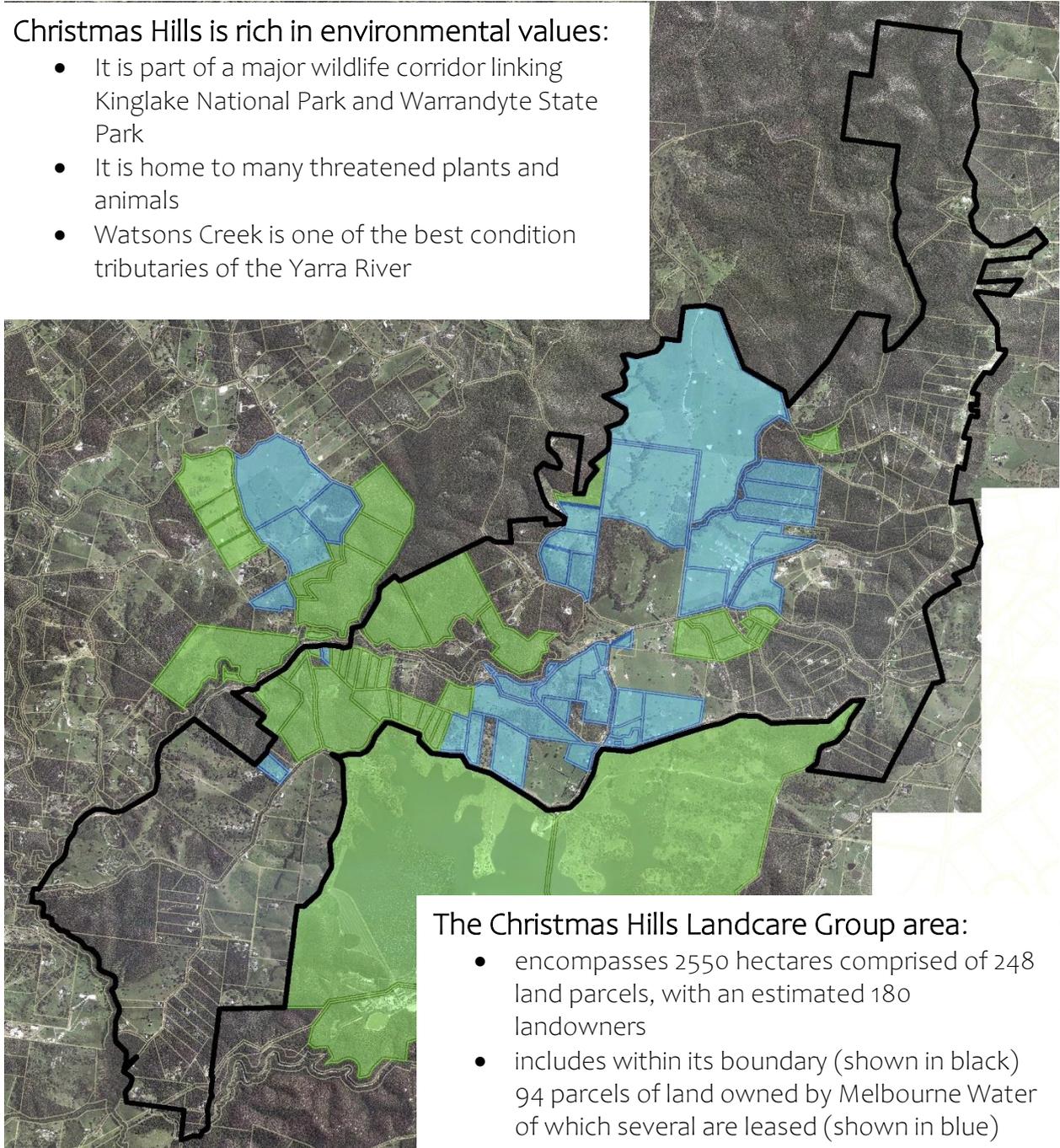


Christmas Hills
Landcare Group

Christmas Hills - the place we care for

Christmas Hills is rich in environmental values:

- It is part of a major wildlife corridor linking Kinglake National Park and Warrandyte State Park
- It is home to many threatened plants and animals
- Watsons Creek is one of the best condition tributaries of the Yarra River



The Christmas Hills Landcare Group area:

- encompasses 2550 hectares comprised of 248 land parcels, with an estimated 180 landowners
- includes within its boundary (shown in black) 94 parcels of land owned by Melbourne Water of which several are leased (shown in blue)

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional owners of this area, recognises them as the original Landcarers of Christmas Hills, and honours their continued relationship to the land now in our care.

