

NATURE PLAY WEEK 2015



7/8/2015

EVALUATION REPORT – short.



This evaluation report was prepared by Kids In Nature Network in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

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Nature Play Week 2015

EVALUATION REPORT – SHORT.

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Summary

Developed collaboratively by individuals and organisations involved in the Kids in Nature Network, Nature Play Week is a signature event which celebrates initiatives of all shapes and sizes that reconnect kids with nature and the outdoors. In its second year of celebration, the week ran from 11 – 19 April 2015, and was once again a key part of Premier's Active April in Victoria.

Nature Play Week 2015 has built on the success of its inaugural year, with many organisations hosting events for a second year running. 44 events were registered, 8 of which were held more than once during the week, totaling in 88 events throughout Nature Play Week. 18 out of 44 event organisers responded to our evaluation survey and reported a total count of 1646 participants involved during the week. Registered organisations predicted a minimum of 1481 participants, and a maximum of 11,920. The total number of participants for Nature Play Week 2015 was estimated at 6,000.

Events included the Nature Play Week launch at the regional Malmsbury Botanical Gardens and workshops, featuring popular Children's Author Alison Lester (Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Kids in Nature Network); an Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Seminar at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne with early childhood expert Dr. Sue Elliot and Bushkinder Founder Doug Fargher, a kids outdoors adventure festival at Angelsea (Australian Camps Association, YMCA, Adventure Types), two family nature days (Parks Victoria, People and Parks Foundation), a Corroboree to learn about Aboriginal culture (Healesville Sanctuary). There were nature play programs at Zoos Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Cranbourne and local councils. A large range of community events were held, including a mini family nature connection retreat, cubby building, nature play groups, outings to local parks and gardens, walks, nature adventures, wildlife spotting, dress-ups, art workshops and even a play.

Nature Play Week was supported by a website with an online events calendar, a media- and a social media campaign. Media coverage included ABC radio, The Herald Sun, local Leader newspapers, community radio and a range of online blogs and websites (full list included in this report).

All Nature Play Week 2015 events can be viewed at www.natureplayweek.org.au

Statistical Information

Statistical information

18 out of 44 organisers (41%) responded to our evaluation survey and reported a total count of 1646 participants involved during the week. Registered organisations predicted a minimum total of 1481 and a maximum total of 11920 participants. The total number of participants for Nature Play Week 2015 was estimated at 6,000.

90% of registered event organisers were organisations; 10% were individuals staging an event. 79% of events were held in Metro and Greater Melbourne, however some fantastic regional events (including the launch) were held in Malmsbury, Geelong, Phillip Island and Koo Wee Rup to name a few. Four organisations hosted events in New South Wales, including Centennial Parklands.

Events were more or less spread evenly across the week, with the majority of events occurring on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and on weekends. 60% of events were free of charge to participants. If participants paid, price ranged from \$5-\$25 per person, with the exception of weekend camps / activities which included childcare.

Participants said they heard about Nature Play Week from a variety of sources: Kids In Nature Network mail out; facebook; various organisations and networks, or through previous involvement.

Participating Organisations

Kids In Nature Network

Botanic Gardens

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne
 Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne
 Malmsbury Botanical Gardens
 Euroa Arboretum
 Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens
 Warrnambool Botanic Gardens

State Government

Parks Victoria
 Premier's Active April (Sport and Recreation Victoria,
 Department of Health and Human Services)
 Centennial Parklands (Sydney, NSW)

Councils

Manningham City Council
 City of Darebin
 Macedon Shire Ranges
 City of Casey
 City of Greater Geelong
 City of Greater Dandenong
 Wyndham City Council

Childcare, Kinder, playgroups

Playgroup Victoria
Kooweerup Regional Health Service
Vermont Gardening Playgroup
Cammeray Children's Centre

Zoos

Healesville Sanctuary
Melbourne Zoo
Werribee Open Range Zoo

YMCA

YMCA Victoria / Australian Camps Association /
Adventure Types
YMCA Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp
YMCA Camp Manyung

Others

Victoria Walks
Active in Parks
Playgroup Victoria
People and Parks Foundation
Bushkinders Australia
ECO Learning Network
Australian Camps Association
Play Australia
Muddy Boots and Sandy Hands
Bushwalking Victoria
Geelong Nature Play Interest Group
Melbourne Water
Barwon Water

