

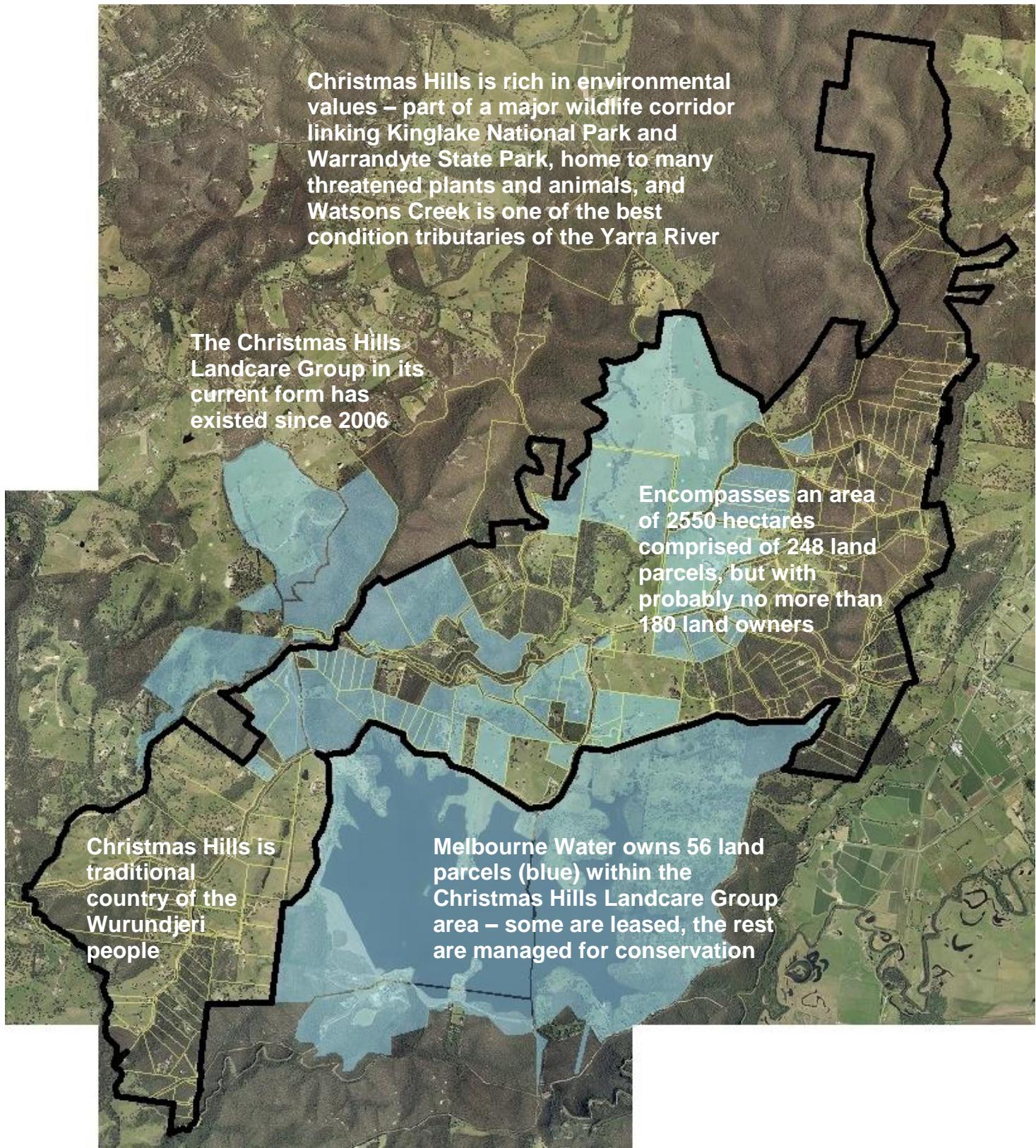


Christmas Hills Landcare Group

2012 Annual Report



Background



At the AGM held on the 19th February, the 20 members in attendance voted in 7 people to the Management Committee: Doug Evans, Rob Shackleton, Tina Keene, Nicole Noy, Mark Gardner, and Kylie Moppert.

