

Zoological Parks Board
of New South Wales

BACKYARD TO BUSH

Grow Your Own Wildlife

Themes: Attracting wildlife to your garden, Surviving the Suburbs, Living things

Syllabus Links: 'Australia Your Standing in it', 'Places we know', 'Built Environments', 'Living Things'

Stages 2 & 3

Jack Keen and all the Keen family take great pride in their 'great Australian backyard'. It is full of all their Aussie mates. They have alien looking leaf insects living in the glasshouse, a whole variety of frogs in the frog pond, a python under the water tank and even a spider in the mail box!

Jack Keen is inviting you to come and discover how to plan, plant and create a native 'wildlife attracting' garden or 'patch' in your own school grounds or at home.

Jack also wants you to know how we can better share our backyard with our native neighbours. Life in the suburbs is hard if you're a possum, bandicoot or lorikeet and it is up to us to help them find areas to go for feeding and sleeping.

Unfortunately Jack will be at work on the day that you visit but 'Garnie' the Gardner, his crazy but very friendly friend, will be there to show you around and introduce you to the animals that you can attract to your 'patch'. Garnie has the biggest green thumbs ever!

This hands on and interactive workshop will allow your students to:

- meet a range of native neighbours that can share your backyard such as pythons, slippery frogs, lounging lizards, giant insects and furry possums
- discover the place of local wildlife, our sense of place in an urban area and how we can live together, share and enjoy the suburbs

We guarantee that your class will leave with green thumbs of their own!

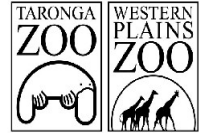
Bookings for workshops are essential. To make a booking:

Phone: 02 9978 4578

Fax: 02 9968 4159

Email: b2b@zoo.nsw.gov.au

Grow Your Own Wildlife- Stage 2 & 3 Education Resource



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Workshop Objectives and NSW Curriculum Links

The Grow Your Own Wildlife workshop will contribute to the following curriculum objectives and outcomes:

Environmental Education Policy

Students will develop:

1. knowledge and understanding about:
 - the impact of people on environments (K2)
 - the principles of ecologically sustainable development (K4)
2. skills in:
 - identifying and assessing environmental problems (S2)
 - communicating environmental problems to others (S3)
 - resolving environmental problems (S4)
 - adopting behaviours and practices that protect the environment (S5)
3. values and attitudes relating to:
 - a commitment to act for the environment by supporting long - term solutions to environmental problems (V3)

Science and Technology

Stage 2... a student:

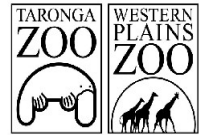
- BES1.1 creates, models and evaluates built environments reflecting consideration of functional and aesthetic factors
- LTS2.3 identifies and describes the structure and function of living things and ways in which living things interact with other living things and their environment

Stage 3... a student:

- BES3.1 creates and evaluates built environments demonstrating consideration of sustainability and aesthetic, cultural, safety and functional issues
- LTS2.3 identifies and describes the structure and function of living things and ways in which they interact with other living things and their environment.

Human Society and Its Environment

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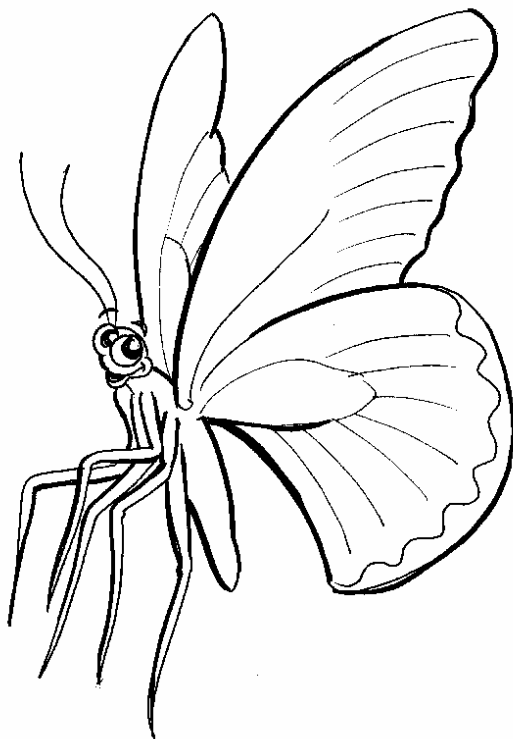
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Stage 2... a student:

