



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for August 2009



A visit to Bow Wow Creek Gorge

After having to cancel our planned visit to Bow Wow Creek Gorge in June due to inclement weather, we have arranged that the next Landcare meeting will be held at 10:00 am on Saturday 22nd August at Pam & Colin Fitzsimon's property, "Bow Wow Creek", 444 Sandy Creek Road, between Quorrobolong and Mulbring

Pam and Colin Fitzsimons have kindly offered to take us on a walk of Bow Wow Creek Gorge that has very distinctive fossils and geological features as well as sub-tropical rainforest and varied birdlife. We will have a 2-3 hour walk with Pam and Colin. The walk will be at a leisurely pace with plenty of opportunities to look at the features of the gorge, followed by lunch together. Please bring a plate to share, as well as your own utensils.

It is a bush walk so ensure you have suitable clothing and footwear, a hat, water bottle, camera and binoculars.

Feel free to ring Catherine Craig on 4998 3236 if you would like a lift.

Bow Wow Creek Gorge is a National Heritage listed site. You can find more details by going to the Australian Government website at www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=1224



Directions to the Fitzsimon's property:

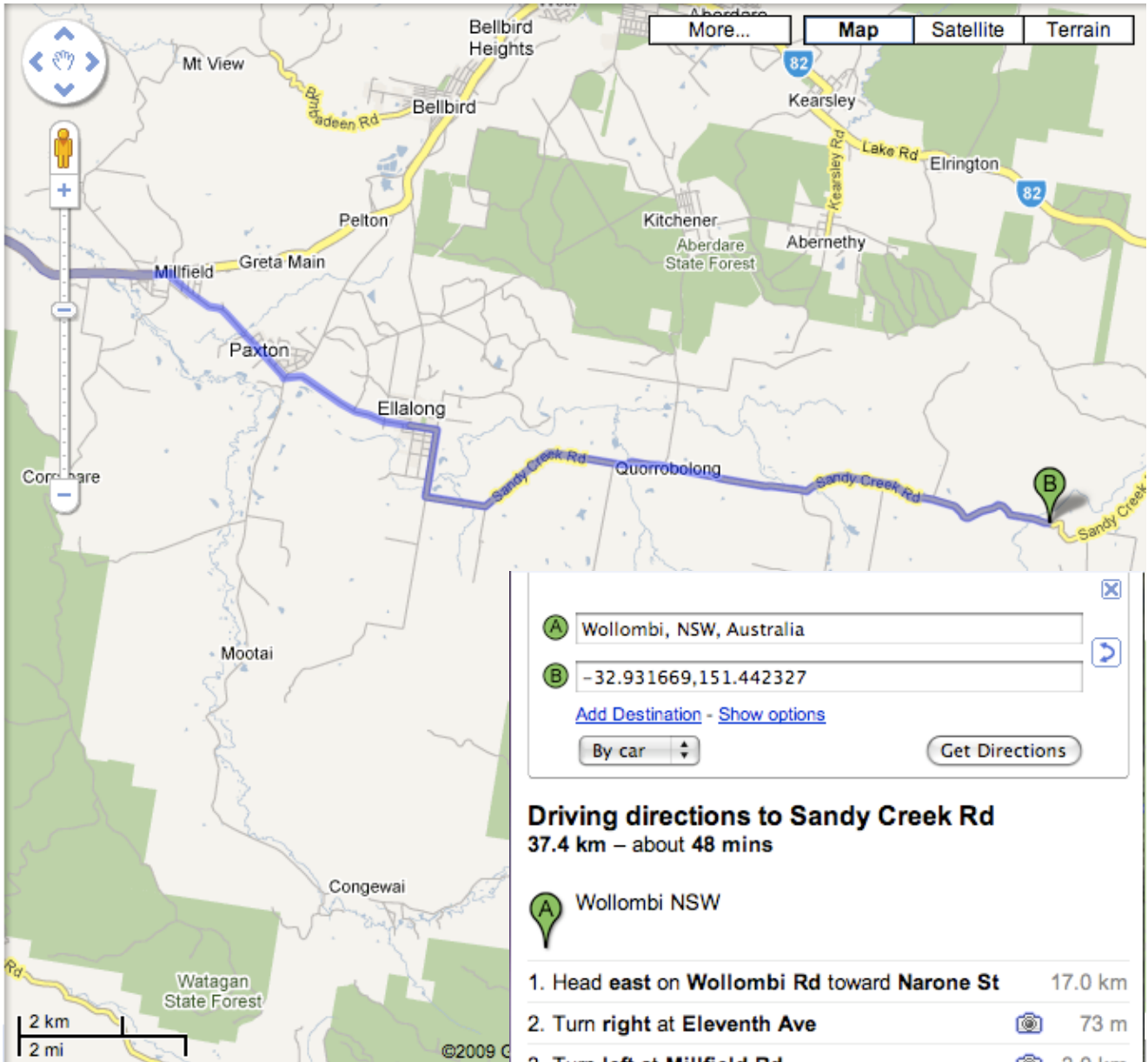
It is a 30-40 minute drive from Wollombi through Millfield, Paxton, Ellalong & Quorrobolong to 444 Sandy Creek Road (look out for Landcare sign).