Subsequently the committee determined the positions each would fill:
Doug – Chair; Nicole – Secretary; Kylie – Treasurer;
Mark – Vice Chair; Tina – Membership officer
(Rob stepped down from the committee in March)

The committee met eight times during the year and its decisions are guided by the group's vision, mission and strategic pathways established in August 2011. In 2012 the committee focussed on organising the events, selling a donated painting, determining projects to pursue funding for, updating the membership form and financial reporting format, and staying in touch with what was happening with the emerging Nillumbik Landcare Network, and the Nillumbik Conservation Corridor project.

Management committee



Kylie
Moppert

Mark (Gad)
Gardner

Tina
Keene

Nicole
Noy

Doug
Evans



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

Strategy

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.)

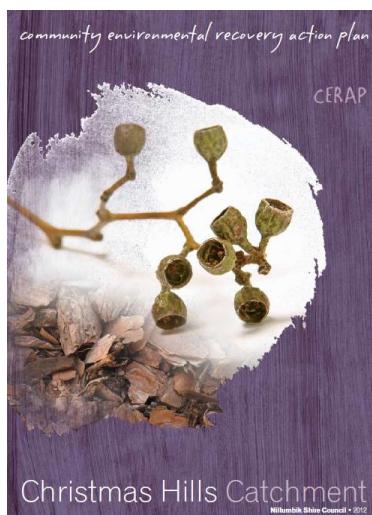
5. Integrate our efforts, and collaborate with others who have a shared interest in the environmental assets of Christmas Hills. How?

- 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

Strategic pathways

The Christmas Hills Community Environmental Action Plan was launched on the 1st December.

It consolidates information on the environmental assets of Christmas Hills and also guides landholder action in a map-based format.



Membership

Tina Keene was duly appointed as the first to fill our new dedicated Membership Officer role. During the year Tina refreshed our membership form and encouraged renewals, leading to the following list of financial members for 2012

Angie and Greg Macmillan

Bridget Bainbridge

Chris and Tina Keene

Colin and Eva Tyssen

Darren and Narrelle Trippett

Darren Bennett and Vanessa Reid

David Lang and Joan Stephens

Deb Wadsworth

Diane and Ray Marsh

Doug Evans and Pip Charlton

Douglas and Helen Bell

Garry and Mandy Lovell

Greg Bourne

Jackie Hamlet

Jan Cranwell and Phil Styles

Jane and Peter Russ

Joanne Sharman and Tomas Clark

John Devling

Judith Ellerton

Kay and Rod Armstrong

Kaye and Hugh McRae

Kevin and Margo Heeley

Kylie Moppert and Mark Gardner

Liz and Peter Laver

Lucy Canavan and Danny MacMinn

Martin Gray and Tamara Rennie

Mick and Suzanne Craine

Natali and Nick Capobianco

Neroli Merridew

Nev Ragg and Janet Meade

Nicole Noy & Ross Coupar

Paul and Jenny Mitchell

Paul Danelutti

Rob Shackleton and Linda Joyce

Robyn Adams & Dianne Simmons

Sally Corrigan

Sarah Hammond & Rhys Morgan

Simon Gilbert and Jill Scott

Tanja and Nick Bird

Tony & Brigid Bell

Veronica Holland

Warwick and Carol Leeson

Plus one donation

Joining the Christmas Hills Landcare Group means:

- Meeting neighbours
- Building relationships
- Gaining knowledge and skills
- Helping each other
- Working together

Joining the Christmas Hills Landcare Group gives you:

- access to local events designed to improve your understanding and develop your skills
- regular opportunities to meet and socialise with neighbours
- access to projects designed to assist landholders to take action

So 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 members gate sign, a community benefit card, and are added to the email list to get you in the loop - then it is only a \$10 annual renewal fee.

Membership



Following a community gathering in October 2005 at the Christmas Hills Primary School organised to gauge interest in Landcare, membership of the Christmas Hills Landcare Group has steadily grown.

Events

The first event for 2012 saw a presentation by Julia Franco (Land Management Officer - Biodiversity from Nillumbik Shire) on vegetation loss in Nillumbik, followed by the AGM.

