

Yalukit Willam Nature Association

May 2024

Old Man Sunsetting

Wygabil-ny-ewin, Old Man Sun Season on
Boonwurrung Country



Tim from Native Fish Australia surveys the Chain of Ponds with
Gio for the YWNA partnership Native Fish project.
Photo:Natalie Davey

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Old Man SunSetting

Natalie Davey, YWNA President

We are fast reaching the end of Autumn and as the days still shine warmly, showing off the reserve in all its growing splendour - YWNA is busily trying to keep up with the season's activities.

YWNA has handed over most of their gathered and gleaned harvest of seeds to the Melbourne Uni team, who are preparing the mixes for direct sowing. This should happen very soon. You may have noticed the landscapers busily preparing the Wild Flower meadow site with paths and rock design. It will be immensely exciting to see this part of the project develop. We welcome any new active volunteers as YWNA will be working in the site and focussing particularly in the potential frog swales. This new area increases our scope and work.

At the recent Bayside Council meeting, (10.4) the design for the Southern Wetlands was passed. YWNA has been pleased to note that there has been engineering thought into helping prevent the spillage of water from this wetland into the Chain of Ponds as this will help the ongoing work to clear the Chain of Ponds of Gambusia. Have you noticed the ponds - especially the billabongs, are currently being allowed to go through a drying process - just like a natural system would do. This process is helping to remove Gambusia (an introduced pest fish) or at least drastically reduce their numbers. It is interesting to note that Soak 2 which dried out last year, now has an abundance of frogs which is due to the fact Gambusia are not present. They know!

YWNA has joined a partnership with Australian Native Fish Association and Melbourne Water to host and grow Southern Pygmy Perch.

Attachment 1: Wetland Concept



Southern Wetlands Design

'Expanded wetlands were needed to improve the quality of water that is released into Port Phillip Bay. The Masterplan proposed an extension to the current wetland and constructing a new wetland to the south of the existing.' P. 165 Bayside meeting

Pictured below Gio and Natalie from YWNA with Tim Curmi (president of the Vic Chapter of the Australian Native Fish Association. And Greg Martin - President of the Vic Chapter of ANGFA



Celebrating the shed becoming the first to house Pygmy Perch as part of a joint project supported by Melbourne Water

We are looking forward to potentially breeding fish specifically for the Chain of Ponds and wetlands. YWNA would love to help the pops of Dwarf Galaxis which are endangered and from memory in the Masterplan. Next steps will be permits and further discussions. Thank you to the Plant Lab volunteers who helped transfer the fish to their new home.

After setting up the tank - Gio, Tim and I had a walk through the Chain of Ponds as Tim wanted to ascertain the habitat. We all noted with glee the recruitment of water plants (Trigolchin) in the drying billabong. A big shout out to the YWNA team who helped with pumping out the Billabongs. Brilliant job. We particularly have to thank Nils who has returned to Holland. The barefoot wetland warrior. As a community group, for health and safety, we require boots on site- but it is sometimes hard to argue with a barefoot warrior.



You may also notice some extra rocks around the billabong. These have been placed there as frogs need open areas to get out and bathe in light. It will be very interesting to see the habitat develop in the Wildflower Meadow. YWNA is particularly invested in the swales- the low lying areas that will hold water. YWNA is growing plants especially for this habitat area as well as the Wild Flower meadow.



Claire Hudson, from YWNA Plant Lab, has initiated a project with the Bowls Club. YWNA is able to operate with volunteers due to the Bowls Association sharing their amenities while the reserve is in development stage. We had long wanted to do something with and for them in return. This is a delightful way to share the reserve's plantings with our neighbour and increase habitat at the same time!

As a member we encourage to engage in any of the YWNA activities, or share any ideas for engagement. Please keep an eye on our website events page or/and Facebook page for upcoming surveys or Working Bees.