Environment education organisations

Port Phillip EcoCentre
Birdlife Australia
Australian Conservation Volunteers
Western Melbourne Catchments Network
Friends of Braeside Park
Gould League
CERES Community Environment Park

Small businesses

Natured Kids
Leap into Nature
Nurture in Nature
Discovery Club

Arts organisations

Heide Museum of Modern Art

Polyglot
McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery
Bluebird Foundation

All events can be viewed at www.natureplayweek.org.au

Supporting organisations

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne
Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne
Premier's Active April
Department of Health and Human Services
Playgroup Victoria
Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Acknowledgements

Kids in Nature Network would like to thank all organisations and event organisers, speakers, participants, partners, supporters and friends for making the week a success.

Nature Play Week was created and facilitated by Kids in Nature Network (Cecile van der Burgh, Christine Joy and Emily Barrow). Financial support from the Department of Health and Human Services allowed Kids in Nature Network to create a paid position of ½ day a week for Emily.

Kids in Nature Network would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the many people who have volunteered their time, energy and expertise in Nature Play Week. 60% of organised events were free of charge. This is an inclusive initiative powered by people power and community spirit. Nature Play Week would not be possible without these contributions.

The week received incredible support from the staff and volunteers at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. Kids in Nature Network would like to extend a special thanks to Mick Robertson (Education), Kylie Regester, Sharon Willoughby and Joanne Fyffe (Public Programs) for their key involvement in the continuing success of Nature Play Week. The Gardens hosted several successful events throughout the week and continue to facilitate nature play opportunities for families and communities in groundbreaking and inspiring ways.

Nature Play Week was generously supported by the Department of Health and Human Services. The week would not have been possible without this ongoing support.

Author Alison Lester and all speakers at the launch and workshop contributed their presentations in kind. Thank you so much!

Several bigger key events were run by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Parks Victoria, and Zoos Victoria registered their Autumn programs across 3 sites as a part of NPW.

Major components of Nature Play Week, including communication with participants, website development and media engagement, were financially supported by the department of Health and Human Services, and in-kind by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. The launch event was coordinated in-kind by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and Kids in Nature Network and financially supported by department of Health and Human Services.

Evaluations and Testimonials

18 evaluations were received from organisations holding events in Nature Play Week 2015.

What worked well for organisers

- Partnering with other organisations in the community
- Diversity of grassroots and larger organisations
- Targeting Early Years Services
- Collaborating with councils
- Choosing an appropriate site
- Using the outdoors as a teaching and learning environment
- Engaging, prepared, organised, and fun presenters
- Children presenting
- Great weather
- A relaxed atmosphere
- Allowing time for unstructured play
- Having a range of activities available for different age groups
- Inter-generational collaboration - celebrate and involve our elders and youth!
- Positive feedback
- Low to no cost allowed better participation
- Organisers who paid for Facebook promotion had a big turnout.

Challenges

- Need for more helpers / preparation
- Some events competed with dates for others in the local area, affecting turn outs
- Setting up collaborations on marketing in local region
- Need for more promotion in lead up to event
- Difficult due to wide age range
- Hard to find time to promote effectively
- Nature Play Week doesn't fall during school holidays, this affects many target audiences, as families who would ordinarily attend are at school.

Suggestions for future

- Access to financial assistance for organisers
- Helping local organisers to network in the planning stages, to avoid competition with dates
- Uploading the events calendar sooner so organisers can get a feel for what else is happening
- Rename NPW twitter account to Nature Play Week
- Encourage Nature Play in schools
- Add a self-guided section to our website. Organisers lack the resources to be everywhere all the time, and a lot of parents are already 'on board' with nature play, they just need some cool new ideas.
- Many commented it would help if NPW was held during the school holidays. Problem is that a lot of event organisers also have holidays then. Nature Play is for kids of all ages, and best enjoyed with siblings. By hosting the event during the school term we limit our reach.

Testimonials (from evaluations)

Fantastic to have a week dedicated to nature play. Together we can build momentum and encourage nature play every day!

Parks Victoria

We brought a lot of new families out into parks, who didn't realise these spaces existed. Fantastic to show off local options. There was a lot of enthusiasm for discovering their own backyard.

Parks Victoria

Nature Play Week creates a great platform for raising awareness of the importance of nature play for children. It also allows exposure for groups that run nature play type sessions all year round.