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, several 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

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?

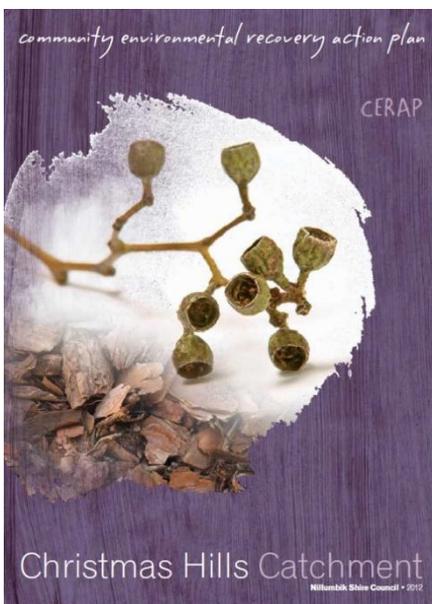
- Communicate the map-based plan of Christmas Hills environmental assets, threats and required action to landholders
- Translate and interpret the group's objectives and action priorities from the plan to property scale

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 2019

2019 saw a return to relatively normal programming for the group, and some frustration.

Nonetheless the 2019 committee, expanded by three from the 2018 committee, continued to be positive and focussed. A big thank you goes out to Nev, Nicole, Margo, Sally and Judith who each hosted at least one committee meeting during the year, including providing dinner prior to the start of each meeting.

There were many highlights from the year, amongst them being the four burns we did under the guidance of Wurundjeri Fire Elder, Uncle Dave Wandin, the group breakfast cookup and feast that was part of the birds event, the live snakes on show at the reptiles event, the delight and wonder expressed at the fungi event, and the powerful sense of community at the tenth anniversary dinner reflecting on the 2009 bushfires.

We are an active member of the Nillumbik Landcare Network and the strategic plan they have developed is resonating around the shire – we are using it to guide an update of our own strategic plan, as are other member groups, and it is being used to unify the efforts and coordinate action between the Landcare groups and the public land management agencies operating within Nillumbik.

The saga that has been the consultation around the sale of Melbourne Water owned properties in Christmas Hills that started back in 2017 went quiet in 2019. In February we were notified that Melbourne Water had submitted their Draft Masterplan and report to the Government Land Planning Service (GLPS) who are acting as the planning authority for the proposed changes to the planning controls (zones and overlays).

Many aspects of the Draft Masterplan for which we sought alternative outcomes have been retained in their submission. The next opportunity to advocate for our preferred alternatives will be when the GLPS puts the planning scheme amendment on public exhibition. However there has been no movement on this front all year! This delay however, has enabled us to compile a hefty document that brings together all the evidence we can find to support our position when the time comes to present our case.

Although the land sales saga went quiet in 2019, Nillumbik Council's review of their Green Wedge Management Plan, proved to be another frustrating example of consultation by volume rather than quality. In November, Council formally adopted a shambolic plan that in many cases was unchanged from the draft released for feedback, ignoring the overwhelming opposition they received.

2020 will no doubt be another adventure for the Christmas Hills Landcare Group – bring it on!

Doug Evans

Events run in 2019

AGM with Black Saturday 10th anniversary dinner

February 2019 brought with it the ten-year anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, fires that left their mark on the Christmas Hills environment and community.

In recognition of this milestone, local resident Nev Ragg initiated the idea of a community dinner to simply bring people together and reflect in whatever way they chose.

Rather than organise a separate event in February to include our AGM, the Christmas Hills Landcare Group committee decided to hold the AGM just before the dinner so members could stay on and help prepare for the dinner.

Held at the Christmas Hills Hall, the AGM attracted around 25 people who received a copy of the CHLG 2018 Annual Report to help them reflect on the group's achievements for 2018.

We also worked through our annual group 'health check' before electing the management committee for 2019 that pleasingly saw new additions to the committee.

We were then joined by many other members of the Christmas Hills community that swelled the numbers to around 60, who together enjoyed a delicious dinner and conversations. Accompanied by the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade's collection of newspaper cuttings from February 2009, and a compilation of videos from the CHLG fauna monitoring cameras, many personal reflections on the 2009 bushfires were shared.