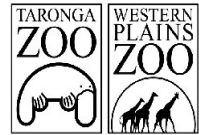
- ENS2.5 describes places in the local area and other parts of Australia and explain their significance
- ENS2.6 describes people's interactions with environments and identifies responsible ways of interacting with environments
- SSS2.8 investigates rights, responsibilities and decision-making processes in the school and community and demonstrates how participation can contribute to the quality of their school and community life

Stage 3... a student:

- CCS3.1 explains the significance of particular people, groups, places, actions and events in the past in developing Australian identities and heritage
- ENS3.5 demonstrates an understanding of the interconnectedness between Australia and global environments and how individuals and groups can act in an ecologically responsible manner



Introduction



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'Grow Your Own Wildlife' is a guide to planning, planting and creating a wildlife attracting garden or 'patch' in your school grounds.

Most school gardens have some native plants. This resource, along with a visit to Backyard to Bush at Taronga Zoo, will help you and your class to take this one step further by planning and creating an area that will attract native wildlife – your own 'patch'.

Most school playgrounds would benefit greatly from the 're-introduction' of some native plants. These plants are usually low maintenance, requiring little in the way of watering, pruning, weeding and feeding. Through completing all or some of these activities with your class you will not only improve your local environment, but you will also create a wonderful ongoing teaching resource - Australia's native animals and plants!

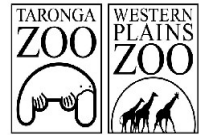
The possibilities for creating your own 'patch' are endless and this resource and the activities within it are a great start. There are many resources available that can further challenge your students to create a 'holistic' environmentally friendly school playground or become involved in community groups to restore local bush environments. Some of these are listed at the end of this resource. Adopting a patch of land and planting a native friendly garden or piece of bush is just one step, yet an important one, in this process.

This resource is designed so that you can add, change, or alter any activity to suit the level and unique needs of your class. It should act as a celebration of the discoveries the students make in the 'patch' that they create in their own school.



Background

Australia's environments are home to an enormous diversity of native plants and



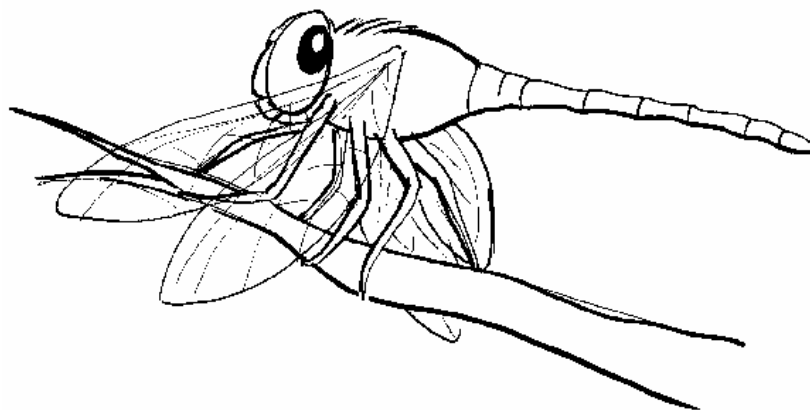
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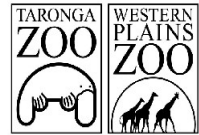
animals. This is in spite of major changes to the original landscape that has continued over the last 200 years. The native landscape in the Sydney region and all over Australia was initially viewed by European settlers as foreign. This has led to a long tradition of replacing native plants with exotic plants and grassy lawns. The result has been a dramatic reduction in native wildlife habitat particularly in highly populated areas.