Not sure? Then refer to Google map and directions on the following page

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Catherine Craig (4998 3236)

Everyone is welcome.



[Add Destination](#) - [Show options](#)

Driving directions to Sandy Creek Rd
 37.4 km – about 48 mins

Wollombi NSW

1. Head **east** on **Wollombi Rd** toward **Narone St** 17.0 km
2. Turn **right** at **Eleventh Ave** 73 m
3. Turn **left** at **Millfield Rd** 3.0 km
4. Turn **left** to stay on **Millfield Rd** 2.2 km
5. Continue on **Helena St** 1.0 km
6. Turn **right** at **Hamilton St** 1.0 km
7. Continue on **Sandy Creek Rd** 0.3 km
8. Turn **left** to stay on **Sandy Creek Rd** 12.9 km
Destination will be on the left

Sandy Creek Rd

Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Contacts

Mail: Wollombi Valley Landcare Group, Inc. c/o Wollombi General Store, Wollombi 2325

Items for newsletter: Graham Taylor - 9981 6317/4998 3326 wollombi.landcare@gmail.com

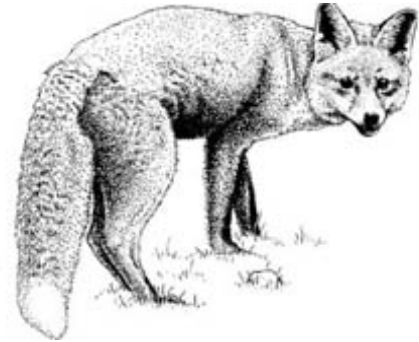
The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Inc, or any other Landcare agency or government department, but are presented to promote discussion about and the practice of sustainable land use and environmental responsibility.

There will now be NO 1080 Fox Baiting Program this winter

Since our well attended meeting about fox control at Wollombi Public School in April 2008, Wollombi Valley Landcare Group has been developing a strategic approach to fox baiting using 1080, recommended by NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Livestock Health and Pest Authority as the most effective method of control available.

We assembled a list of properties keen to join the program and have been working with Hunter Land Management, who have extensive experience of fox baiting programs, to put the planning and notification details in place ready for HLM to carry out a baiting program this winter. That was finally scheduled for early August with mailing addresses for neighbours in those localities also obtained from Cessnock Council as an extra level of notification.

All was in place ready to proceed when we learned that the management board of the **new pest authority** for our area is not allowing baiting to occur within 150 metres of smaller properties, even when it is agreed to by the signing of a waiver form. We had expected the waiver to be allowed, as is the case in many rural areas where there are substantial losses from fox predation. With the quality of animal habitat in the Wollombi Valley, we are very concerned at the increasing loss of small ground feeding native animals and domestic poultry to foxes. However, the Cumberland LHPA is not allowing the waivers. This ruling will exclude half the properties involved in this year's program, which has rendered it unviable for the current group of properties. Therefore **WVLG is not proceeding with a fox-baiting program this year.**



Any future fox baiting program can only involve those properties where bait stations can be at least 150 metres from any habitation and there would need to be enough properties involved for a professional baiting crew to be working for at least a full day laying baits in easily accessed areas. A regular program, perhaps twice each winter, should have a substantial effect on fox populations.

In the meantime, we are investigating the use of a professional shooter on those properties that were due to take part in this year's program.