Our Increased programming and the upsurge of interest in the reserve is a reason our committee is on the look out for any keen members interested in volunteering some time to help with the communications team. If you are interested please email YWNA at committee@ywna.org

Plant Lab leader Claire Hudson has partnered YWNA with the Bowling Club to refresh their gardens with local native plants



Tangled Lignum, *Duma florulenta*

THANK

YOU

Thanks as always to all our keen volunteers and supporters. You are all amazing.



Looking from Pond 7 over to the future Southern Wetlands

Ebony Bain - New Working Bee Coordinator

We are thrilled to have Ebony on board coordinating our working bees. Ebony has been volunteering at the Plant Lab for a couple of years, and with her day job being a science communicator- she's a perfect match. She has instigated a new tradition of a grazing table for our events.

Make sure to say hi and introduce yourself to Ebony at the next working bee. Thanks to Ebony YWNA now has an [Instagram account](#) too. A big thanks again to Harry Baxter, who coordinated the working bees over 2023.



Ebony kneeling with YWNA volunteers after a huge seed cleaning Working Bee.

Volunteer Week

20-26 May 2024

As a volunteer organisation, this year's theme of '**Something for Everyone**' suits our focus on involving community in as many meaningful ways we can think of, particularly during the development phases of this wetland project.

The current YWNA committee and sub-committee are always open to engagement ideas and input from all our members.

At this stage you can go seed collecting, help survey birds, macro-invertebrates and water quality. You can help grow plants, plant, feed fish or/and contribute to YWNA growing and learning as a young organisation. And more! All that we have become and contributed so far has been through the hard work of countless volunteers. The project has inspired so many people to contribute their time and knowledge- and as a community group we want to thank each and everyone of you. This project is the result of a shared community vision and it is so inspiring to see the ongoing involvement of so many!



Photo -Natalie Davey

Volunteer Week 20-26 May 2024



Gratitude and thanks go out to all the people on YWNA's Subcommittees

These are the people who actively connect you to activities to make a difference on the ground

You know who you are and we hope to shine more light on each of you individually over time. But for now YWNA as a whole, just want you to know how amazing you all are and how terrific it is that you are part of this community creating and caring for the YWNR.

Photo -Danny Fog
Birdwatchers

Bird Corner

Migration Day

Gio Fitzpatrick



I awoke on this crisp and sunny May morning (2/5/2024) to the jolting news that Archer Calloway had found a Yellow-faced Honeyeater perched in a dead cypress on the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve! A new bird for the site and one that I've only ever seen once in inner Melbourne. They're a rarity around here now but there are people who can remember them being quite common in the bushland reserves of Bayside several decades ago. Indeed, when the whole place was bushland of one kind or another, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were probably one of the commonest birds in almost any treed area.

Now they cause sleepy naturalists to rush out the door without breakfast in the slim hope of a glimpse. I'd meandered around on the bike for fifteen minutes, thinking "well, at least I tried" when it suddenly flew over and shot into a River Red Gum near the water tanks. Just as I was lifting my binoculars, the Noisy Miners caught up with it and sent it out of sight, over the Chain of Ponds. For an exhausted and hungry, migrating bird, ongoing harassment by Noisy Miners is a powerful and potentially lethal deterrent, so I was surprised to find that an hour later, the Yellow-faced Honeyeater was still around; now at the Elwood Bowls Club.

While trying to get a look at it in a Eucalyptus scoparia between the bowling greens and the sports oval, something else caught my attention further up – three Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters flying north together over the reserve. Then, less than a minute later, a Little Eagle tracked through the bright blue sky in the same direction. It seems that the still and cloudless weather conditions today had converged on just the right time of year to make for a spectacular day of bird migration. Archer joined me to chase up the Yellow-faced Honeyeater again and as we were looking, a Mistletoebird began calling and flew in a big loop around us, followed by a Spotted Pardalote.