Fungi magic

In April, 21 people gathered at Doug and Pip's place where we were entranced by Alison Pouliot, her knowledge of fungi, and the diversity of local specimens she had collected and spread out on two large tables.



Author of *"The Allure of Fungi"*, Alison gave a highly engaging presentation around the specimens in front of us, covering the basics of fungus identification (use all your senses!), fungi ecology, and aspects of the associated natural and cultural histories. Alison willingly fielded numerous questions, many coming from the younger members of her audience.

We were all encouraged to handle, smell, feel, and examine closely all different types of fungi on display.



Then we went for a 'fungi foray' exploring the property to see what signs of fungi we could find, before returning to the house for afternoon tea and more questioning!



Traditional Wurundjeri burning comes back to Christmas Hills

In 2017 the CHLG successfully applied for a Port Phillip and Westernport CMA Community Grant to work with Wurundjeri to establish four traditional burn demonstration sites on three private properties in Christmas Hills. In line with the traditional burning practices, we sought to conduct the burns as community events, bringing families and community together.

Unlike the pre-European Wurundjeri however, modern practices meant we were limited to weekends, and in 2018 weekends and the necessary windows of opportunity to burn did not align. As a result the burns were postponed to 2019, during which we did manage to get all four burns in.

The first two were conducted on Gad's property, one on each of two burn sites he hosts, on a weekend in May. Under the guidance of Wurundjeri Fire Elder, Uncle Dave Wandin, eleven people participated in the first, and eight in the second.



The other two were conducted in July at Doug and Pip's, and in August at Ross and Nicole's.

All the burns were patchy and none ended up covering the full proposed burn area at each site. This was due in part at least, to the low levels of grass cover, meaning it was very difficult to get a

flame front to spread very far on its own. This also helped us come to the realisation that we will need to be returning to these sites each year, under the right conditions, to burn a bit more each time, with the expectation that the grass cover will gradually increase over time, and the burns will in turn begin to move more easily on their own.



Helping a neighbour with weed control

Every year we endeavour to hold an event where members volunteer their time to help a neighbour with controlling weeds on their property, and in the process improve their skills in weed identification and control methods.



In 2018 we had planned to hold this event on one of the Mellings' properties on Skyline Road where we had engaged the contractor Indigenous Design to treat a large patch of agapanthus. The idea at the time was to do follow up control on the agapanthus, but because the initial treatment hadn't been successful, this was postponed until August 2019 after the contractor applied a second, and more effective treatment.

Although the agapanthus had taken a big hit from its summer herbicide treatment, some of the larger plants were still hanging on, so these, along with scattered small seedlings that had been missed, were our targets.

After filling Phil and Jan's rubbish and green waste bins to the hilt, we went across the road to their place for socialising over afternoon tea.



The Birds (of Christmas Hills)

Building on an idea from local bird enthusiast, Will Mitchell, this event in October brought 26 local landholders together at the Christmas Hills Hall to learn about some of the local bird species, practice bird surveying, and be introduced to Birdlife Australia's Birds on Farms project.

Following a short 7am briefing, landholders were teamed up with one of several bird expert friends recruited by Will before heading off in different directions to seven properties. Once there they warmed up by just looking around to see what birds they could discover, and then they did a trial run of Birdlife Australia's 2-hectare, 20 minute bird survey method.

Upon return, everyone joined in the task of preparing a breakfast feast - everything from fresh fruit to bacon and eggs, smashed avocado on toast and croissants - whilst keeping Phil and his coffee van busy keeping up with the demand for fresh espresso coffees.

Then it was time for all to sit down and enjoy their food preparation efforts, accompanied by lively conversations about birds, bird watching and whatever else took their fancy!

Once the bellies were filled, and the tables cleared, Doug showed a short video, "Birds of Christmas Hills" that was a compilation of 5 second clips of every bird species captured by motion-sensing cameras in the CHLG fauna monitoring program, accompanied by recordings of the corresponding bird calls.



Then we had a presentation by Caroline Wilson from Birdlife Australia about the "Birds on Farms" project that teams up rural landholders with birdwatchers to undertake ongoing bird surveys (using the method we had practiced earlier). Caroline was delighted when five landholders signed up to the project.

Reptiles of Christmas Hills

The final event for the year was held in December at the Christmas Hills Hall and focussed on learning more about the reptiles in Christmas Hills.

