



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for August 2008



Workshop on Woody Weeds

*At the next Landcare meeting at 2:00 pm on
Saturday 16th August at Laguna Hall*

Many properties in the Wollombi Valley have problems with woody weeds. These are the trees and shrubs that have escaped from gardens over the last 200 years of European settlement. Some of these plants have been introduced from Europe but most of our major problems are plants from climates closer to those found here.



These plants usually prefer the wetter more fertile habitats along the Wollombi Brook, along creek beds and in gullies. They are also frequently closely related to native plants in these areas. Picking out the invading trees and shrubs from the native rainforest and wetter understorey species can be very tricky and in our valley we have several areas of confusion.

To introduce this subject, Robyn Lamond will give a 15 minute summary of bush regeneration, i.e. how to weed out exotic invaders from our native bush.

We have also asked several local landholders to give a short talk on their experience with particular woody weeds on their property:

Lantana & Blackberry - Shelagh Brigg
Tree of Heaven - Jane Mowatt
Green Cestrum - Bill Hicks

If anyone else would like to contribute their experience with Willows, Wild Olives or Privet then please contact Jane Mowatt on 4998 8158. We would be happy to hear from you.

We have also invited the Cessnock City Council Weeds Officer, Barry Shepherd, to join us and to answer our questions.

We are also hoping that a representative from National Parks and Wildlife Service will be able to join us to explain how they are managing the same problems in the National Parks which surround us.

Where possible we suggest you bring along a specimen of any woody plant that you suspect is a weed. Many native rainforest species are taking the opportunity of the wet year to recolonise in the area. If you don't know the plant is, then leave it in the ground and just bring a piece in for identification!

For more information phone Robyn Lamond (4998 8415) or Jane Mowatt (4998 8158)

Everyone is welcome. Tea & coffee provided.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Inc, or any other Landcare agency or government department, but are presented to promote discussion about and the practice of sustainable land use and environmental responsibility.

Report on our last meeting – a visit to Brian and Barbara Barnes' hilltop property

We were fortunate in arriving on the first sunny day in weeks which allowed a full appreciation of the incredible view out over Blaxland's Arm, the Boree Track, and beyond over ranges of tree covered hills.

After car pooling at Laguna to ensure nobody was going to have trouble with the track we arrived at 2 o'clock. Then, after a short introductory talk we were shown over the extensive gardens that Brian is, of course, still extending in those directions which do not include a sheer cliff face.



There were many interesting ideas and useful tips both for growing plants and protecting against fire. Some of the points I picked up were:

- all pipes were buried to protect them against melting in a fire. Digging the trenches provided a source of rocks for the landscaping.
- There was a dedicated 3,000 gallon tank for watering the garden set up so that if anything went wrong with a pipe or tap, only that (small) tank's water would be lost.
- At each tank's outlet is placed a 44 gallon drum so that it can be filled for firefighting. Filling buckets individually from a tap is too slow and people have to wait for their bucket to fill.
- The tanks are connected by the underground pipes so as to gravity feed down to each other further down the hill. The pump is on the lowest tank so that its contents can be pumped up the highest, or header, tank.
- To grow water plants on the top of a hill, bury open topped plastic drums behind a rock wall.
- Thickly mulch paths so that water is absorbed into the soil of the surrounding plant beds any flow of water off the property is minimized. Brian's aim is to stop any water from leaving his garden areas. There is some seepage just beginning after a very wet year.
- On steep slopes amazing things can be done with lots of rock, steps, energy and a good eye for terrain.
- With only one light frost recorded approximately every 5 years the tropical fruit trees were the envy of those of us living down in the valleys. There were bunches of Lady Finger bananas on the banana trees! Also pineapple plants (no fruit this year), pepino, an avocado growing well, a very healthy and fruiting ice cream plant, *Inga edulis*, a mango tree, cherry guava, many citrus and, new to me, a "saba" nut tree, 2 metres high with edible nuts and leaves.
- Brian strongly recommended biodynamic treatments. They were applied approximately 18 months ago and within 3 months he recorded a great improvement in the health and growth of his plants.
- Cushions, in plastic buckets with lids, placed next to rock seats encourage people to sit and enjoy the view and the garden.
- One of many interesting outdoor areas has been created by growing Kiwi fruit vines over scaffolding walls and a wire roof so as to shade some tables and chairs in summer.
- Many of the materials used are secondhand and/or recycled.