Archer asked if I knew of any mistletoes growing in the Rippon Lea Estate, to which I replied, that there had been a fairly large, old Creeping Mistletoe in the Golden Elm between the Fernery and the ABC building until recently when an arborist unfortunately cut it out. The only ones left in the estate now are a handful of young ones in a Plane Tree near the gardener's quarters on the Elm Street Border. Let's hope that the arborists don't get to them... There had been no sign of the lone Yellow-faced Honeyeater along New Street for a few minutes and then... a sound which seemed totally foreign to this place echoed in. The flight calls of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters! Six of them filed past at canopy height, heading south east. 15 minutes later, more flocks passed over, first another 6 and then about 20; all heading in the same direction and chattering as they went. A Whistling Kite was the next visitor. It circled over the northern corner of the reserve once before disappearing over Elsternwick. The reports of other interesting sightings then started coming in thick and fast from other birders in the local area.

- . From the roof of a building near the Caulfield Racecourse, Matt McCrae saw a Little Eagle (possibly the same one) on the lawn of the racecourse with prey.
- . Archer found a Golden Whistler beside the lookout tower at the ornamental pond at Rippon Lea Estate.
- . Joshua Gatchalian saw 14 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters fly over near Perc White Reserve.
- . Aidan Powell saw another 10 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters flying over next to Acland Street.
- . Rohan Clarke saw about 15 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters flying over Cheltenham Recreation Reserve.
- . Archer saw 6 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters actually land in Rippon Lea Estate, followed by 11 more.
- . Ian Melbourne saw a Whistling Kite over the Urban Forest Reserve in East Malvern.
- . Aidan Powell saw 5 Purple-crowned Lorikeets over Point Ormond.
- . Archer found a male Mistletoebird right next to that Plane Tree mentioned before in Rippon Lea Estate.
- . Robert Schiller found 5 King Parrots in the Urban Forest Reserve.
- . Rohan Clarke found 4 White-naped Honeyeaters and lots of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters at Ricketts Point.
- . Aidan found another Yellow-faced Honeyeater along with a Flame Robin and a Black Shouldered Kite on the Elwood Foreshore.
- . Archer saw a flock of 62 Straw-necked Ibis flying over.
- . Rohan saw a Black-shouldered Kite, White-fronted Tern and a Short-tailed Shearwater at Ricketts Point.

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- Emma Bond found 4 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at Darling Park

To call this event unprecedented would be an understatement. When I was first becoming familiar with local birds, largely under the tutelage of David W. Eades, I knew that Yellow-faced Honeyeater had only been seen once in the City of Port Phillip in over 30 years of observation (that one was found by Andrew McCutcheon at Moran Reserve). The movements of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters in Victoria are complex. A large portion of the population spends the summer in wet upland forests and woodlands, when their foods are most abundant there but movement patterns vary between region and habitat. To summarise, at this time of year, some move from wet to dry habitats, some move from high to low altitude, some move North into New South Wales and some, in lowland areas, stay all year. Most of them didn't stop, they just powered their way over our fairly inhospitable landscape. Michael Norris tells me that in the early days, one could easily observe the ebbs and flows of mass honeyeater migration in Bayside.

There was a stronger sense then, that the landscape was interconnected and the ecosystems functioning. While green and fairly heavily treed, our home landscape no-longer provides adequate food resources that these birds require. The urban canopy is virtually insect-free, relative the indigenous trees that once grew here and the seasonal variation in nectar-flows from the local eucalypts and shrubs has been replaced by a more-or-less continuous flow from trees and shrubs in from all over Australia. This steady stream is now heavily guarded by a dense population of resident larger honeyeaters, particularly, Red and Little Wattlebirds and Noisy Miners. This has created a situation where the incentives for this kind of migration are now absent locally and reaching those patches that remain suitable is now harder. It is hopeful however, that events like today's are still happening and observable. It means that if we started to become more considerate about what we plant in our streets, gardens and parks, birds like these might still respond. That window is still open. Although nothing like today's event has been observed in recent decades, from about 2018, David W. Eades started seeing occasional small flocks of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters every spring, migrating along the coast in Elwood.