Leap into Nature

Parents and services very appreciative of our free community movie night- a great initiative, enjoyed by all
City of Greater Geelong

"We had such fun on Sunday! My 3.5 year old cannot stop talking about it. It was so simple yet such fun. Thank you so much for taking the time to organise such a great event for families. Both the kids and I had great fun connecting with nature and spending time building bead necklaces, watching the ducks, sea gulls and pelicans! Thank you once again and well done!"

Participant from Muddy Boots and Sandy Hands

Nature Play Week is a great way for different groups to celebrate and raise awareness in the community of the benefits of nature play. People value what they experience.

Danielle Bain, Muddy Boots and Sandy Hands

A Large part of our event was self-guided. Parents came to the park and were shown they don't need a tour leader to enjoy the space, increasing their likelihood to come again. We provided a trigger, parents were given the opportunity to just play too. We also found grass roots communications to be invaluable - community newsletters and social media followings were the most influential. Participants were all delighted with both events, and told us that not only did the events introduce them to new nature play ideas, but also taught them about what natural places were available in their area to host nature play.

Meredith Lamb, People and Parks Foundation

Of course we promote and encourage nature play every day of the year, but having wonderful initiative such as Nature Play Week is a fantastic way to help encourage families to get out into nature on a more regular basis.

It's also a fantastic showcase and way to promote all the fantastic groups, activities, resources, facilities, organisations and of course the wonderful natural places and spaces that we have right on our doorstep.

Tania Maloney, Nurture in Nature

Taking a week to celebrate the importance of nature in our lives is a vital step in re establishing the connection with our earth. **Bluebird Foundation**

The week provides the incentive to re-prioritise time in nature more highly - helping us see that we should do this for the rest of the year as well!

Susan Parker, Barwon Health

Key Components of Nature Play Week 2015

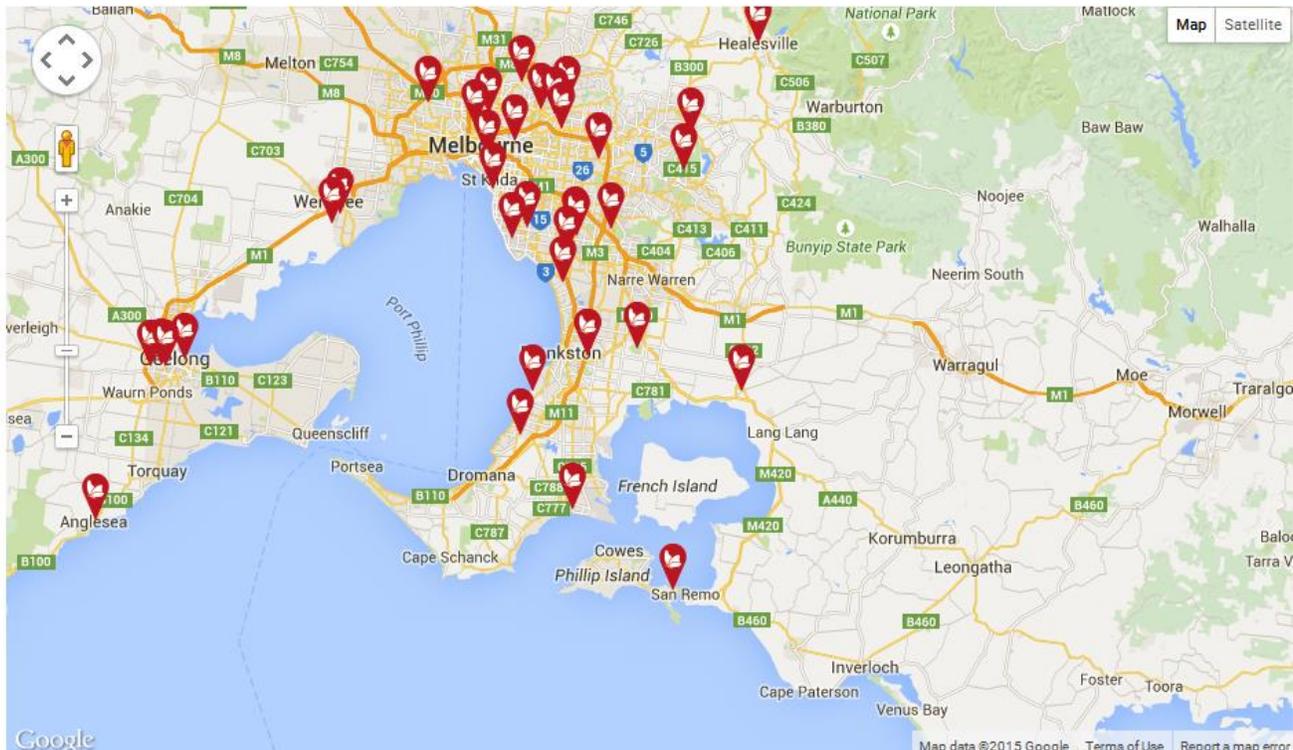
1. Events Calendar and Website update
2. Publicity and Media
3. The Launch Event