Julia shared with us the findings of her analysis of native vegetation loss, both permitted and illegal, across Nillumbik.

Richard Francis, Director of Abzeco, was due to present the findings of his work for Nillumbik shire to update their Environmental Significance Overlay. His work included fauna surveys to help clarify the current extent and quality of native flora and fauna habitat in the shire. Unfortunately Richard was caught up with field work in eastern Victoria which meant he was a late withdrawal from the event.

He did, however, present at a later event.

A draft program of events for 2012 was mapped out, and then the management committee for 2012 was duly elected before we all enjoyed an abundance of coffee, tea, scones, cakes and biscuits.

Vegetation loss, habitat values and AGM



Enjoying afternoon tea after the 2012 AGM

Events

Two events on the 2012 program were weeding working bees to help two of our members with weed control.

At each event those present were shown how to recognise the target weed species, and how to treat them using tools from the Christmas Hills Tool Trailer. This approach aims to help landholders be better equipped to manage these weeds on their own properties.

On a drizzly day in May, 10 people helped Neroli Merridew tackle Sweet Pittosporum, Boneseed, Spanish Heath and Agapanthus on her steep property.

On a cool day in September, 8 people helped Judith Ellerton tackle Bluebell Creeper, Sallow Wattle, and a weedy Melaleuca on her steep property.

Helping neighbours with weed control



On a wet day in July, 20 people gathered at Sally Corrigan's place to hear from Dan Borg, Aquatic Scientist from Melbourne Water. Dan's presentation gave us insights into the geomorphology and hydrology of Watsons Creek, and he also shared his knowledge on the fish likely to occur in the creek.

We then went down to the nearby creek where Eddie Tsyrlin, another aquatic scientist from Melbourne Water, sampled the creek for aquatic fauna.

As a comparison we moved up the creek to David Lang and Joan Stephen's place ("Four Winds") to sample the headwaters of the creek for aquatic fauna. In both cases the bugs in the creek indicate it is in very good condition.

David and Joan then hosted us all for afternoon tea.

Up the creek without a paddle



Eddie Tsyrlin and Dan Borg from Melbourne Water show us water bugs from the headwaters of Watsons Creek on the Four Winds property

Events

Each year the group aims to hold one event that is open to everyone in Christmas Hills with the aim of increasing our profile and recruiting new members.

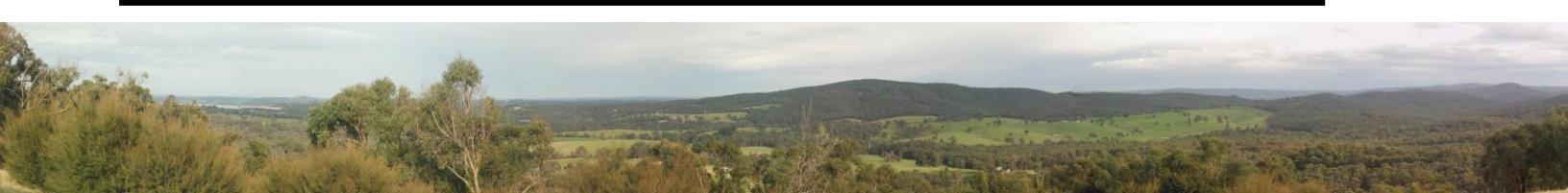
For 2012 we organised “*Christmas Hills IS where the wild things are*” as part of the Christmas Hills Primary School annual Spring Fair in October. Our event program had three parts to it, which was run in the morning and repeated again in the afternoon. The first part was a presentation with live native animals by the Wild Action Zoo, followed by Richard Francis of Abzeco presenting on the local habitat values and why he thinks Christmas Hills has the best habitat in Nillumbik, and ending with a presentation by the Chair, Doug Evans, on how the group helps landholders care for local habitat.

The morning session attracted about 30 people, whereas the afternoon session filled the Blue Wren Theatre with an estimated 100 or more people. Funding was secured from Nillumbik’s “Christmas Hills Events and Activities” program to cover the costs of the Wild Action Zoo.