Did you know that 80% of our native wildlife are only found in Australia and 14% is already endangered. The majority of this wildlife is dependant on specific habitats. If we change or degrade the habitat there is a good chance that much of the native wildlife will continue to vanish with it. It can be easy to reclaim areas of land for wildlife habitat by planting native trees, shrubs and grasses. The more you plant, the more habitats you can generate. Every planting is worthwhile. Even one gum tree can support an entire ecosystem – insects, lizards, birds, possums, all dependant on one another, and ultimately on the tree!

As a class you may be able to transform the corner of an existing garden, a bunch of planter boxes, a square metre of bare earth, or a whole school playground to create your 'patch'. Enjoy the challenge... the benefits are wild!



Activities to do Before Coming to the Zoo



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These activities are designed to be completed as a lead up to a 'Backyard to Bush' excursion at Taronga Zoo. They can be completed in isolation however the following sequence is recommended to ensure your class gains the most from their excursion to Taronga Zoo.

Getting Started

A great way to start preparing to 'Grow Your Own Wildlife' and create your own 'patch' is to take a bush walk in your local area. Get a map of the area and as a class find an area of bush, parkland or reserve that you could walk to and study the area. Try to find the best area for wildlife or bush.

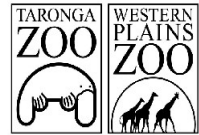
Your students may have some excellent suggestions of a place that they have discovered in their own 'adventures' in the area.

Take a Bush Walk

In the bush, local park/playground or reserve you and your students can complete the following activities:

- Take large pieces of butchers paper and map out the area. Ensure the students include all the large trees, shrubs, grasses, landforms, fallen trees and water bodies. If you do not know the names of the plants write a description of them, take a sample leaf or a photograph.
- Look for signs of animals eg. feathers, droppings, nests, tracks, cocoons, snake skin
- Record any animals that the students see
- Do a bit of 'Bush Archeology' – look for clues as to what the area is used for or was once used for eg signs of life, of people working and of recreation
- Count the number of tree hollows in the area. Describe their location eg. in logs on the ground or high up a tree. Look at the ground below the hollow to see if there is any evidence of what might be using the hollow. Perhaps introduce the idea of how important hollows are to many native animals and that clearing has removed many of these.

- Discuss nest boxes. By attaching nest boxes to trees you will give animals such as parrots and possums a chance to breed which they may otherwise not have. You may have to keep an eye on the nest box to discourage starlings, sparrows or mynah birds nesting here before the desired locals take up residence. See

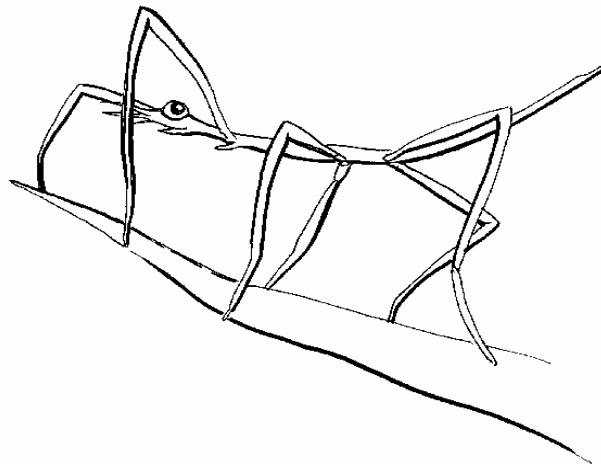


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the Nest Box activity in the post 'Backyard to Bush' section for a detailed description and diagram of how to make a nest box.

- Students could write a story about this area, perhaps focusing on what the area was once used for and what it is used for today. Use their imagination to introduce Bushrangers or bush fairies into their stories.
- Complete a sound map activity in the area. Sit the students down with paper and a pencil and have them draw an image of what they hear in the area.



How Things Have Changed

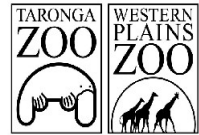
For your students to understand the importance of native animals in their local area, what animals can and are found in their area and ways to attract them to their patch they will need to find out what was originally in the area and discuss reasons why the animals are no longer found there.

