

Bewildering

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What is bewildering?

Bewildering is a very deep human response to our relationship to our world especially our immediate environment that recognizes our place in it, our dependence upon it, and our responsibility to it. It is more than a charming term; it is a term for charming.

Bewildering is engagement with community and nature. It is making provision for people's and wildlife's wellbeing and belonging. We do this by: creating healthy, engaging surrounds for people to belong in; planting appropriate vegetation, removing rubbish, obstacles, weeds; creating and enhancing habitat wherever we can thus facilitating the process of allowing other species to live and belong with us in our backyards, suburbs, cities, and industrial and rural areas.

Bewildering is building for belonging

Bewildering can mean designing cities for the varied dimensions of people's lives, with mixed-use environments that integrate opportunities to shop, work, learn and relax; where neighbourhoods are walkable and cyclable, where people of different ages, ethnicities and incomes are mixed together, and where natural prospects for connection exist, from pedestrian zones to public parks to farmer's markets. It can also mean prioritizing housing and community quality alongside quantity.

It is not just such things as planting trees, greening, cuddling koalas and saving whales.

How can I bewilder? As *Bewilders*, we would enhance the place where we live to make it as healthy as possible for us and allow for as much wildlife as possible to share it with us.

'*Bewilder*' is an ancient term meaning 'to be as the wilderness, fully connected to life, the source, the Spirit, God, Nature. It is gained through being wholeheartedly in Nature' and essentially 'charmed by Nature'. If one became bewildered, especially if it happened unexpectedly and they were untrained in these matters, they would often become confused for their world would be different in that state and they might not know how to be their usual selves in it. They have become 'bewildered'. For those in the know, such as Druids in the old times, this would be a highly desirable state to be in and one that was sought after. It was only later that the confusion aspect was emphasized over the connection with nature and it became used as a derogatory term to discourage people from becoming connected to life, nature, the source, the spirit or God in this way.

We can now expand the term 'to bewilder' to include 'making wildness' and thus 'making provision for the opportunity for us to become bewildered and increase our health and wellbeing, open our hearts and embrace our rightful place in the world as a part of Nature fully connected to it, dependant upon it and responsible to it'.

We have had the *Age of Enlightenment*, now we are ready for the *Age of Enlivenment*.

Can we, should we, bring Wild Life back into our urban lives? Why bother and go to the expense of bringing wild things back into our urban environment especially when funds may be scarce for urban housing, schools, playing fields, social services, fire and police protection? This is no trivial question!

Nature is *rejuvenating*. We evolved in wild forests and grasslands. Our senses are made for the subtleties of nature: not for the blaring of sirens but the rustle of a predator's paw; the warm colours of ripe fruit; and our hearts and brains reward our sensory efforts with feelings of deep pleasure and healing.

Wild Life is essential not a luxury. Wild Life allows us to watch things live, to not be alone, to touch the earth, scratch about in soils, breathe the scent of plants and flowers, let off steam, connect with other people and connect with Life. Wild Life is *Therapeutic*.

Wild Life is essential to human physical, social, psychological & spiritual wellbeing.

Funds

Cities have traditionally reserved funds for such requisites as police, sewers, fire trucks, roads, storm water, and garbage, and considered Wild Life, parks, green space and greenery as pleasant things – investments for leftover funds. Wild Life, parks, green space and greenery in cities represent a minor public investment with a huge payoff. Parks and Wild Life provide many services such as water infiltration, air pollution treatment, ameliorating temperature.

Parks and Wild Life help people to take care of themselves so cities don't have to spend as much on social, medical and safety services trying to fix their problems.

Nature's rewards – Values of Wildlife

Parks and Wild Life provide essential services.

Plants specifically provide the following services:

1. water infiltration
2. air pollution treatment - vegetation filters pollution and traps tiny particles of dust and soot reducing airborne particulates from vehicles. Green lung effect – plants cleanse the air of dangerous chemicals (e.g. SO₂, NO₂, CO)
3. air conditioning/ameliorating temperature - leaves shade and cool hard surfaces cooling their surrounds
4. Calming and communing effect on people; less stress, aggression, violence, and crime, litter and graffiti; more calm, safe, communal
5. Essential to human physical, social, psychological and spiritual well-being
6. Connection with Nature – very important!

We need to acknowledge:

- the essential services provided by Nature, and
- the extent to which living organisms are now bound to us
- that our national parks are no longer enough
- that our towns and cities, industrial areas and farms are living places where people and wildlife can belong, and

- that we should do more to accommodate the wellbeing of people and the species that are now obliged to live among us.

Where do we find a place in our community to create OPPORTUNITIES for NATURE and REWARD ourselves with environmental services, re-creation, beautification, amenity, health, sense of place and fertile ground for our imagination – for belonging?

Consider waste spaces: verges, boundaries, waste land. These now become opportunities for increasing ecodiversity and amenity.