Where the wild things are



“Cackles” the Kookaburra from Wild Action Zoo responds to the laughter of the audience



Creating opportunities for social interaction is one of the many objectives of the Christmas Hills Landcare Group, and the end-of-year breakup is a great example of this.

In December, 33 people gathered at Chris and Tina Keene's new house with instructions to bring a curry to share and a Krappy Kris Kringle.

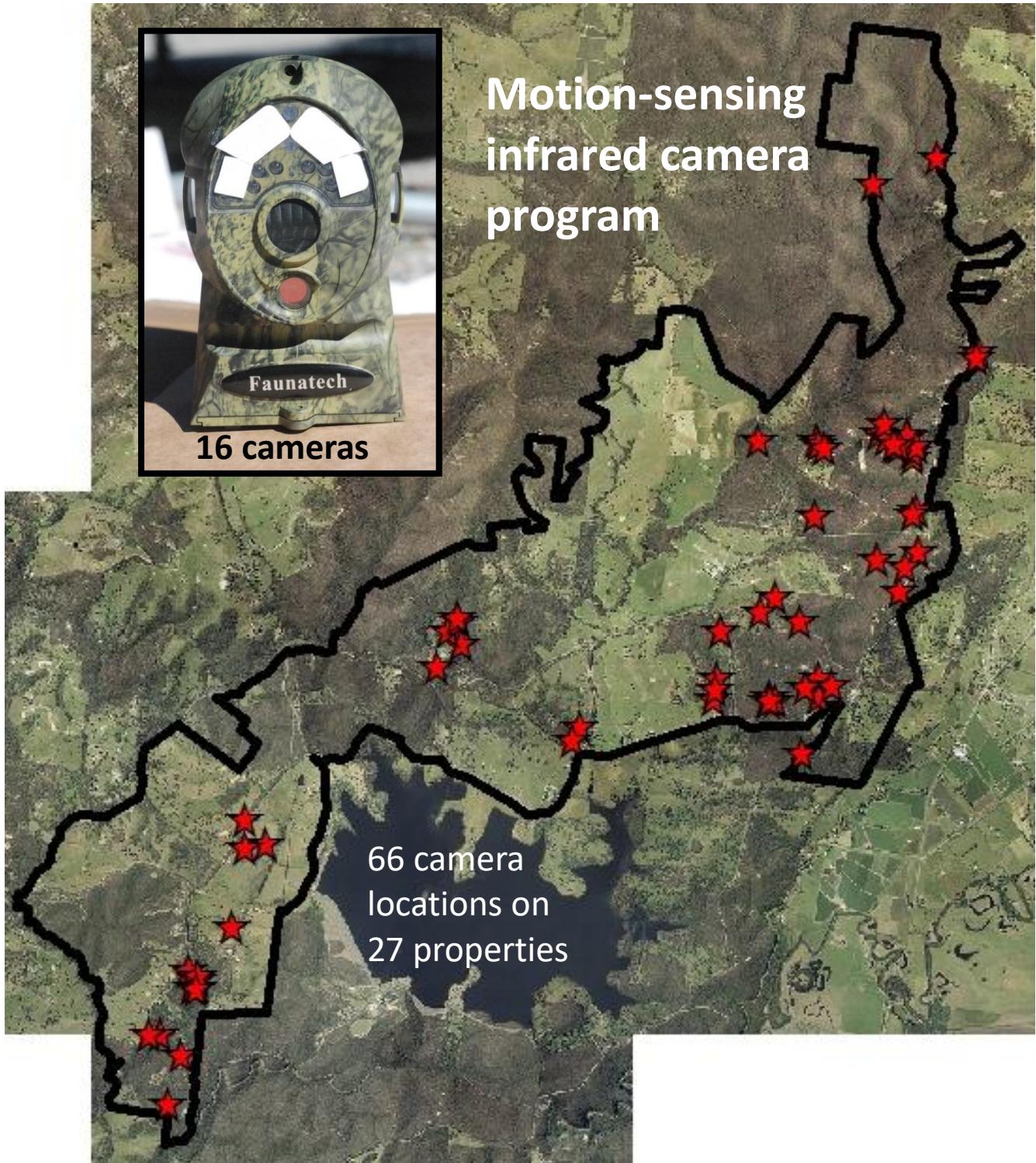
The event began with a presentation that summarised what the motion-sensing cameras had captured during the year. Then it was time to hand out the Kris Kringles which were opened and traded with much frivolity. Then we all sat down and dined on a wide range of delicious curries, complemented by a dessert of kulfi ice cream, courtesy of the group.