Suggested activities include:

- Discuss and brainstorm with your class how Australian environments have changed and reasons for this – particularly focus on your local environment.
- Discuss how Aboriginal people used and still use the land. In groups research
- some Dreaming stories from language groups all over Australia. Discuss as a class if and how these stories can teach us more about how to care for our environment and the animals that live in them.

Consider this...

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Aboriginal people used only their local resources for food. They had an intimate knowledge of their environment and moved seasonally to locations with abundant food. Local wildlife was hunted and tubers, seeds, fruits and nuts and edible insects were gathered. They used various methods of fishing, including spears and large fish traps in streams. They also made medicines from plants. Hunting and gathering food in their local area was a daily activity. Children were taught about their local environment and how to utilize the resources. Aboriginal people respect the land and did not have a negative impact on the environment

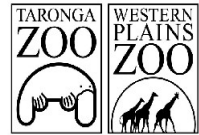
A. Hill 'Dreaming' 1995

- Ask some older people from your local area what it was like in the past. What were some of the native animals or bush that was around? Maybe visit a local nursing home. As a class develop a timeline of this information including important benchmarks eg last time someone remembers seeing a certain animal, when an area of bush was developed
- Approach the local council or library to see if there are aerial photographs available of your local area including the school and area of bush you have visited. When you first look at the photographs, look for familiar landmarks like major roads or rivers. This will make it easier to find your way around the photograph. If you are able to obtain historical aerial photographs compare the areas of native bush now to what was in your area in the past. How have the bush patches changed?

Find Out What Animals are Already in Your Area

It is important to do some research to find out what animals are already living in your local area, what animals were once found in the area and from these, what animals you would like to attract back.

- Individually or as a class, spend some time out in the playground recording what animals you can see.
- Add to the list animals that the students, families and neighbours have seen over the last few years.
- Also note the wildlife species that the students have encountered in parks and bushland in about a 50km radius of the school maybe talk to local council officers for help with this.



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- Do an internet search to try and find out what other animals are found or were once found in your area. Check out www.floraforfauna.com.au or for comprehensive lists of animals in your area.

As a class decide on which species or groups of animals that you would like to attract the most. It can be a variety. The size of the area that you think you are going to work on may affect this decision. In the beginning it may be simpler and easier to implement a 'Grow Your Own Wildlife' program if you choose four to five animals. During this process discuss the issue that non-flying animals (with the exception of larger mammals that can travel long distances at night) will probably need green-space or bush corridors to naturally move into your area. Introduce the concept of 'Bush Corridors'.

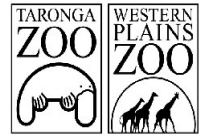
What do Animals need to Survive?

All wildlife requires four basic elements to survive. They are:

- Food
- Water
- Shelter – protection from natural predators and the weather
- Areas where they can reproduce and bear young safely.

Combinations of these four elements are unique for each species. For a whole class effort and to include all of the students' interests you can plan a garden or habitat that offers enough combinations to attract a large number and variety of animals to the area.

- In groups have your students research the animals that they decided they would like to attract to their school. Brainstorm questions that they have about the animal and things they think they will need to know about them eg. what they eat, do they need water, where do they get this water from, do they need shelter, what type of shelter, how do they reproduce, what do they need to reproduce.
- From this information have each group produce a fact sheet on the animal and their needs to survive. Each group could also create a model or collage of the habitat.



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Select Plants to Provide Food for the Animals

- From your research of what the animal eats naturally in the wild select those trees, shrubs, vines and ferns that benefit the chosen animal. You may also want to consider what will look good to you.
- www.floraforfauna.com.au will also suggest plants that will attract native animals. You can also find detailed information on how to take care of these plants

This step in the process can get quite involved. To get some help you may want to invite a bush regenerator from your local council or nursery owner to speak to your class. For example to attract Blue-tongue Lizards to a garden you should consider the following:

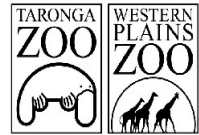
- Climbing plant – Common Appleberry
- Place leaf litter and bark in the garden
- Plant native grasses such as Common Wallaby Grass or Kangaroo Grass
- Ground cover – Everlasting Daisy or Native Daisy
- Tufting or clumping plants – Flax Lily or Grassy Matrush

Discuss with your class areas for the animals to escape from predators and places to rest and raise young. Plants can provide this cover including ground ferns, flowers and grasses. Lawn clippings or wood chip mulches also offer cover to small ground-dwelling mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Brushpiles and logs can also be used as cover. You should also consider nest boxes in your plan.