If you would like to be part of a future fox control program to restore some balance in our natural areas and give our native wildlife a better chance of survival, please contact Wollombi Valley Landcare Group, c/o Wollombi Store with your property and contact details.

With the deferral of any fox-baiting program this year, if you have problems with foxes on your property, then you may wish to consider borrowing the Landcare fox trap. This fox trap is available on loan to any Landcare member to use. Instructions are provided to guide you in setting up the trap and placing baits in the cage.

If you do use the trap then you will need to check the trap daily in case you find a native animal has entered the trap and needs to be released.

The trap does not kill any animal that is caught in the trap, so if you are successful in trapping a fox then you will have to make your own arrangements to have the fox killed.

So if you like to borrow the trap then please contact Catherine Craig on 4998 3236.

Foxes – the facts...

Foxes prey on ground feeding wildlife such as lyrebirds, wrens and small mammals such as bandicoots as well as domestic livestock especially lambs and chickens, ducks, geese and their eggs. Predation by the European red fox was declared a key threatening process across NSW in 1998 by the NSW Scientific Committee. They have been identified as a primary threat to about 40 threatened native species including the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby locally.

Baiting with sodium fluoroacetate (1080) is the most cost-effective method of control available. As 1080 poses a significant risk to some non-target animals, its use in New South Wales is governed by the Pesticides Act and the relevant Pesticide Control Order. Considerable research, over many years, has helped refine the methods used in fox control programs.



The number of 1080 baits that can be laid on a property depends on the size of the landholding. The minimum size for fox baiting is 5 hectares: 1 bait. Baits are laid at least 5 metres inside the boundary of participating properties and cannot be laid within 150 metres of habitation.

The bait is buried 10 cm into a mound of soil so that only digging animals can reach it. Each bait is checked twice a week, replaced if taken, and then removed and disposed of at the end of 2 weeks. Notices are placed in newspapers and signs posted on property entrances giving details of the baiting dates. If you have domestic animals, it is strongly recommended that they be kept restrained or muzzled in those identified areas at all times, both during the baiting program and 4 weeks after the program finishes.

The most effective baits are fresh meat (to appeal only to carnivores) injected with 3 mg of 1080, which is too small a dose to kill animals other than foxes and dogs. Tethering the bait with a skewer will also increase the tendency of the fox to eat it on the spot and die within 6-8 hours, typically back in its den.

Successful baiting of this nature takes place regularly in Sydney's bushland parks in close proximity to homes with domestic animals. The pet owners simply keep their animals restrained or out of the specified areas for the baiting period. A 1080 baiting program by NPWS is also currently underway in the Mangrove Mountain to Bucketty area.

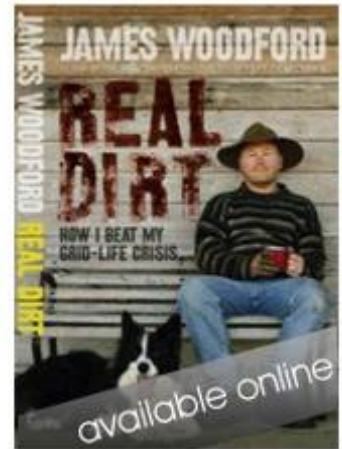
Regular fox baiting programs have been shown to greatly improve the survival of native wildlife and domestic stock. The greater the number of properties involved in fox control programs the more significant the impact on fox numbers which will relieve their predatory pressure on our wildlife and stock.

I'll kill those cwazy wabbits, and you, too, evil Mr Foxy

• James Woodford

Extract from Sydney Morning Herald, July 11, 2009

Having left Sydney five years ago, we have discovered that farms and forests are not just being overrun by 'seachangers' but also by a secret underworld of swarming exotic pests. In the past few months down here on the NSW South Coast we have lost six of our laying hens to foxes that are so brazen they have even taken chickens in daylight. Rabbits have destroyed almost an entire landcare planting, pulling out hundreds of seedlings. Huge black rats chewed the bottom out of a new surfboard and, after a century of neglect, our paddocks are next to useless for pasture because they are full of exotic weeds and a tussock that is behaving like a weed. Indian Myna birds are for the first time being seen in the area in groups of two and three.