Spaces - New opportunities

- Roadside verges
- Factory fronts
- School yards
- Grounds of public buildings, e.g. schools, universities, churches
- Sides of premises
- Median strips
- Special road gardens
- Front yards
- Roof tops
- Roofs (lichen, grass)
- Walls
- Easements – power, water, stormwater, transport, etc.
- Open up your imagination and SEE.

We can expand the concept of these spaces to see them as opportunities to include

- Nature conservation – urban bush, movement corridors, habitat, rare species conservation, etc
- Community – gardens (vegetable, flower, native), orchards, parks, re-creation, places to connect with each other and our environment
- Beauty, amenity, sense of place
- Urban runoff control and infiltration
- Pollution treatment and health creation and enhancement

URBANITY becomes BEWILDERED
WASTE SPACE and WILDLIFE become SERVICES/FUNCTIONAL ORGANS

Bewildering is creating spaces for Wildlife as functional organs serving ALL LIFE.

- Widen verges and narrow roads, one way streets, single lane streets; ramp gutters rather than curbs
- Create wide wild median strips along roads
- Create roadside features, planters, tree bays, etc
- Build them into our architectural designs and plans, e.g. cluster or pod housing development; houses-hollow bricks for bats and wasps, roof top gardens, window boxes, etc

- Reorganize our present services to become multi-service e.g. transport corridors with wildlife
- Use porous paving where possible

We are only limited by our *Will* and *Imagination*

Many modern programs rely on ‘greening’ and tree planting’. Whereas these are good, they are now not good enough for they do not consider the needs of animals and the necessity for animals now to live with us. These are landscaping solutions. We now need *bewilderingg* solutions.

ECOSCAPING

We can *Ecoscape* rather than *Landscape*

- *Landscaping* works with what you want and imposes that on the area chosen with little regard for the ecology of the area.
- *Ecoscaping* recognizes the ecological factors of an area and works with them.

Ecoscaping –conserving, building, reconstructing and enhancing Wild Life habitat and conserving species:

1. Know your local species and use them where possible
2. Movement facilitators – fence tops, holes in fences, bridges, etc
3. Food - making provision for as many links in the food web as possible
4. Water – bird baths, backyard ponds, clean creeks and urban ponds
5. Roosting and nesting structures, e.g. nesting boxes, mounds, wasp tubes, bee and wasp wood, etc
6. Shelter – rocks, logs, dead wood, hollows, thick vegetation, etc
7. Vegetation with layers not just fixating on trees – trees, shrubs and herbs; fungi, litter, logs and rocks
8. Easy on the mulch – use groundcovers
9. Meadows rather than lawns
10. Think food, water, shelter, pollination and dispersal, symbiosis, essential services
11. Do not be a *Native Plant Chauvinist* – many exotic species are excellent resources for native animals. Colour, appearance and perfume very important for people (e.g., annuals). Permaculture is a subset of ecoscaping.
12. Recognize, value and conserve *sense of place*.

Reconnection of our sensorial empathy with the living land: this is the way to the new environmental ethic that the world aspires – an ethic that will lead us to respect and heed not only the lives of our fellow human beings, but also the life and wellbeing of the rest of Nature.

Problems and issues

- Various laws, regulations and approvals to consider and possibly change
- Old conservation and management principles and bureaucratic inertia

- Management and maintenance of over-riding functions such as underground sewer, power, telephone, water, overhead power and communications, etc
- Weeds and weed seed banks
- Inclement weather
- Vandalism and theft
- Rubbish dumping
- OHS/WPS issues
- Visibility and safety
- Car crashes
- Parking and access across
- Attitudes/beliefs/self interest
- Ignorance, insensitivity, poor taste, egos
- Funding

The Urban Vote

- Urban people are critical for nature conservation nationally and globally
- More than half of humanity lives in urban areas
- Worldwide trend towards more democratic voting systems where the voters hold ultimate power
- Conservation depends on support from urban voters, urban donors and urban communicators; yet urban people are having less and less contact with Wildlife and understand it less.
- People will really only value Wildlife only if they care about Nature where they live.

Of all the world's creatures, perhaps those in greatest need of Bewildering are our children. The collapse of children's engagement with nature has been even faster than the collapse of the natural world.

Levels of management

Local, State and Federal

- Governments, industry
- Councils
- Groups – private, corporate, clubs, etc.
- Schools
- Individuals

Promotion

- Education
- Council and government support
- Community involvement: in local and regional planning; voluntary work
- Research, record, map and report on local wildlife
- Celebration – local, regional and national e.g. bogong moth festival, lawn grub festival, Gynea lily festival
- Adoption
- Competitions – gardening groups make special provision and prizes, photo comps
- Schools, towns, districts adopt local species and reserves and celebrate them and local natural and seasonal phenomena

- Think tanks

Get into it! **Bewildering**

We have: *Bush Regenerators*

Now we need

Bush Makers

Verge Regenerators

Home makers

**But best of all – BE WYRD
Become a BEWILDERER**

Our Motto: **Be Wyrd and Bewilder**

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