- Logs on slopes when moved parallel to the contours hold back an enormous amount of soil which would otherwise be washed down the hill.
- Biodiversity is increasing due to the absence of chemical sprays. The first leech was found the day before.
- The vegetable garden is fully netted to exclude birds and possums with an outer frame of steel fence posts and polypipe, gates used as solid framing along the center, and the netting on the sides that is removable to allow access. This looked very practical for those of us who have a lot of native animals in the vicinity of our vegetables-to-be.
- More generally, excluding possums is done by keeping fences loose and floppy with loose chicken wire around any emergent tree trunks. Apparently, possums don't like climbing on loose floppy wire.
- A quick and easy bench can consist of planks between two 44 gallon drums. Just the right height for potting up plants on.
- A good mulch for fire protection is stones over a sheet of newspaper. It acts as a fire break but still permits water penetration into the soil.
- Waist high gardening especially of frequently picked herbs can be set up using the trusty 44 gallon drums, with both ends removed and a deep plastic pot of the same diameter placed in the top.



It was necessary to clear a lot of the native vegetation in order to establish the buildings and gardens but many of the native shrubs and Yellow Bloodwood trees (*Eucalyptus eximia*) have been left to provide shade and habitat. The integration of the original native plants with the introduced food plants has been very successful.

Our thanks to Brian and Barbara for a very interesting tour of the gardens and a very pleasant social get together afterwards.

A boost for the CMA's community support program

There is some great news for the communities of Wyong, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock and Maitland this month with the extension of community support contracts in both the Wyong and Lake Macquarie areas and a new Community Support Officer being employed for the Maitland and Cessnock areas.

The programs in Lake Macquarie and Wyong have proved to be extremely successful as partnerships between the CMA and the councils of Lake Macquarie and Wyong and the achievements of the past years will be built upon in 2008.

Meanwhile a new Community Support Officer, Graham Price (pictured), has been employed three days a week to provide support to the communities of Maitland and Cessnock in accessing technical support, funding and assistance from the CMA and other agencies for the implementation of natural resource management activities.



Catchment News Issue 7: July 2008

Salvinia always a challenge!

In late July a team of young volunteers, one of many recruited from throughout the world to work on conservation projects throughout Australia by *Conservation Volunteers Australia* (CVA) started to tackle the Salvinia, a noxious water weed originally from Brazil, that is choking the wetland next to *Avoca House* on Wollombi Road. These projects in natural areas always present challenges and this was no exception. However, despite the cold and rain the group has made a sizable hole in the infestation. It was unrealistic to expect much more from a few days work.



CVA volunteers use rakes and a pump to remove Salvinia near Wollombi, July 2008 Photo: HCR CMA

The team was very grateful of the cosy and comfortable cottage accommodation provided by *Capers Guesthouse*.

Different equipment will be required to remove a significant amount of this infestation. However, a more mechanised approach may also be prohibitively expensive. If we are able to clear the Salvinia off half the wetland, there may be an opportunity to introduce the Salvinia Weevil, a biological control, in the spring when the conditions will be warm enough for the new growth it lives off.

Meanwhile a new infestation in Wollombi Millpond is being treated, confined by booms and closely monitored by the Weeds Officers at Cessnock Council. It is critical to tackle Salvinia as early as possible when volumes are lower. Once it is thickly layered its treatment presents greater challenges.



The Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is providing some funding assistance through to the end of October / early November this year, targeting infestations such as this which have appeared since the June 2007 flood. It's a joint project with CMA, Council, Hunter Councils & the local community working together. The CMA would like to hear as soon as possible from any landholders who know or suspect that they have Salvinia on a dam or waterway.

Contact Lorna Adlem 4938 4925.

Fox Control Update

Carrying out fox baiting in the valley has turned out to be much more restrictive than we expected. There are understandably very strict regulations on the use of 1080, including a minimum distance of 500 metres for any bait burial station from an occupied site. As our area is quite closely settled, it is difficult to find many places for stations in areas that foxes frequent.

We are now making enquiries about another option which will involve an outside agency doing the baiting with smaller minimum distances due to their undertaking a fox control risk assessment. There are very successful fox baiting program in urban areas using this approach and we are keen for the wildlife of the Wollombi Valley to enjoy some respite from fox predation.