Peter Robertson from Wildlife Profiles and co-author of the recently published “*Reptiles of Victoria: A Guide to Identification and Ecology*” kicked things off with a comprehensive presentation of all the reptile species likely to occur in and around Christmas Hills. Peter also provide an outline of the structure of his book and had copies of the book available for sale at the end of the event. Peter very kindly donated a copy to the CHLG for our reference library.



We then transitioned into a showcase of live reptiles presented by Michael Alexander of Black Snake Productions. Michael had a number of live specimens on display, but the real focus was the snake pit set up at the back of the hall. Surrounded by curious members, Michael entered the pit and one-at-a-time revealed live specimens of four species of venomous snakes expected to occur in Christmas Hills - Red-bellied Black Snake, Lowland Copperhead, Tiger Snake, and Eastern Brown Snake. For each species Michael regaled us with stories and information on their ecology and behaviour.



To finish up, he demonstrated how to treat a snake bite using a specially-designed compression bandage kit (CHLG purchased a kit for the tool trailer)

The 30 people who attended were then invited to help themselves to afternoon tea featuring a selection of bakery treats and fresh fruit and then take a seat to watch the annual presentation of what the cameras saw during the year. The presentation comprised a selection of short videos that summarised all the different species that the CHLG motion-sensing cameras had captured on private properties during 2019. A record 81 different fauna species were recorded - 19 mammals, 55 birds, 5 reptiles and 2 amphibians.





Projects run in 2019

Projects



Community fauna monitoring

The importance of connecting landholders to the fauna that occurs on their properties and the wider Christmas Hills area as a motivation for taking action on their own properties to care for habitat is central to this ongoing project.

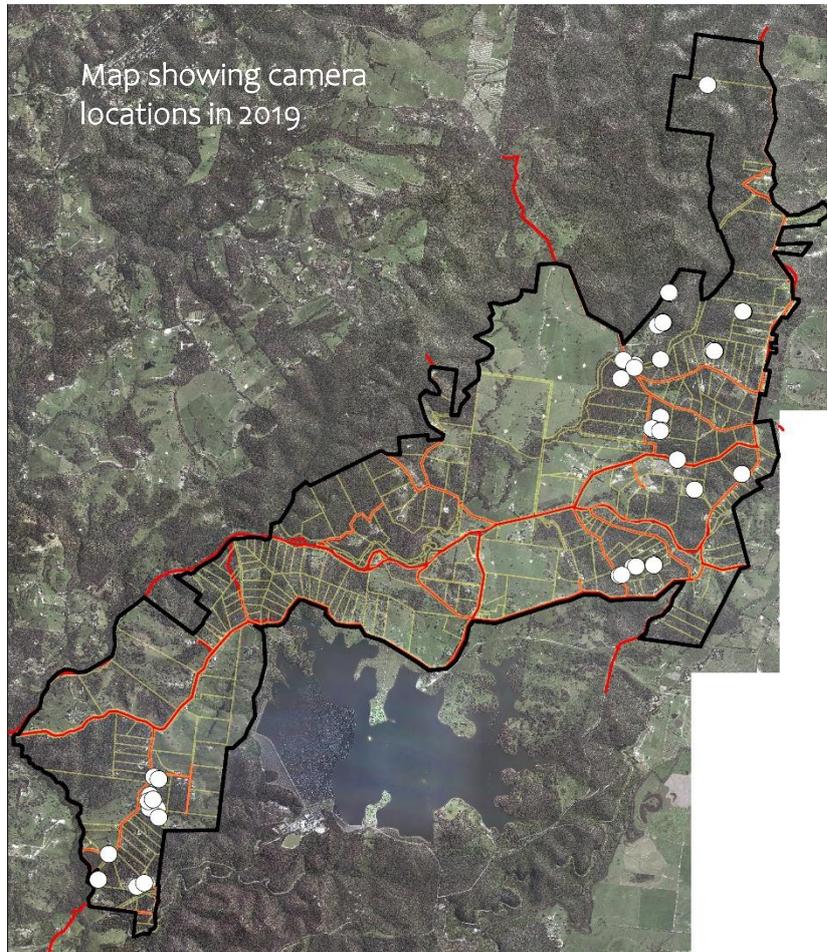
By providing landholders with access to the group's motion-sensing infrared trail cameras and help with setting them up along with a scent lure to attract fauna, the CHLG's ongoing Community Fauna Monitoring program helps them find out more about the fauna that occurs on their properties and create these connections. The quality and affordability of the cameras is constantly improving, so when we get the opportunity to secure funding to upgrade some of our cameras, we do so. Currently we are using Browning Spec Ops Extreme and Moultrie 1100i cameras.