Small ponds and pools will not only provide habitat for frogs but they will also act as a water source for many other animals including birds and insects. Raised birdbaths will attract birds to your area. Your excursion to Backyard to Bush will help your students to understand how to build a frog pond or a lizard lounge and why they are an important component of all 'Grow Your Own Wildlife' gardens or areas.

Select Your Patch

With all of the information that you have researched on animals that you would like to attract to your playground and what plants and elements you will need to attract them, select an area that you would like to work on. It can simply be a garden bed



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that already has some native plants.

Some ideas are:

- An indigenous forest in your playground that all students can enjoy. In this forest only plant local native species of trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses to recreate the original forest before European settlement
- A wild corner – plant a corner of the school grounds with native plants to develop an area that encourages wildlife.
- An environmental playground – plant trees and shrubs to attract the wildlife and also provides an interactive play area where students can run, hide, explore and have space for cubby holes
- A sensory garden – plant a range of fragrant plants that will not only attract wildlife but will smell, feel and look unusual and students can spend time discovering them

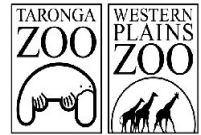
Discuss all these ideas and more. Decide on which is most appropriate for your school playground, needs and budget!

Monitor it

Before you start working on your area it is important to monitor it and see what is already living there. This way you can be sure not to upset any existing animals and you can have a record of what was there before to show progress and what you have achieved.

Develop a check list from the information below to record what is in your area.

- Trees at least 10 metres tall
- Any hollows or spots for animals to shelter
- Trees and shrubs between one and ten metres tall
- How many birds recorded in a ten minute period
- What is the percentage of leaf or bark cover on the ground
- Number of shrubs under one metre
- How many different types of flowering plants are there?
- Number of animals crossing the area in ten minutes
- Number of signs of animals eg droppings, scratches, tracks
- Number of weeds in the area
- Number of introduced animals in the area in ten minutes. These include dogs,



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- cats, rats, starlings, Indian Mynah birds, sparrows & pigeons.
- Amount of rubbish in the area

At several locations in your 'patch' take a photo before you start. Photographs should be taken at regular intervals along the way, dated and kept in an album. Copies could be used for displays or to accompany articles in the local paper or school newsletter.

Map Your Area and Bring your Plan to the Zoo

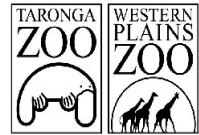
Before your class visits Backyard to Bush to complete their 'Grow Your Own Wildlife' workshop have them draw a plan on grid paper of what they would like their 'patch' to look like. Follow the steps below:

- Decide if there are any trees or shrubs that are not wanted or are causing problems and need to be removed. Check with your School Principal, Grounds Keeper and Local Council for approval before taking action.
- From the list of plants that you decided on, start planning the areas that you would like to plant them. Consider tall trees first and gradually work your way down to the smaller plants.
- Consider shade for smaller plants and try to select trees and shrubs that fruit at different times of the year.
- Ensure that your plan is compatible with what the area is used for and looks good to you.

Bring this plan along to your Backyard to Bush workshop to discuss with 'Garney the Green Gardner'. Garney helps the Keen family with their garden. Garney has the biggest green thumbs you have ever seen!

What is a Bush Corridor?