Show us your curry

Janet Meade shows off the most sought after Kris Kringle – the green frog!



Projects



Projects

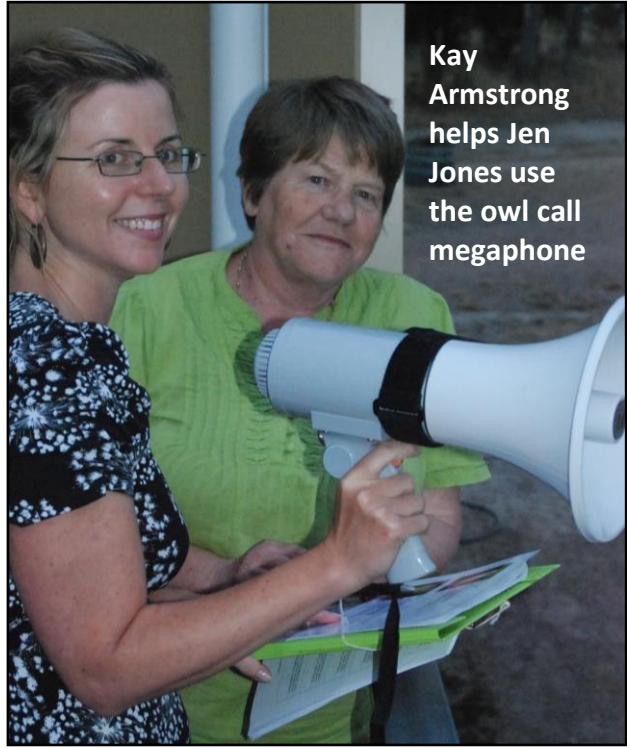
The Christmas Hills Landcare group secured funding from Nillumbik shire for another ten motion-sensing infrared trail cameras to go with the six we already had. Using scent lures to attract fauna to the front of the camera, landholders have been using the cameras to help find out what fauna occurs on their properties.

Nev Ragg, Nicole Noy and Doug Evans coordinated the sharing of the cameras amongst landholders, and during the year cameras were used on 27 different properties in 66 different locations. They detected 10 different native mammal species, 7 different introduced mammal species, and several bird species including the Superb Lyrebird and the Painted Button-quail.