Because the habitat available to them here has changed little for several decades and they rarely seem to stop and interact with it, it would appear that the new trend could be driven from something further afield. Perhaps as more of the foothills and riparian corridors further inland in Melbourne become terminally saturated with Noisy Miners, as has happened over the last decade, the She-oak dominated coast is becoming a more important migration corridor? Unfortunately, a recent increase in the planting of Coast Banksias in exposed locations along the Elwood Foreshore has seen increased infiltration of the area by Noisy Miners and a boom in Little Wattlebirds, which places new threats to migrants right in the bottleneck. If we all plant more prolific insect-supporting trees such as Black Wattle, Silver Wattle and Drooping She-oak in gardens and streets, we'll be providing food for a wide range of migrant birds and not magnifying the issue of overabundant large honeyeaters supported by overabundant and overly stable sugar sources.

Photos: Yellow-faced Honeyeater in YWNR (Archer Calloway), Whistling Kite over East Malvern (Ian Melbourne), Little Eagle at Caulfield Racecourse Reserve (Matt McCrae), Mistletoebird at Rippon Lea Estate (Archer Calloway).



Eagle-eyed spotting of the Little Eagle

🌸 Invitation 🌸

🌸 THANK YOU FLOWER MEADOW TOUR 🌸

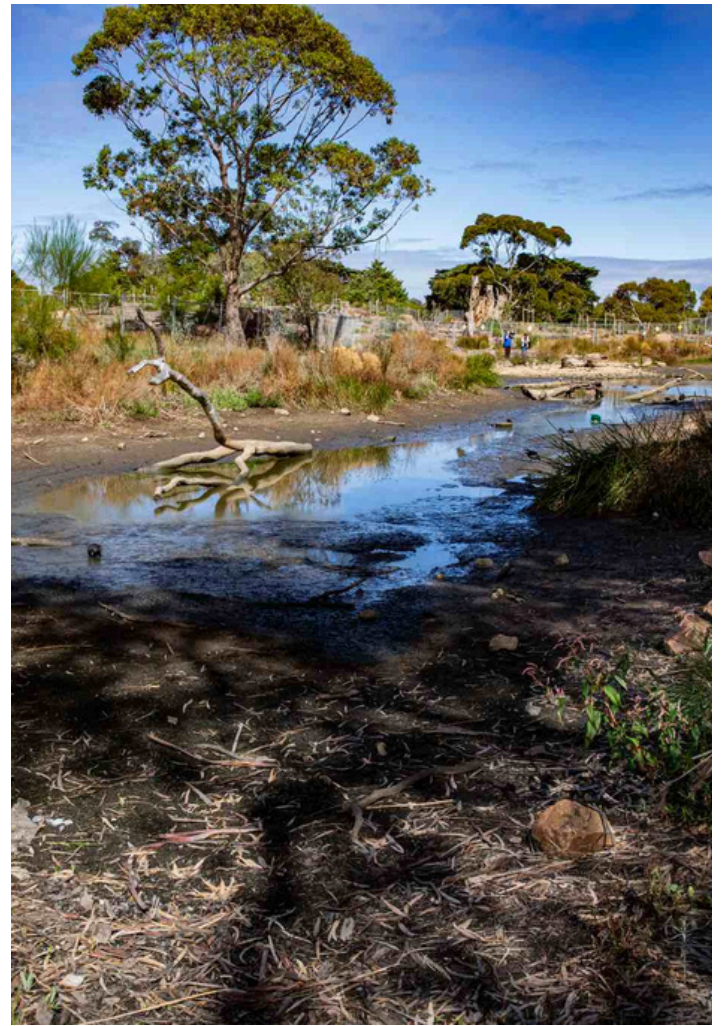
Volunteer Week is here and to celebrate we are offering a tour around the soon to be sown Wildflower meadow with Gio Fitzpatrick and the Project Lead Jarrod Fleming.