A bush corridor is a natural strip of native trees, shrubs and understorey plants that create a natural network of native vegetation that animals can use. It is like a green web linking areas of bush land allowing wildlife to:



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- find food, shelter and nesting sites
- travel in between bush. Many native species avoid crossing cleared areas
- increase the area of their habitat

Introduce the idea of a bush corridor. Discuss with the class the possibility of introducing one in your patch to link it to another area of native plants. The denser and wider the corridor is between isolated areas of bush, the better and more diverse it can be as habitat and as a corridor.

Refer back to the students maps of the local bush area. Was there a wildlife corridor?

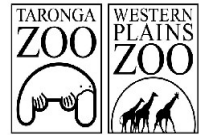
Games

Introduce the idea of feral animals and their impact on native animals by playing the following game.

Feral animals are animals that are not native to Australia and have been brought here over time and released or escaped into the wild. They compete with native animals for space and food. Some feral animals such as cats and foxes are particularly aggressive and some hunt and kill native animals while others may have come originally from farms and eat plants.

Have your students brainstorm the types of feral animals that threaten Australian animals and habitats. Some ideas are;

- Mice
- Goats
- Pigs
- Rabbits
- Cats
- Carp
- Horses
- Cane Toads
- Mosquito fish
- Foxes
- Buffalo
- Indian Myna Birds
- Deer
- Camel



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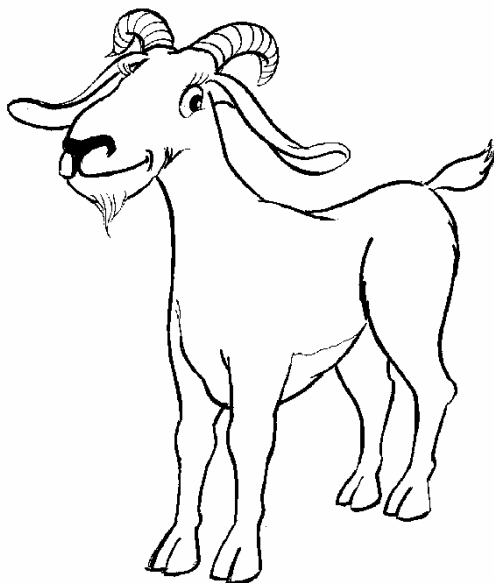
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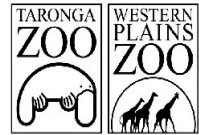
Ferals!

Play the game as a variation of 'tip' or 'tag'. The teacher can nominate one student to be 'it' – the feral animal. Change the 'feral' every few minutes. You may even want to add a second 'feral'.

Once a student (native animal) is tagged they must crouch down. In order to release them another native animal must make a shelter over them. While forming the shelter native animals cannot be tagged. But they can only be safe from the feral for a count of three. The feral can hang around the natives and count to three after which they must separate and face the feral!

Remember to set boundaries for the game. A variation can be where the students move like the native animals eg jump like a kangaroo.





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At Backyard to Bush

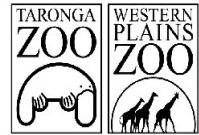
It is now time to visit Taronga Zoo and Backyard to Bush to present your design and ideas to our crazy but expert 'Garney' the Gardener. You will also get a chance to meet some of the wildlife that you may attract to your patch. You will have the opportunity to come nose to nose with a variety of native animals and learn more about the type of habitat we need to create for them to help them survive the suburbs.

Before you visit Backyard to Bush read the letter from Jack Keen to your class. The letter can be found at the end of this resource and will prepare them for their workshop and give them a better understanding of the exhibit and the theatrical component.



'Garney'

Activities To Do After Your Zoo Excursion



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Now that you have selected your 'patch', visited Backyard to Bush at Taronga Zoo and learnt all about the native neighbours that you can attract to your garden it is time to get started.