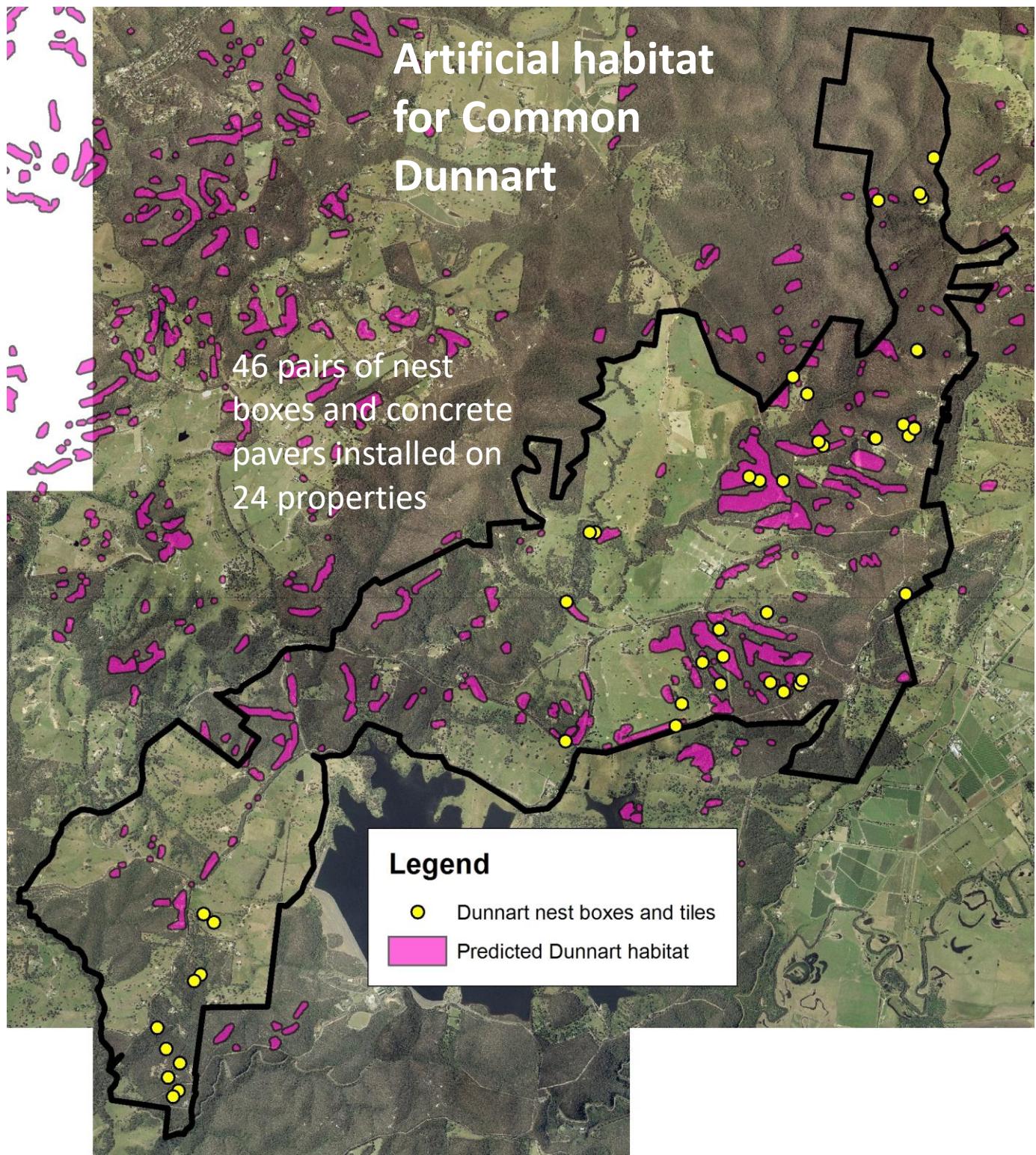
Calls of the six owl species likely to occur in the Christmas Hills area have been loaded onto an MP3 player coupled to a megaphone. This enables landholders to play the calls and see what response they can get – either a return call or attracting an owl close enough to identify it. During the year, Kay Armstrong coordinated the use of the megaphone, and to date six landholders have used the equipment detecting the presence of Southern Boobook, Powerful, Barn and Barking Owls.

Community fauna monitoring

A few of the species captured on camera:



Projects



Projects

The Common Dunnart (*Sminthopsis murina*) is a small carnivorous marsupial that is listed as 'Vulnerable' in Victoria, and is found locally with a known population occurring in the One Tree Hill reserve.

Parks Victoria have successfully used roof tiles and concrete pavers to provide artificial habitat for this species in this reserve. Using a 2010/11 Port Phillip and Westernport CMA Community Grant the group purchased 50 concrete pavers, and also had 50 nest boxes constructed that are specifically designed for dunnarts.