You will be able to see where the future Flower Meadow is being laid out and learn more about the design and future ecology of the space. We will be holding the tour immediately after our next Working Bee on **Saturday 25th May** (during Volunteer Week) 12.45pm. Please wear sturdy shoes and comfortable, warm clothing.



Gio Fitzpatrick on site with Jarrod Fleming- Project Lead and Prof Nick Williams and Sophia Blosfelds from Melbourne Uni.

It will also be a great opportunity to ask questions about the drying process currently occurring in the Chain of Ponds.



Drying Out Billabong
- Natalie Davey

iNaturalist

The Yalukit Willam Nature reserve iNaturalist project is a great resource showcasing the incredible biodiversity the reserve hosts.

You can also contribute to citizen science and our knowledge of the YWNA by adding observations for identification by experts.

Hop on and have a look around [here](#)

Turning OFF the



pumps



Many waterbodies around Melbourne are artificially held in a compromised state of stasis but our ponds have now been liberated. To simply turn off the pump may seem a tiny act but in terms of ecological returns, it is huge. It will elevate our ponds from being yet another set of rather impoverished constructed wetlands to being the stage for one of our region's greatest natural spectacles.

What to expect:

1. As water begins to draw down and muddy pond beds are exposed, more specialised edge-dwelling waterbirds (shorebirds) are likely to drop in. They (most species) need open mud on which to pick and probe for invertebrates while having more or less panoramic views of their surroundings. They cannot forage among the tall, dense vegetation that currently dominates the edges. Species which could appear include Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-winged Stilt, Latham's Snipe and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (although, it is getting a little late in the season for the last two).
2. When only small puddles are left, expect to see many resident waterbirds making the most of the soup of prey which gets concentrated into the shrinking pools. In the past, the drainage of Elsternwick Park south lake attracted visiting Pelicans, White-necked Herons, Australian White Ibis and Pink-eared Ducks (all birds which tend not to visit the lake otherwise). Birds may feed on the abundant *Gambusia* (Mosquitofish) and so convert what is currently a major threat and limiting factor for biodiversity into food for native wildlife. It is quite likely that this boom in prey availability will stimulate the local White-faced Herons to breed again this summer.
3. By this time, aquatic, semi aquatic and even many terrestrial plants will begin invading the exposed pond bed en masse. They will germinate in the hundreds of thousands and outpace the grazing pressure of ducks which has hitherto obstructed their advance into the ponds. Grazing pressure by ducks will reduce overall as the exposed ground is a less inviting foraging zone and the hardened soil will provide a sturdier anchor for the roots of small seedlings.

4. If the ponds sit dry for some time, all gambusia will be gone. Many terrestrial species of plants which have a 'live fast – die young' strategy will colonise the pond beds, put on a show of colour and set seed. These plants are adapted to and rely on cycles of boom and bust. They would be doomed and gone without such events. The unique ephemeral habitat that they create may, in turn, provide unprecedented wildlife surprises for us to observe. Eastern Rosellas may have a daisy seed feast, skinks and black field crickets may love the soil cracks and fresh flushes of vegetation, in turn attracting things like Sacred Kingfishers which prey on them... who knows...
5. When water returns to the now vegetated pond beds, conditions will be perfect for frogs to breed. The flooded plants will become an underwater labyrinth among which tadpoles and many aquatic invertebrates can gain shelter. The surfaces of these plants will form biofilms upon which tadpoles, pond snails and glass shrimp forage. The lack of gambusia will allow tadpoles to reach maturity (gambusia bite the tails of tadpoles and eventually kill them) and they can then emerge as the first generation of frogs to fulfil their lifecycle on this patch of land for decades. The chorus of frogs belting through all of the ponds at once is a very exciting prospect. As is the thought that today's local kids could witness the wonder of frogs and metamorphosis right here in their home landscape as perhaps, their grandparents had.
6. The bottleneck in aquatic predators in general along with a flush of plant growth will see a boom in microcrustaceans such as Cladocerans (Water Fleas) and Ostracods (Seed Shrimp). These have a similar life strategy to those plants mentioned in point 4 – get in quick and multiply like crazy before the slower predators or competitors get going. The clouds of microcrustaceans, feeding on phytoplankton may entice filter-feeding extraordinaires such as Pink-eared Ducks and (if we are extremely lucky) Australasian Shovelers to drop in for a feast.