But the biggest shock was that we recently monitored our 28-hectare voluntary conservation agreement area. That protected forest is meant to be a haven for wildlife and, according to a local biodiversity officer with the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Wil Allen, contains plenty of good habitat for small native animals such as the endangered potoroo. So when Wil set up three hidden cameras and left them for a fortnight he had high hopes of capturing some endangered marsupial action.

On the designated day for retrieving the cameras we were dismayed to see spectacular footage of an exquisitely beautiful fox. It was like we had had paid to see *Sound Of Music* and ended up in a cinema screening *American Psycho*. Over a fortnight we had captured numerous films and photos of the feral pest. But there was not one small native marsupial or native rat picked up by Wil's cameras. And if this is happening in our small forest, imagine the story writ large across the nation. It is little wonder we are facing a terrifying biodiversity crisis.... we are not going to continue to provide a lovely home for a fox.

But it is not the kind of fight that can be had with the Elmer Fudd hunting laws proposed for NSW. The Shooters Party was keen to see hunting in national parks and an expansion of the rules controlling shooting on private land, including some native animals such as eastern grey kangaroos. Alarming to opponents was the provision for the deliberate release of some species of exotic "game".

One argument for such hunting is that it will help fight feral pests. But the numbers just don't stack up. In the past two years recreational hunters have killed an average 622 foxes a year. It's better than nothing but no one can pretend this represents a co-ordinated fox control program. It is about recreation.

Proof that trying to hunt such creatures with firearms is futile was a report from my neighbour that he had tried unsuccessfully to assassinate Mr Foxy Gentleman. He found conventional weapons don't work as an eviction method - the bush is thick, time is short and the enemy has reinforcements aplenty.

Assisted by the South East Livestock Health and Pest Authority, we have set up six baiting stations using 1080 poison, to which native animals have a level of resistance. In spite of our

reluctance to use such a poison, every station had been raided. We plan to run the baiting until at least next year and then monitor the recovery of native animals.

On a second front, we recently fed our thriving population of rabbits with a big bag of carrots. After a week we laid on for them a kilogram of shredded carrot infected with the calicivirus, supplied by the local pest authority. About a dozen neighbours went through the same process, so with any luck we will soon make a dent in the bunny population.

With help from the local small farms incentive program, we have just sown our front paddock with native wallaby grass. So far so good - it is growing well.

Maybe we are wasting our time. After all, what is the point of feral control in one small place amid an ocean of invasive species? Then again maybe we might make a difference to even just a single population of a single native species that doesn't stand a chance against that single lovely but deadly fox. The least we can do is to get rid of him. An even better outcome would be if more neighbours joined the war on ferals but not just with guns. Hunting is an old-fashioned rural way which has proven ineffective.

Even so, the fight is worth having. As Wil Allen wrote in his note to us: *"It would be a very worthwhile project to attempt to follow changes in native wildlife abundance as feral animals are controlled."*

We can control feral animals - or at least make life harder for them - but not with bullets alone. The first step is deciding that pests, like all bad guests, are not welcome.

James Woodford is the editor of www.realdirt.com.au and author of *Real Dirt: How I Beat My Grid-Life Crisis* (Text Publishing)



COMMUNITY FIREWISE MEETING

Your local volunteer Rural Fire Service will be holding a **Community FireWise Meeting** to help you prepare for the upcoming Bushfire Season

To learn more about how to prepare a **Bushfire Action Plan** come along to this meeting:

Sunday 11 October 2009
10.00am – 11.30am
Laguna Hall



moving towards a FIREWISE community

Our parks and animals are not fair game!

The Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill, introduced into the NSW Parliament by the Shooters Party in June proposes opening up our national parks to recreational shooting and the establishment of game reserves.

The Parks and Native Animals Protection Coalition - made up of leading environmental organisations and animal welfare groups, are opposed to hunting in National Parks, the establishment of private game parks, the hunting of native animals and birds, and the release or relocation of introduced birds, and other measures outlined in the Bill.

The Shooters Bill proposition will not assist in the control of feral animals in national parks, is contrary to existing animal welfare legislation, will have a detrimental impact on the environment and places the average national park user at risk.

Several species of birds and four species of kangaroos are on the hit list of 26 native species that would become fair game for licensed hunters under this legislation. Under the Shooters Bill duck hunting will be reintroduced to NSW.