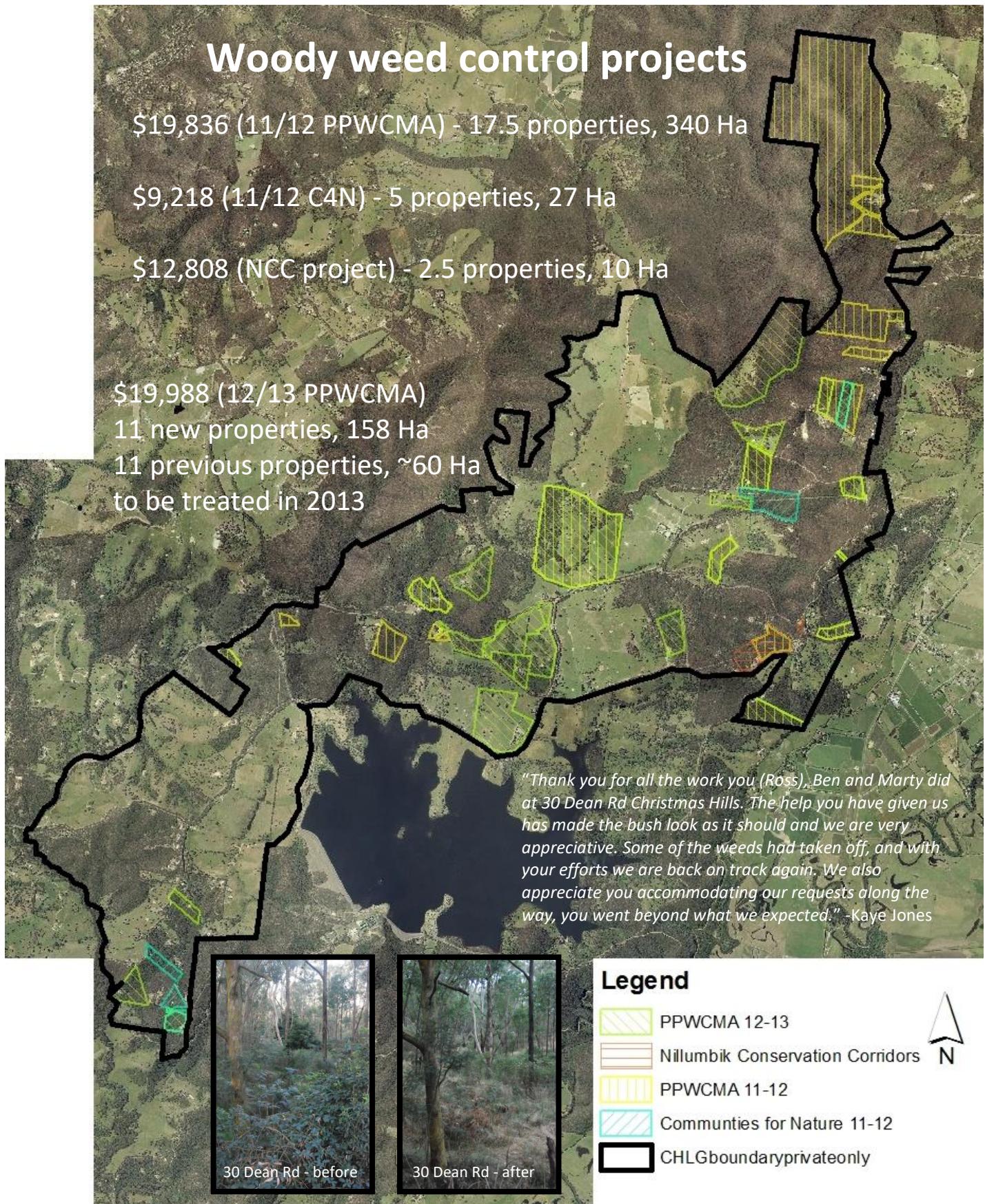
During the year 46 of these were installed on 24 properties by Mark (Gad) Gardner with the aim of improving the chances of this population to grow and spread into other parts of Christmas Hills. They will now be left for a while and not be inspected until spring in 2013 at the earliest.

The placement of these nest boxes and pavers was in part guided by a Deakin University student project under the supervision of Di Simmons that used habitat characteristics of recorded Common Dunnart locations to predict other locations with similar habitat characteristics.

Dunnart nest boxes



Projects



Projects

One of the major threats to the quality of flora and fauna habitat in Christmas Hills are woody weeds invading native vegetation. Species such as Blackberry, Boneseed, Sweet Pittosporum, Cootamundra Wattle, Sallow Wattle and Radiata Pine can form dense infestations preventing natural regeneration of native species and altering fauna habitat.

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.