1. Events calendar and website update

An expression of interest form was created in survey monkey. A call for events was put out by email with a link to the survey. Event details for 88 events were collated. The Nature Play Week website was updated in collaboration with Disruptive Media. Disruptive Media trained Emily and Cecile to upload events onto an online event calendar and a map (see image below) showing event locations. A support kit for organisers was developed, and emailed. All events uploaded onto the Nature Play Week website were shared with Premier's Active April. Participant liaison, website, the events calendar, map, and support kit for organisers were managed by Emily Barrow (Kids in Nature Network).

www.natureplayweek.org.au

Find out where nature play is happening near you



2. Publicity and Media

Media coverage for Nature Play Week included ABC radio, The Herald Sun, local Leader newspapers, community radio and a range of online blogs and websites (see list on next page).

The week was supported by regular social media posts championing Nature Play Week events using Facebook and Twitter and e-newsletters. Publicity and media liaison was managed by Cecile van der Burgh (Kids in Nature Network) with support from Essential Media Communications.

Media coverage

A selection of full articles is included in the last pages of this report.

Metro media

Herald Sun photo and article 14 April 2015, mentioning Nature Play Week and interview with Doug Fargher on Bush Kinders on 14/04/05 – photo and article <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/victorian-kinder-kids-go-bush-to-learn-from-nature/story-fni0fit3-1227302424909> - attached.

Herald Sun - photo and article 4 April 2015

Game for some Fresh Air– Government and outdoor educators in Victoria collaborating to beat Nature Deficit Disorder. “Dan Andrews, Victoria’s new Premier wants parents to let their kids’ imaginations go wild outside during this school holidays. *“Some of the best experiences can be had out in nature’s playground, where you can make your own adventures and have fun away from the iPad and the telly”.* References to international movement, Kids Adventure Outdoors Angelsea, scrapping of camping fees in a selection of Victorian national parks (Environment Minister Lisa Neville).
- attached.

3AW Radio interview with Doug Fargher 14/04/2015 – attached.

All The Best community radio – Podcast. Visits to several NPW events and interview with Cecile van der Burgh. <http://allthebestradio.com/shows/1520-go-play-outside/>

Local media

Inner East Progress Leader, 14 April – Leap into Nature - Nature discovery and play at Yarra Bend Park: Print: Photo and article in <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/inner-east/nature-play-week-event-at-yarra-bend-park-kew/story-fngnvlpt-1227298931529>

Dandenong Leader Article and photo, 13 April 2015. Healthy Together Dandenong – attached. Nature Play Week Events in Dandenong.

Wyndham Star Weekly: Werribee Family nature Day event Active in Parks/Parks Victoria, article and photo 8th April 2015.

<http://www.wyndham.starweekly.com.au/story/1835721/hit-the-trail-at-werribee-park-for-nature-play-week/>

Wyndham Leader: 28 Apr 2015

Organisation opens new bushwalking routes, photo and article.

<http://leader.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

Batemans Bay Post, April 4 2015, Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens

Photo and article. <http://www.batemansbaypost.com.au/story/2987100/send-the-kids-outside-to-play-these-holidays/>

Launch event & Malmsbury workshop

Radio: ABC Central VIC & Bendigo – Carolyn Tavener, Principal of Malmsbury Primary School, interview on 7 April (attached)

Print: Macedon Ranges Leader – Eron Chapman. Article and photo re. launch, printed on 7/4 (attached)

Print: Macedon Ranges Weekly – Photographer attended the launch, photograph and story in Printed on 21 April <http://www.macedonranges.starweekly.com.au/story/1836329/kids-switch-on-to-nature-play-week/>

Blogs, mags, websites

Active April Website

<https://www.activeapril.vic.gov.au/2015/nature-play-week/>

Nature Play Week at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Cranbourne