In 2019 the use of the group's cameras was locally coordinated by Nev Ragg, Peter Laver, and Doug Evans, with cameras used on 21 different properties in over 40 different locations (with many repeat set ups at three 'productive' locations featuring a dam surrounded by bush).

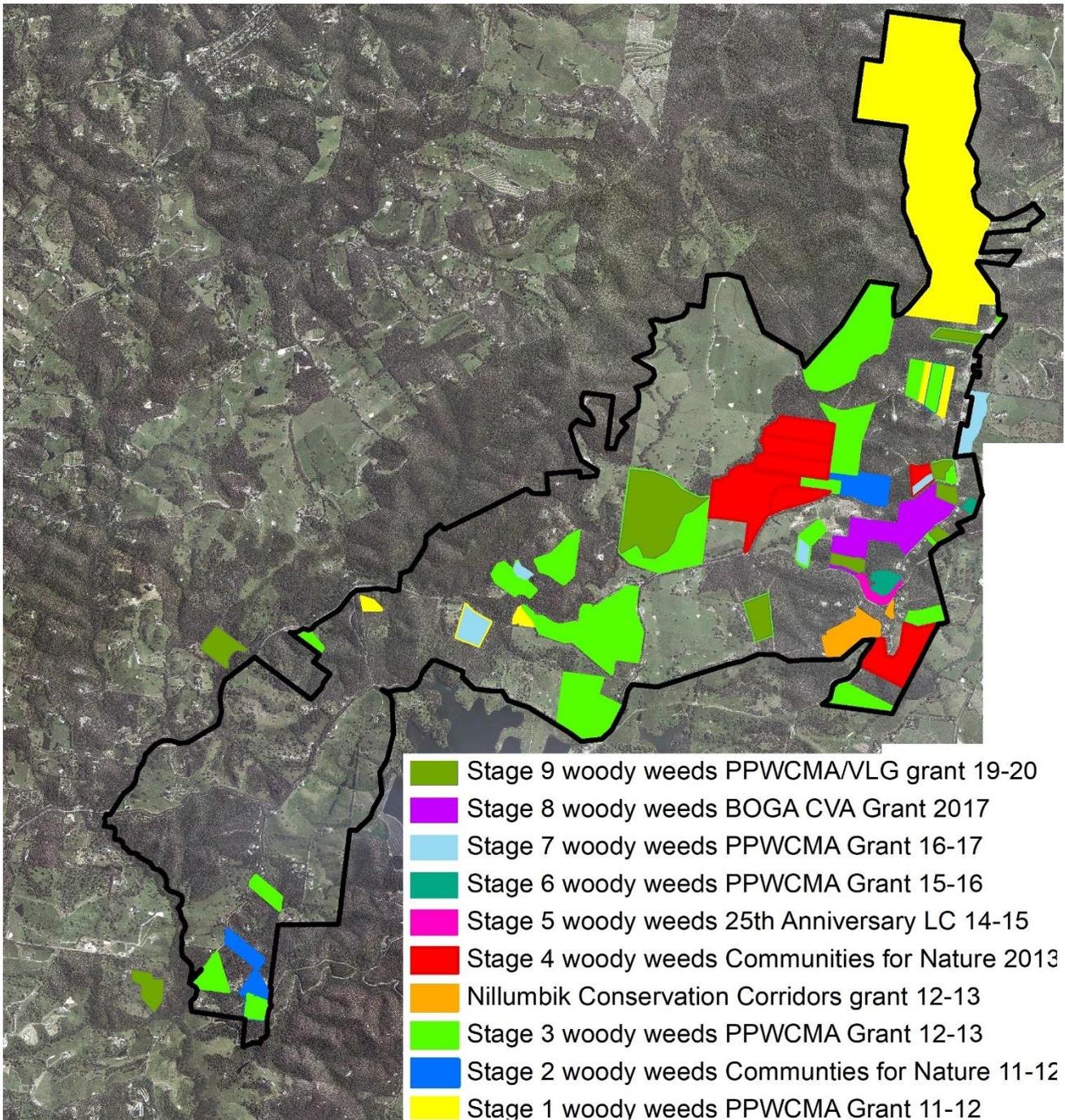
This year we detected a new annual record of 81 different fauna species - 19 mammals (7 introduced), 55 birds (1 introduced), 5 reptiles and 2 amphibians.