WVLG Committee

Inaugural NSW Land for Wildlife Conference

The Conference, held on Friday 1st August at Taronga Zoo, was attended by three of us from Wollombi. It was enormously informative with a wide range of topics, engaging speakers, handouts and a terrific opportunity to meet other like minded people from all over the state.

A keynote speaker was Dr John Williams, Natural Resources Commissioner. He gave a passionate plea for the encouragement of conservation on private land as it makes up 92% of land ownership in NSW.

He explained how we depend upon biodiversity for the resilience of the planet, that *'the economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment'* and that poor management costs too much as we forgo income from damaged landscapes. We need to set targets at all levels: property, catchment, regional and national, to encourage voluntary action.

There were several speakers from the NSW *Department of Environment and Climate Change*: Simon Smith, the Deputy Director General, Climate Change, Policy and programmes, Dr Lynn Webber, Chris Murray and Louisa Mamourney. We were given a comprehensive outline of the conservation incentives available in NSW including **Land For Wildlife**, *Wildlife Refuges*, *Voluntary Conservation Agreements*, *Bio-banking* and the *Great Eastern Ranges Initiative* (formerly Alps to Atherton).

Assoc. Professor Michael Mahoney from the *University of Newcastle* spoke of the importance of large and close natural corridors as critical linkages in coping with Climate Change. He also spoke of One Health: an all inclusive approach to the future of soil, water, plants, animals, ecosystems, individuals, families, communities and nations.

Anthea Coggan from CSIRO *Sustainable Systems* gave some very useful tips on how to motivate conservation action on private land.

Tony Voller from the *Hunter – Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority* talked about opportunities for incentive payments to landholders via Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs) which include sustainability and conservation outcomes. It is a competitive selection process.

NSW **Land For Wildlife** is coordinated by the *Community Environment Network* (CEN) on the Central Coast. Their Chairman, John Asquith outlined the program and the ground breaking work they have done to offer this club-style program of support to landholders. CEN is seeking partnerships with agencies throughout NSW to extend this successful and much appreciated program.

Amanda Bland, former **Land For Wildlife** Co-ordinator on the Central Coast, spoke about the growth of the scheme and two **Land For Wildlife** members, Nick Chartorisky and Liz Cayzer spoke of their own **Land For Wildlife** experiences.

Those able to attend the field day the following day experienced first hand, the conservation challenges faced by three long term **Land For Wildlife** property owners and the projects which have changed their lives and the future of their properties. The excursion was a further valuable networking opportunity.



Gael Winnick and Robyn Lamond

National Walk to Work Day

With average use, an Australian family car travels 15,000 kms a year, generating about 5 tonnes of greenhouse pollution and costing its owners about \$13,000. For example, walking just 10 kms a week (1 km each way) to and from work, instead of driving, saves about \$900 in transport costs and 300 kilograms of greenhouse pollution each year.

Walk to Work Day (WTWD) is an annual event held around Australia which promotes regular walking and a cleaner environment. By registering for participation at www.walk.com.au individuals, businesses and organisations can take the first step to improve our nation's health and environment.

When: Friday 3 October 2008

"Who Cares about Cessnock's Environment?" Survey

As part of an exciting new program called "*Sign up for Sustainability*" about to commence in the Cessnock LGA (Local Government Area), Council is undertaking a survey to assess the knowledge, awareness, attitudes and actions of the community towards our local environment. From this survey a program of educational activities will be developed to take to local service clubs, P&C Groups, youth groups and community events. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete with 10 short, tick box questions.

The survey is available online through Council's website at www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au Alternatively contact Tricia to have a printed version mailed to you.

Have your say now! "*Sign up for Sustainability*"

A system of pledges will be incorporated into the program whereby residents will 'sign-up' to undertake specific actions to change their behaviour and improve their sustainability impacts.

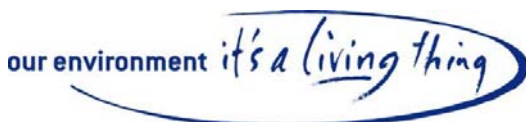
These pledges will then be tracked for evaluation purposes to see if actions are being undertaken and savings achieved.

The programs objectives are to:

1. Gauge level of the community's knowledge, awareness, attitudes and actions on urban sustainability issues.
2. Decrease participant household energy and water usage by at least 10%.
3. Increase participant knowledge of biodiversity and dryland salinity issues.
4. And, enable existing community groups to develop sustainability skills

If you have any questions about this program please contact:

Tricia Donnelly
Sustainability Programs Officer
Cessnock City Council
Ph: 4993 4236





The LANDCARE NSW

Advocate

July 2008



Why Landcare NSW Inc?