YWNA teams were actively pumping out water to facilitate the drying process



Soak 2, which has previously dried out, is now brimming with frogs. One being the Spotted Marsh Frog above.

7. As the water sits high for a while, things will generally quieten down. Predator populations within the pond will reach carrying capacity, plants will thin out from the deeper areas, outwards and vegetation on the edges will thicken, covering muddy gaps and becoming increasingly dominated by just a few larger species.

8. Soon it'll be time for another dry spell, only this time the populations, eggs, seeds, spores and possibly even memories of those species which rely on wetland dynamism will have built up and be more ready than before. The show will only get more spectacular.

If you think this kind of facilitated ecosystem recovery is what this project is all about, let Bayside Council know that you're happy with their decision. This action is a little out of the ordinary for this area and could do with community support. Many people who do not know the ecological processes at work, may be distressed by the sight of a drying wetland and see it as process of degradation. In much the same way that the seeming calamity of a fire can be powerfully regenerative in some terrestrial environments in our region, many wetland types become more 'healthy' (diverse and productive) after drying out. I am so glad that we are now acknowledging this in the management of the reserve and I am sure that the community will get behind it.



Gio Fitzpatrick

Reveil and Underwater Listening



YWNA took part in a Global Listening project Reveil for the third time this year on Sunday 7th May. This entailed a dawn start and putting hydrophones (underwater microphones) into the ponds to listen. This terrific project travels through environmental sound from East to West around the whole globe following the sunrise.

YWNA Waterwatch added underwater sound in 2021 to our monthly Waterwatch program. The recorded sound helps us monitor the biodiversity of underwater macro-invertebrates. We collect and record sound from both Elster Creek and the Chain of Ponds.

The connectivity of water shows we need the health of the whole catchment to really help bolster the health of the reserve. You will be aware that a lot of the pollutants that threaten water quality in the reserve (and Bay) flow first through mainly concreted stormwater in Glen Eira and the broader Dandenong Catchment. We have recently learned that Glen Eira Council are working to increase the number of GPTs (Gross Pollutant Traps) in their system and are working with Melbourne Water on this. The issues we face lower in the catchment need to be dealt with at source, if we are really going to see water quality improve substantially over time.



YWNA is very aware of broader community efforts to clean up this notoriously filthy waterway and we would like to express gratitude to all the amazing volunteers who are lobbying, picking up and recording litter, working with community and other organisations to highlight the ongoing nature of the degradation of urban waterways. Elster Creek has long been intractably dirty and our hope is that we will see this improve immeasurably over a short time span.

The development of the Southern Wetlands in the Reserve will support this goal. The added wetland space will help filter water, reduce turbidity and nitrate levels flowing into the Bay. To some degree it will help with light flooding, though in catastrophic events the soon to be developed [Drain Duplication Project](#) will take over to divert flooding from this part of the catchment. The drain will protect this wetland too from catastrophic inundation, so that its function of cleaning the waters flowing into the Bay and providing biodiverse habitat can be sustained.

What's On This Weekend

Check out the [events](#) page on our website anytime for upcoming events in the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve.

May 25

Working Bee

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

YWNA Shed 172 Glenhuntly Rd, Brighton, Victoria

Now at a 9:30am-12:30pm timeslot! Come along on Saturday 25th May to help grow the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve



All YWNA members are invited to our Thank You Tour walk, following this weekend's Working Bee. The walk over the Wild Flower Meadow with Gio Fitzpatrick and Project Lead Jarrod Fleming. This will start at 12.45pm from the YWNA shed and go for about an hour. Please wear heavy protective shoes and comfortable warm clothes.