Notable 'captures' for 2019 include:

- Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles nasuta*)
- Olive Whistler (*Pachycephala olivacea*),
- Nankeen Night-heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*), and
- Gang Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*),
- Leaden Flycatcher (*Myiagra rubecula*)
- Brush Bronzewing (*Phaps elegans*)



Projects



Stage 1 - \$19,836 (11/12 PPWCMA)	17.5 properties, 340 Ha
Stage 2 - \$9,218 (11/12 C4N)	5 properties, 27 Ha
Stage 2.5 - \$12,808 (NCC project)	2.5 properties, 10 Ha
Stage 3 - \$19,988 (12/13 PPWCMA)	11 new properties, 158 Ha and 11 previous properties, 60 Ha
Stage 4 - \$9,185 (2013 C4N)	6 properties, 69 Ha
Stage 5 - \$18,500 (14/15 25th ALG)	1 property, 4 Ha
Stage 6 - \$22,596 (15-16 PPWCMA)	1 new property, 2 Ha and 1 previous property, 5 Ha
Stage 7 - \$3,301 (16-17 PPWCMA)	2 new properties, 13 Ha and 3 previous properties, 12 Ha
Stage 8 - \$26,400 (2017 BOGA)	4 new properties, 41 Ha
Stage 9 - \$17,155 (19-20 PPWCMA)	4 new properties, 31.9 Ha and 6 previous properties, 68 Ha

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.

The CHLG woody weed program has been going since 2011 and leading into 2019 had undertaken weed control work on 50 properties covering 669 hectares. During 2019 Indigenous Design Environmental Services were engaged to do weed control work on 4 additional properties treating another 32 hectares. This was funded through a Victorian Landcare Program grant secured through the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA.

The totals to date are \$148,887 secured to treat woody weeds on 54 properties covering 701 hectares.

In recent years we have extended the project to target an infestation of agapanthus invading bushland on Skyline Road.

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



Projects



Wyenondabool – ‘hills of fire’

Back in 2017 the CHLG was successful in securing a Port Phillip and Westernport CMA Community Grant to work with Wurundjeri to establish four traditional burn demonstration sites on three private properties in Christmas Hills.

Attempts to conduct the burns in 2018 were thwarted by the misalignment of the conditions needed, and availability of the Wurundjeri Narrap Team, resulting in a project variation to postpone the burns until 2019. Unfortunately, this precluded the involvement of the Narrap Team as they were fully booked, leading to a second project variation to revise the budget expenditure.

A revised approach had Wurundjeri Fire Elder, Uncle Dave Wandin supervise community burns conducted by local volunteers, and using a template developed by the CHLG, Uncle Dave worked with the host property owners to prepare a burn plan for each of the four demonstration burns. The revised expenditure also enabled us to engage a videographer to document the project and purchase some key equipment for conducting the burns.

Four community burns were conducted on three weekends in May, July and August that together involved 16 local community volunteers in addition to Uncle Dave and the respective landowners. In each case Uncle Dave Wandin welcomed them onto Wurundjeri country and briefed them on the burn plan. The initial ignition was jointly delivered by Uncle Dave and the respective landowners, before the other volunteers were invited to help spread the burn using branches with dry leaves and pieces of stringybark. With the high proportion of leaf litter at each site, the ability for the flames to spread by themselves was very limited.

A monitoring program for traditional burns specifically developed for this project guided the post-burn data collection in October that included photopoint monitoring of vegetation and canopy cover, quadrat vegetation surveys, pitfall trap sampling of invertebrates, and motion-sensing cameras to sample vertebrate fauna. A Latrobe University entomology student has been engaged to identify the invertebrate samples.