We're deeply concerned that while the legislation does not allow the shooting of endangered and threatened species, once amateur hunters have access to national parks these species may be illegally targeted or unintentionally killed.

NSW Parliament is set to consider the Shooters Bill when it resumes in the first week of September.

We must urgently show our political leaders that the community strongly condemns the Bill - rejecting all hunting in national parks in NSW.

The NSW Government needs the Shooters Party's number to pass legislation and the pressure is on for some kind of hunting concession. The community must show our political leadership we do not support open season on our wildlife.

The Parks and Native Animals Protection Coalition:- Nature Conservation Council of NSW / Total Environment Centre Inc. / The Wilderness Society / WIRES / Colong Foundation for Wilderness / Invasive Species Council Australia / Humane Society International / National Parks Association of NSW.

Do You Need Expert Assistance in Any of These Fields?

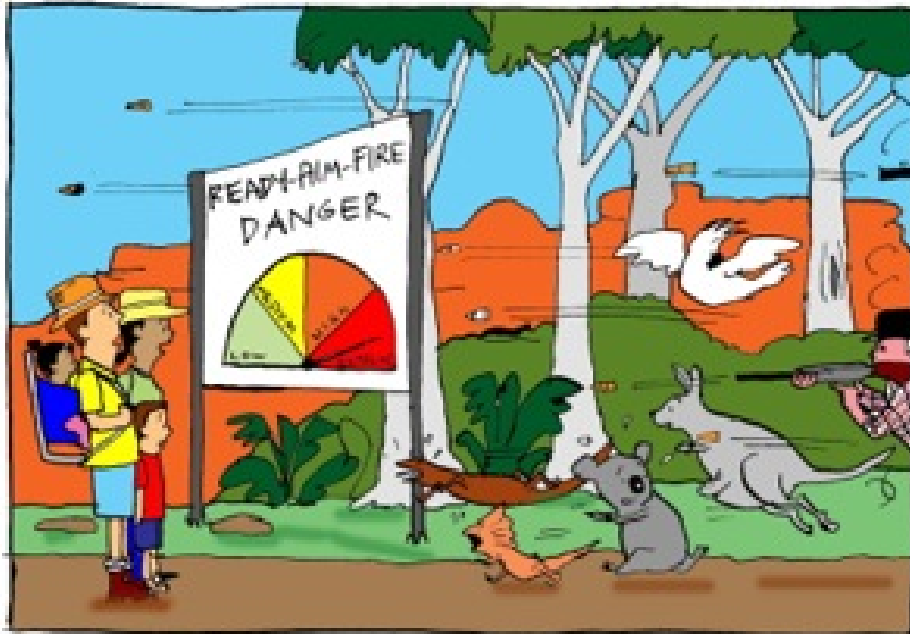
- Weed Management
- GIS Mapping
- Revegetation
- Erosion Control
- CMA, State and Local Government Liaison
- Revegetation
- Physical Property Planning

Hunter Land Management is locally owned private company



Ph. 02 4932 1550

mail@hunterlandmanagement.com.au



Public Meeting on the Shooters' Bill

Tuesday 25th August, 2009

6.45pm for 7pm

Ku-ring-gai Town Hall

1186 Pacific Hwy, Pymble

(A short walk from Pymble train station)

supported by the *Parks and Native Animal Protection Coalition*

Speakers:

Professor Tony Peacock, CEO Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre
Laurie Levy, veteran activist from the Campaign Against Duck Hunting, Victoria

Robert Brown, MLC, Shooters' Party

Lee Rhiannon, MLC, NSW Greens

Catherine Cusack, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Cate Faehrmann, Executive Director, Nature Conservation Council of NSW (MC)

And NSW Government speaker – (to be confirmed)

Topics will include:

- **the science perspective on effective feral animal control**
- **why national parks and animal welfare groups strongly oppose the Bill**
- **arguments in support of the Bill**

Join the Landcare Committee

We really need an injection of fresh ideas from new faces and a few more hands on deck. It is really not onerous to help run your Landcare group. As a committee we meet for a couple of hours only every 2 months and jobs are shared around by an enthusiastic, currently too small, committee.

As an existing member of Landcare we encourage you to get involved and share the load, otherwise the organisation is going to slowly fade away.

Please call Jane Mowatt 4998 8158 with your ideas and offers of help.