May 26

Waterwatch

May 26 @ 9:30 am - 12:00 pm

In Reserve, near Monash Bridge entrance. St Kilda St, Elwood, Victoria

Our monthly Waterwatch monitoring is taking place in the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve. Please all meet at 9.30am at the picnic tables next to Monash Bridge, off St Kilda St. Please email natalieadavey@gmail.com if wanting to come for the first time.



The Yalukit Willam Nature Association acknowledges the Yalukit Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung people - Traditional Custodians of the Land and Sea Country we live on. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We celebrate the stories, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Elders of all communities. Always respect and gratitude to our YWNA Patron N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs OM

Plant Lab and Spa



If you are interested in becoming more involved in the weekly work of the YWNA Plant Lab/SPA please send an email to committee@ywna.org.au and we will add you to the regular Plant Lab list.

The Plant Lab is managed by Gio Fitzpatrick, Jo Samuel-King and Claire Hudson. Julie Beatty has been managing the seed production this year.

Weekly Plant Lab times are 2.30-5.30pm Wednesdays

Additional Saturday session is on the **third** Saturday of the month 2.30-4.30pm

This Saturday (18th of May) has been cancelled to focus on the June 1 trip.

A field trip to Tootarook Swamp planned, to collect aquatics, earmarked for **Saturday 1st June**. More details to follow

Gio Fitzpatrick and Sophie Clarke will continue to support many of the Wednesday afternoon sessions with Jo to allow for different activities to take place at the same time.

Claire will be running a **Saturday morning session on the second Saturday each month. 9.30-12pm**. This will include a range of general Plant lab activities with a focus on our new project of the Bowls Club perimeter garden with input from Bowls and YWNA members.

For all members currently volunteering or those wishing to join active YWNA projects, we are holding our Annual Induction next Month

Induction – 2-30-3.30pm, Wednesday, June 12th. YWNA Shed

YWNA holds an annual Induction, and is happy to familiarise you anytime with our protocols if needed. Our general Induction is to introduce you a little more formally with the YWNA [Handbook](#). It clarifies the responsibilities that we have to you as a volunteer and your own responsibilities as part of the team. We will be working with Nadav from the Ecocentre to support the Induction.

Acknowledgements

A final note to thank Bayside Council for their collaborative work with YWNA. Last year we spent a long time forming a shared framework with our [MOU agreement](#). Many thanks go to the previous committee who worked hard to complete this work with Council Officers. All agreements only prove their use in action and YWNA is very pleased to note that extensive engagement has occurred, punctuated with frequent meetings with Officers and Project Lead Jarrod Fleming. The local knowledge that the YWNA community is so passionate about maintaining in this project is definitely being listened to and YWNA is appreciative of the time taken to allow this cross collaboration to occur in a real way.

Earlier this year, N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs, Boonwurrung Elder, had an opportunity to talk with Bayside Council and we hope this is the beginning of a deeper engagement as the project develops. She has been instrumental in the design of the meeting place and has been active creating film and dance projects on the site. We are very fortunate to have N'arwee't so involved with YWNA and give her patronage, and even more importantly, her time. N'arwee't has been sharing knowledge of her Country with Bayside for over 30 years. If you haven't heard it before - have a listen to the [Time of Chaos story](#)- shared on the Bayside Council website. The story helps you situate this 14 hectare site in the deep time home of the Boonwurrung's continuous occupation and ongoing struggle for true acknowledgment and voice. She is very interested in the regeneration of Country as an incredible opportunity to work with young people in her community and broader public and support the deeper potential for Culture-led projects.



N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs with Officers from Bayside- Tom Vercoe and Fiona Mitchell in the reserve.