Members of the Wurundjeri Narrap Team collect invertebrate samples

Management committee

At the AGM held on the 18th February 2018, the 22 members in attendance voted in the six incumbents, along with three new committee members (Judith Ellerton was returning) to the Management Committee for 2019. The elected committee was:

Doug Evans – Chair
Nicole Noy – Treasurer
Sally Corrigan – Membership Officer
Mark Gardner – Vice Chair
Tina Keene – Secretary
Nev Ragg – ordinary Committee Member
Judith Ellerton – ordinary Committee Member
Margo Heeley – ordinary Committee Member
Paul Mitchell – ordinary Committee Member

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 2019 the committee focussed on:

- organising the 2019 program of events
- developing an updated CHLG strategy from the Nillumbik Landcare Network plan
- assessing funding opportunities and determining projects to pursue funding for
- financial management
- exploring options for coordinating weed control with council
- Encouraging and supporting members to voice their views on Nillumbik’s Green Wedge Management Plan review

(Note: As a result of securing a job in northern Australia, Paul Mitchell stepped down in July)



Membership

We think that as a result of not reminding people during the year to renew their membership, the numbers for 2019 look low compared to 2018, but expect them to bounce back as late renewals are received. In addition, the 2018 numbers shown below have been revised upwards from those published in the 2018 Annual Report following renewals received after going to print. The following were the financial members for 2019 at the time of printing:

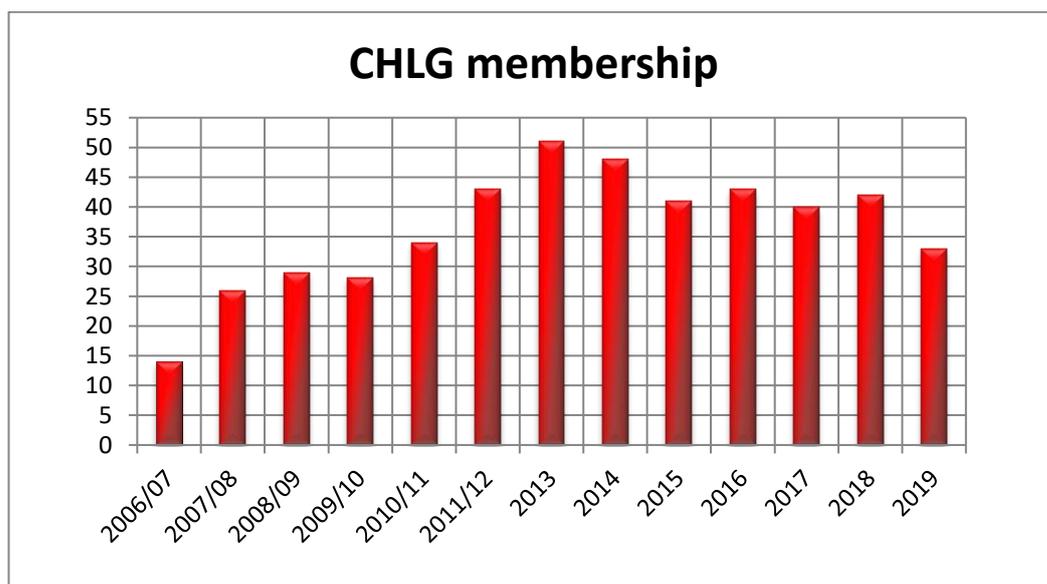
Robyn Adams and Di Simmons
Bronwyn Woods
Carole & Paul Faulkner
Chris & Tina Keene
Colin & Denise Berry
Douglas and Helen Bell
Doug Evans & Pip Charlton
Fairlie Tabart
Greg and Angie MacMillan
Helen Richards
Jackie Hamlet
Jo Mogilewska & Dave Holder

John & Moira Robertson
Judith Ellerton
Kevin & Margo Heeley
Liz & Peter Laver
Lucy Canavan & Danny Macminn
Mark Gardner
Michael Shead & Nicole Vallack
Mick & Suzanne Craine
Neroli Merridew
Nev Ragg & Janet Meade
Nicole Noy & Ross Coupar

Paul & Jenny Mitchell
Paul and Christine Danelutti
Paul and Steven Melling
Peter Benda & Sonja Pedell
Sally Corrigan
Tony & Anna Gleeson
Tony and Brigid Bell
Tim Lang & Tina McCarthy
Viv Murphy
Warwick & Carol Leeson
Veronica Holland

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.

Group health element	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	10/11	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
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	5	4	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	5	4	4
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	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	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	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	3	3	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	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	4	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	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	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	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	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	5	4	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	5	5	5

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

Partnerships

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

Nillumbik Landcare Network

CHLG is one of eleven Landcare groups that form the Nillumbik Landcare Network (NLN), which is supported by a part-time Landcare Facilitator, Colin Broughton, employed by Nillumbik Shire Council and funded by the Victorian Government. After preparing their strategic Conservation Action Plan in 2015, the NLN embarked on a project to establish a simple and cost-effective way of measuring the ongoing, long-term health of Nillumbik's remnant forest and woodlands.

