



## The pleasure of wildlife

By Barry Lees

My wife and I live on 5 acres with a lot of bush. We

regularly see wallabies, goannas, skinks, water dragons, diamond pythons, possums, bandicoots, many small birds, brown doves, wonga pigeons, peaceful doves, king parrots, crimson rosellas, yellow tail black cockatoos, glossy black cockatoos, occasional echidnas. We don't see any noisy miners or India mynas. We have a few ponds with dragon flies and many bugs in and on the water. On some nights, the frog noise is deafening.

We love all this wildlife and the entertainment it provides. There are continual surprises. We saw a mother wallaby with a tiny head looking out of her pouch. We saw it later, with more fur. Mum was eating leaves from a shrub while bub leaned out and nibbled on the lower leaves. A month on, we saw bub on the ground, all legs and tail, wobbling along trying to control these long appendages. When they saw us, bub leapt into mum's pouch, leaving bits sticking out. As bub grew, they ate together, bub never more than a metre from mum. Last week, we saw bub alone, now about 40cm high, exploring the bush, nibbling everything.

We saw a big goanna climbing a tree, probably looking for eggs in a nest. A white cockatoo attacked the goanna,



screeching loudly, to stop it climbing. It hung on upside-down, trying to bite the goanna's head. In reply, the goanna tried to grab the cockatoo in its mouth. The cockatoo then flew underneath and tried to bite its tail. The goanna swung its tail violently, to swat the cockatoo. The noise and action went for half an hour, when the goanna came down the tree and the cockatoo flew away.

I backed down the drive recently, towards a water dragon, standing dead still, looking at my approaching car. I slowed, then stopped when the rear tyre was 50cm away. I got out slowly and quietly explained the consequences if he did not move. He listened intently, with small movements of his head. As I stood up there was a blur and he was off through the bush at high speed. I like to think it was a lizard playing chicken, with his mates looking on seeing who would win the bet.

Many people clear the shrubs from their land, and then spend many hours mowing the grass. That's their choice, but it creates a biological desert. With the joy, entertainment and endless learning on offer from wildlife, I struggle to understand why they would choose the ride-on mower.

**!** If you would like to know more, contact us at Still Creek Landcare on [www.stillcreeklandcare.com.au](http://www.stillcreeklandcare.com.au)

## Free Native Plants!

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Once again, a generous donor has enabled Landcare to offer free local native plants to landowners who live in Hornsby Council's rural area, or Hills Shire along Old Northern Road. We want the plants to go to people who are clearing privet or lantana or other weeds and who wish to revegetate with native plants. Also those who want to revegetate their roadside nature strip, or create a wildlife corridor or a similar activity.

If that sounds like you, contact Barry Lees on 9653 3691. I will help you work out what plants would suit your property from those available at either of 2 Nurseries. I will then advise the nursery to expect a call from you to pick up your plants. For Hornsby Shire residents, the plants will come from the Community Nursery at Pennant Hills. For Hills Shire residents, the plants will come from the Community Nursery at Baulkham Hills. The minimum number of plants will be 1 tray of 40 tubes. Plants can include trees, shrubs or groundcovers. Trays and tubes are to be returned to the Nurseries or to me when you have finished with them. You cannot buy local native plants from retail nurseries, so this is a special opportunity. The plants are top quality. I look forward to hearing from you.

For more information about Landcare, go to [stillcreeklandcare.com.au](http://stillcreeklandcare.com.au) or Facebook.