<http://www.rbq.vic.gov.au/news/join-in-during-nature-play-week>

Australasian Leisure Management article, April 9

<http://www.ausleisure.com.au/news/new-movement-aims-to-get-children-to-play-outside/>

Wild Magazine, Article April 2

<http://wild.com.au/news/nature-play-week-2015/>

Discover Your Own Backyard, April 7

<http://www.dyob.com.au/inspire-me/parks-victoria-nature-play-week>

People and Parks Foundation

<http://peopleandparks.org/news-events/nature-play-week-2015>

Little Melbourne

<http://www.littlemelbourne.com.au/to-visit/parks-playgrounds/nature-play-week-2015.html>

Better Health Channel

<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcevent.nsf/pages/BEEE812F751D1317CA257DAC000F205B?open>

Barwon Health (Geelong)

<http://www.barwonhealth.org.au/services/column-3/healthy-communities/children-s-health>

Ray White Real Estate (Cranbourne)

<http://raywhitecranbourne.com/news/nature-play-week/>

Event sites

There were also a number of event listings across local media outlets for various activities across difference areas.

Overall Nature Play Week

www.natureplayweek.org.au – with links to all events.

Parks Victoria/Active in Parks Brimbank Park Discovery Day

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/discover-brimbank-park-during-nature-play-week2>

Parks Victoria/Active in Parks Discover Werribee Park Day

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/discover-werribee-park-during-nature-play-week>

Nurture in Nature - Family Nature Retreat

<http://nurtureinnature.com.au/miniretreat/>

Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp

Nature Play Day

<http://www.mt-evelyn.net/events/nature-play-day.php>

Melbourne Water

<http://www.melbournewater.com.au/getinvolved/events/Pages/Wetlands-discovery-day-.aspx>

Nature Play Polyglot

<http://www.polyglot.org.au/calendar/nature-play-royal-botanic-gardens/>

Nature Play at Balyang Sanctuary

<http://heyevent.com/event/1554288951500484/nature-play-at-balyang-sanctuary-celebrating-nature-play-week>

3. The launch event

Nature Play Week 2015 was launched in the regional Malmsbury Botanical Gardens. It was attended by 54 paying attendees, as well as 15 presenters, 60 school students, and 5 staff / volunteers. Co-ordination of the launch and workshops was led by Christine Joy (RBG) and supported by Emily Barrow (RBG).

The morning began with keynote speakers Kylie Regester, RBG public programs, Barbara Sidey, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, and Cecile van der Burgh (Kids in Nature Network). Following this Alison Lester, Children's book author and artist made a moving presentation on her connection to the environment. Time was then allowed for local community groups to share their works and projects related to nature play in the region.

Participants were served a catered vegan lunch. During this time Playgroup Victoria set up their play van in the gardens to offer local children a play opportunity. The Friends of the Malmsbury Botanical Gardens led a guided walk down to the Coliban River. Alison Lester then officially marked the launch of Nature Play Week by untying a bow from an oak tree in the garden.

The afternoon session consisted of a variety of workshops to choose from. Some workshops were led by local school children from Malmsbury Primary school, and Newham Primary School. The children showed the adults what they loved about playing in nature, showing a wonderful sense of connection to their local places.

A free art workshop with Alison Lester was also provided for grade 1 students from Malmsbury Primary School at the Malmsbury Botanical Gardens.

Other workshops were led by

- Julie Burns, Lecturer, Early Childhood, Federation University Australia
- Latrobe University students and Dr Julie Rudner, Department of Social Inquiry, Bendigo
- Bush Kinder teachers Belinda Schultz, Karen Craig, Jenny Prince, Ali Bullen and Bronwyn Brown
- Rose de Maria, Castlemaine Bush Kinder and Playgroup leader.

Feedback from the day was very positive, with many participants commenting on the unique experience of having children as the experts.

Testimonials

"I attended the Malmsbury session which has changed my life and I have registered into November session as well."

– **Jen Totta**

"Thank you for a lovely afternoon yesterday. It so was great to see the Malmsbury gardens being used for all the different workshops. Our students had a wonderful afternoon and walked back to school feeling pretty darn awesome after running their garden tour, we are very proud of them. The Grade 1 students had a lovely session with Alison Lester, thanks for organising that for us." – **Carolyn Tavener, Principal, Malmsbury Primary School.**

Selection of media coverage

See Pdf: Nature Play Week 2015 – Selection of media coverage.