Continuation of the Forest Health Monitoring Project has been supported by CHLG securing a Helen McPherson Smith Trust philanthropic grant on behalf of the NLN, that has enabled employment of the Council-hosted project officer to continue for three more years.

2019 represented the third year of fauna data collection using motion-sensing cameras and sound recorders at 30 monitoring sites across the shire. With the departure of the original project officer, Jess Lawton (to a fulltime job), this project was very fortunate to secure Dr Karen Rowe, a renowned bioacoustics expert with Museums Victoria and local resident, as the new project officer. The focus in 2019 has included the task of building training datasets to help develop automated 'call recognisers' to identify species from sound recordings.



The NLN translated their strategic Conservation Action Plan into a 'plain English' document for a wider audience titled "Caring for our rural landscape". The NLN is now using this to coordinate action across their member groups and land management agencies such as Nillumbik Council, Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria, and the CHLG is using it as the basis for updating our own strategic plan.

Nillumbik Shire Council

The Nillumbik Shire Council (NSC) also hosted project officers associated with other projects that the Nillumbik Landcare Network is involved in including the 'Nillumbik Conservation Futures' project (which in 2019 funded protective fencing around patches of the threatened Round-leaf Pomaderris in Christmas Hills), and the "Sugarloaf Link" project focussed on fox, deer and weed control in the Bend of Islands and parts of Christmas Hills. NSC also supported two other projects focussed on the Southern Toadlet and the Charming Spider-orchid.

Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

During 2019 CHLG liaised with Peter Mildenhall from the brigade to keep him updated on our plans for demonstrating traditional burning.

Wurundjeri people

CHLG continued to strengthen its relationship with the Wurundjeri people, Traditional Owners of Christmas Hills, with a focus on helping them regain their traditional burning practices with the establishment of traditional burn demonstration sites on four properties.

Promotion

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

Website - hosted on the Victorian Landcare Gateway where we post project descriptions and annual reports:

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



Facebook page - where we post items of interest and reach out to a new audience. At the end of 2019 we had 116 people who liked our page:

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



YouTube channel - where we post selected videos from our fauna monitoring program, and other relevant videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-VdoH6IZo-HFrLPtLS5zkw>



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

Property 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 that we are an active group.



Finances

	Opening balance 1 st January 2019	Plus receipts	Less expenses	Transfers*	Closing balance 31 st December 2019
Group funds					
Memberships and donations	1,391.23	667.59	-60.50 ¹	-414.24 ⁴	1,584.08
Admin	2,845.46	3,725.00	-4,305.13 ²	0.00	2,265.33
Events	4,842.50	5,194.00	-5,652.00 ³	55.50 ⁴	4,440.00
Group funds total	9,079.19	9,586.59	-10,017.63	-358.74	8,289.41
Project grant funds					
Fauna Monitoring	1,804.04	100.00	-446.29	0.00	1,457.75
Nest Boxes	166.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	166.69
Pest Animal Control	0.00	0.00	-358.74	358.74 ⁴	0.00
Firescape	734.34	0.00	0.00-	0.00	734.34
Traditional Burning	31,763.59	0.00	-23,344.76	0.00	8,418.83
Nillumbik-wide Monitoring	1227.87	29,024.00	-20,008.98	0.00	10,242.89
Woody Weeds	2,843.07	17,155.00	-2,638.39	0.00	17,359.68
Grant funds total	38,539.60	46,279.00	-46,797.16	358.74	38,380.18
TOTAL	47,618.79	55,865.59	-56,814.79	0.00	46,669.59

Cash book balance 31st December 2019 46,669.59
Bank balance 31st December 2018 46,669.59

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

Group funds expenses include:

- ¹ Tool trailer registration 2018
- ² Tool trailer registration 2019, fungus book, computer equipment, insurance & membership of Landcare Victoria Incorporated, catering (breakfast ingredients) for bird event.
- ³ Catering & hall hire for Black Saturday 10th Anniversary event, presenter for fungus event, coffee van for bird event, hall hire and presenter for reptile event.

⁴ Membership funds were transferred to cover shortfall for fungus event presenter and to enable purchase of materials for Rodenator.



Christmas Hills
Landcare Group



Neighbours caring for our place.....

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

*(Cover photo: Red fungi by Nev Ragg,
Back page photo: Laughing Kookaburra by Doug Evans)*