During 2012 Indigenous Design Environmental Services were engaged to do weed control work on 25 properties covering 379 hectares using funds secured from the PPWCMA Community Grants, DSE's Communities for Nature, and the Nillumbik Conservation Corridors project. Another PPWCMA Community Grant was secured late in the year that will enable an additional 11 properties covering 158 hectares to be treated in 2013.

Woody weed control



Promotion

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group promotes its activities and maintains a profile through five main means:

We maintain a website where we post newsletters and project and event details:
<http://portphilipwesternport.landcarevic.net.au/Christmashills>

We have recently created a Facebook page - "Friends of Christmas Hills Landcare Group" to see if that might reach a new audience:

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

We send regular email newsletters to all members to keep them informed of upcoming events, project opportunities and other news of relevance.

We provide member gate signs to illustrate the extent of our membership in the community.

At events we put up a sandwich board indicating an event is on to show we are active.

Partnerships

The CHLG is keen to collaborate and form mutually-beneficial partnerships with others who share our objectives. A number of new partnerships emerged during 2012.

Nillumbik Conservation Corridor project

CHLG was part of a consortium of Landcare groups in Nillumbik, led by Dunmoochin Landcare Group, that has secured a major Communities for Nature grant of \$599,000 over four years to improve habitat for threatened species. We have already benefited with weed control on three properties where Round-leaf Pomaderris occurs funded through this project.

Nillumbik Landcare Network

CHLG was part of another consortium of Landcare groups in Nillumbik, this time led by Strathewen Landcare Group that secured a DSE Local Landcare Facilitator grant to employ a part-time Landcare Facilitator for three years. Damian Magner has since been recruited and he is leading the process for establishment of the Nillumbik Landcare Network. This network is transitioning from the Nillumbik Natural Environment Recovery Working Group (of which the CHLG is also a member) that formed in response to the 2009 bushfires.

Sugarloaf Place Plan

Melbourne Water is developing a plan focussed on the area around the Sugarloaf Reservoir and Winneke Water Treatment Plant. CHLG has provided input into this plan.

Christmas Hills Community Website

CHLG is one of several local community groups involved in establishing a community website.



Finances

	Opening balance 1 st January 2012	Plus receipts	Less expenses	Transfers*	Closing balance 31 st December 2012	Notes
Group funds						
Memberships and donations	2,052.62	750.00 ¹	-588.51 ²	115.96	2,680.31	
Ritchies		140.24				
Sale of donated painting		210.00				
Sub total	2,052.62	1,100.24	-588.51	115.96	2,680.31	
Project grant funds						
Weed mapping	0.00				0.00	Project complete
Rabbit control 1	3,521.33		-1,387.79		2,133.54	
Rabbit control 2	2,313.71		-2,313.71		0.00	Project complete
Woody weeds 1	19,836.00		-19,988.38	152.38	0.00	Project complete
Woody weed 2	0.00	9,218.00			9,218.00	Chq sent but not presented by Dec 31
Tool trailer	1,032.75		-861.35		171.40	Binoculars and 1 st Aid Kit to be purchased
Fauna monitoring	2,721.97	4,455.00	-5,684.12	-268.34	1,224.51	Web mapping design modification to do
Wild things event	0.00	3,300.00	-3,300.00		0.00	Project complete (Wild Action Zoo)
Sub total	29,425.76	16,973.00	-33,535.35	-115.96	12,747.45	
TOTAL	31,733.25	18,062.37	-34,123.86	-	15,427.76	
			Bank balance 31 st December 2012		15,427.76	
			Unspent project funds		12,747.45	
			Unspent group funds		2,680.31	
					15,427.76	

* Transfers represent minor over/underspend on projects. Transfers may be between similar projects or to/from Group funds.

¹ Membership funds received include donations and multi-year memberships.

²Expenses include insurance, postage, consumables



Neighbours caring for our place.....

CHRISTMAS HILLS

A scenic landscape photograph of the Christmas Hills area. The foreground shows rolling hills covered in green vegetation and some dry, yellowish fields. In the middle ground, there's a body of water, possibly Port Phillip Bay. The background features more hills under a clear blue sky.