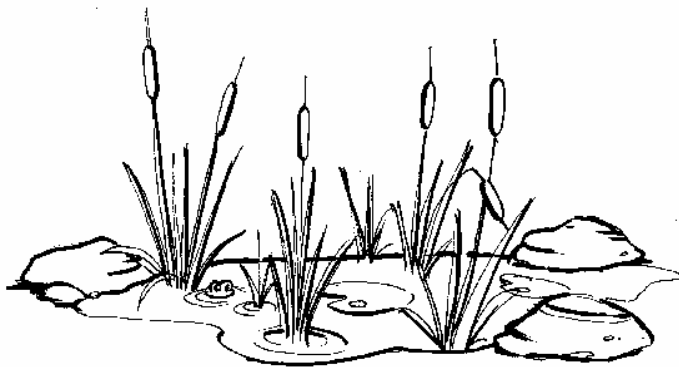
So get your hands dirty and create your patch.

Below is a list of things you and your students can add to your patch, which will help you to 'Grow Your Own Wildlife'.

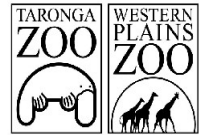
Build a Frog Bog!

The best way to attract frogs to your patch is to build a frog bog. Before you start building it is best to investigate what species of frogs are found in your area. It is important to create a habitat that is attractive to them. It can be useful to inspect local established frog habitats to learn more about the needs of local resident species.

Check out frog field guides and speak to members of local frog groups to help you identify local frogs.



Location of the Pond in your Patch



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The best location for a frog pond in your patch is an area that can provide a variety of conditions to allow the frogs to choose their preferred living space. The pond should be part sunny, part shady. Shade from plants and trees is useful, but the pond should not be directly underneath trees, particularly if they lose their leaves. Some trees like oleanders and pines have poisonous leaves, which can effect the water.

How to build it...

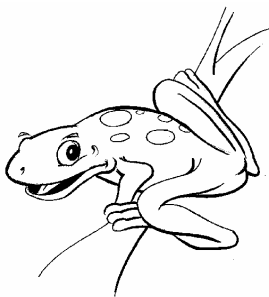
A pond can be built with a sheet of thick plastic laid into a hole in the ground. Running a string along the bottom of the hole will give you accurate measurements for how much liner to purchase. If concrete is used it needs to be coated to stop the lime leaching into the water. Placing shade cloth on top of the liner or concrete will provide a non-slippery surface for the frogs.

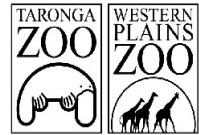
The pond should be no more than 30cm deep, Water plants need to be planted in the pond to provide food and shelter for tadpoles. Native grasses should be planted around the edge amongst rocks providing a moist canopy for frogs to shelter under.

You may want to consider:

A garden light near the pond at night will encourage insects for the frogs to eat and will also make the area more attractive.

A circulating pump in your pond can make it less appealing to breeding mosquitoes, which prefer still water to lay eggs.





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Lounging Lizards

Like most reptiles, lizards enjoy lying in the sun. This warms their bodies, which in turn allows them to move about in search of food and shelter.

To build a 'Lizard Lounge' you will need:

- Gardening tools
- Bark
- Logs
- Rocks – placed in small piles to create shelter
- Native plants
- Clay plumbing pipes
- Mulch (woodchips, leaves, compost)

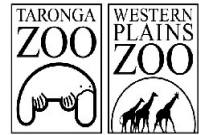
All of these should be placed in an area of your 'patch' to attract lizards ranging from small skinks to larger Blue-tongue Lizards. The logs and rocks will also act as homes for insects such as ants, beetles and spiders that will enjoy your patch and provide food for the lizards.

Add Moving Colour to Your Patch... Add Butterflies!

Australia has over 400 species of native butterflies. Butterflies are more active in spring, summer and autumn especially on warm days.

To attract butterflies to your 'patch' you need to do the following:

- plant nectar plants. Adult butterflies feed almost exclusively on nectar from flowers. They require sugar for energy. Butterflies are particularly attracted to daisy-type flowers.
- plant host plants for the females to lay their eggs. Do some research as to what types of plants are needed for the butterflies in your area to lay on.
- plant a variety of brightly coloured flowers that will flower at different times throughout the year
- include a range of plant sizes to cater for butterflies that fly at various heights. Some butterflies fly around grasses and shrubs while others prefer taller trees.