Landcare NSW Inc evolved from a community desire to have a representational body of Landcarers at the state level. Following the Musters at Lake Macquarie and Tamworth in 2007, a number of issues were raised that threatened the ongoing effectiveness and existence of Landcare and Landcare groups in NSW. Landcare NSW Inc was formed to provide a forum to address those issues seen as barriers to the success of Landcare in NSW.

The membership of Landcare NSW is comprised of endorsed members from Landcare regions, districts or composite groups. Landcare NSW Inc has developed clear objectives and terms of reference to guide the direction of the organisation as it moves forward to promote Landcare.

Aims

Landcare NSW Inc exists to be a strong representative body to work for grassroots community driven natural resource management in NSW. Our aim is to promote and encourage awareness and education in sustainable natural resource management, to foster community and individual action in environmental reparation, nature conservation and the adoption of regenerative production systems, and to advocate ecologically sustainable development.

Terms of Reference

1. to celebrate the achievements of Landcare and promote Landcare and community based NRM organisations and activities,
2. to identify, communicate with and represent Landcare at the grass-roots, State and National level to develop and foster ideas, knowledge and resources.
3. to organise an annual Landcare Muster where landcare networks, groups and members can raise landcare and broader natural resource and environmental issues, and develop strategies to address issues raised.
4. to establish and enhance cooperation and partnerships between landcare and broader natural resource, environmental and primary industry organisations including regional NRM bodies and government departments,
5. to speak as endorsed representatives of landcare networks and landcare groups in the development of District, State and National landcare and broader natural resource and environmental policy,

Actions

Landcare NSW is now actively involved in providing a forum, developing strong networks and up-skilling the community to share their activities and place stories between landcarers, and also to promote Landcare to the wider community affirming the incredible effort made by the 48,000 NSW volunteer landcarers in sustainable natural resource management.

Chairman
David Walker
Ph: 02- 6741 8332
david.walker@lplmc.com.au

Secretary
Marion Benjamin
Ph: 02- 6925 7718
mbenjamin@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 6th September Propagation Workshop

A Propagation by Cuttings Workshop will be held from 10 am to 12:30 pm at Wollombi House, Wollombi. Learn from Evelyn Bloom and Judy Brown how to take cuttings and create new plants at almost no cost. You are welcome to stay and have a chat after the workshop. Coffee and tea provided. Please bring your own lunch.

You will take home your cuttings for the day. All materials provided.

Limit of 8 places. Bookings essential. If interested please contact Evelyn Bloom on 4998 3316

Sunday 14th September Spring Bird Walk at Bow Wow Creek Gorge, Mt Vincent area

Join us for a 3 hour morning walk to observe the birds of Bow Wow Creek Gorge and Wallis Creek. Learn about their habitat, courting displays and nests. A rare opportunity to visit a unique natural treasure of the Lower Hunter. Bookings are essential and a good level of fitness is required as there are creek crossings and fairly steep paths and cliffs.

Cost: \$5 per person. Suitable for adults and children 12+ years old.

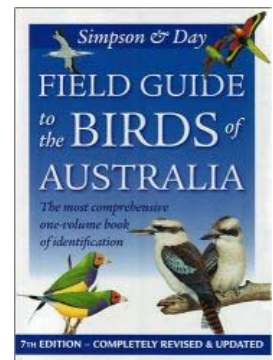
What to bring on the walk: covered footwear, suitable clothing for possible scrub, weather/sun protection, snacks and drinking water. Lunch/morning tea where indicated. Binoculars, camera etc.

Bookings essential and further info: ph. 02 4320 4205 by 12 noon Friday prior to the walk.

Saturday 18th October Next Landcare Meeting - Is there a topic you would like covered? Contact Jane Mowatt on 4998 8158

Landcare library continues to grow

As a result of several requests at the monthly Laguna Market we have bought a copy of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* by Simpson and Day. This book will be available for consultation and/or loan from the Wollombi Landcare library at meetings and at the stall at the Laguna Market.



Staying in touch

For those members with Internet access, we are able to send your newsletter plus numerous other notices and items of interest to you whenever we receive them. However, we need to stay in touch! So if you change your email address then please let me know.

Graham Taylor

Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Contacts

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