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Don't forget:

- rocks to sun themselves on and to court each other
- mud puddles from which they can obtain essential salts – this can be done by a 'frog bog'
- to provide rotten fruit such as banana and watermelon in a shallow dish to supply the butterflies with easy access to amino acids that can also be found in nectar
- do not use any insecticides

Bath Time Anyone?

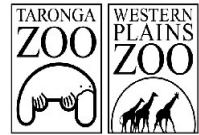
Add a birdbath to your patch. Birdbaths on a stand are surprisingly popular with many different types of birds. The bath only needs to be shallow so that birds can splash around and wash themselves. Remember to keep it clean.

Nest Boxes for Natives

Many native animals such as Lorikeets, Kookaburras, owls, Galahs, possums and gliders rely on hollows in trees for breeding and shelter. Hollows take many years to form and are mostly only present in trees over 60 years old. Because of this it may be important to build nest boxes for these animals.

As a class build a nest box to place in your patch.
Follow these simple steps:

- use timber to create the box. Use marine ply or hardwood. Do not use treated timber, as it is toxic to animals. The thicker the timber used the better, as it will protect the inhabitants from extreme temperatures
- weather proof the box using lacquer or creosote. The inside of the box should not be touched
- cover the floor with bark or wood shavings
- hinge the lid and slope it from the back to the front. The lid should overhang the front and the sides of the box by at least 30 mm
- drill draining holes in the base
- roughen the inside walls and walls with sand paper to allow young to climb out
- place nest boxes at different heights for different animals
- shelter the nest box from wild and hot sun



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- attach the nest box so that it is secure. Place a chain or a strong piece of wire through a piece of garden hose and hang the nest box from a fork in a tree

Try not to disturb the nest box once you have placed it into your patch. It may take some time for birds or mammals to use it. If 'ferals' move in such a way as Indian Mynahs or Sparrows remove the nesting material.

It's time now, if you have not already done so, to sit down and enjoy your 'patch'. Enjoy this special place that you have created. It may not be big but you know it better than anyone else. Lie back and watch the clouds go by. Your 'patch' will continue to grow and change... just like magic!

Check out the following Web sites

The Websites below will help you to create your 'patch'.

Flora for Fauna

www.floraforfauna.com.au

Taronga and Western Plains Zoo

www.zoo.nsw.gov.au

National Parks and Wildlife – Backyard Buddies

www.npws.nsw.gov.au/backyardbuddies

Gould League

www.gould.edu.au

Zoos of Victoria

www.zoo.org.au

ASX Frog Focus

www.asxfrogfocus.com.au

Jack Keen
The House
Backyard to Bush
Taronga Zoo
Mosman NSW 2088

Hi Class,

My name is Jack Keen and I live in the house at Backyard to Bush. I live here with my wife Petra and three kids Skye, Connor and Poppy. I love Australia and I love my 'great Australian backyard'. It is full of all my Aussie mates. The kids have taken over the glasshouse with alien looking stick insects, we have a python under the watertank, frogs in the frog pond and even a Red Back Spider under the toilet seat! It's fantastic!

I want to invite you to visit our house. I heard that you are interested in attracting animals or wildlife to your school and maybe gardens at home to create your own 'patch'. We have created our garden so that we attract many native animals to share our environment. We even have a possum living in our chimney.

When you visit our house you can discover all sorts of things and get to know how we attract animals to the area and better share it with our animal friends. You may need to do a little research and work before you visit to find out what animals live in your area, where they live and what they eat. If you do this and then bring this information with you I am sure that we can help.

Please also remember to bring with you a small pot or plastic cup to plant a tree in. We would love to help you get started with your own garden or 'patch'.

Oh, by the way, I will not be able to be there when you visit. I have to go to work but I have asked a good friend of mine - 'Garnie' the Gardner to be there to meet you. Garnie is a little crazy but friendly. He knows all about how to attract animals to the area and how best we can take care of them and their habitat. 'Garnie's' a bit of an expert and has the biggest green thumbs you have ever seen!

'Garnie' will meet you at the front of the house. Have fun and enjoy your visit. Hope I will see you there another time!

Bye

Jack Keen