

Shirtsleeves

Hunter Region Landcare Network

Network News

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CONSERVING CRESSFIELD

Just north of Scone in the Upper Hunter Valley is Cressfield, an old 1,500 hectare wheat and sheep raising property with the 5 bail shearing shed still in operating order. It is now home to some 70 of the best breeding and racing thoroughbred horses in Australia. Lucerne hay is also grown for the property's hungry horses, along with 500 head of Angus cattle.

Cressfield homestead is "listed as an item of the environmental heritage" and government approval was given before recent, major restoration to bring it back to its former glory. This two-storey, local sandstone 1917 Queensland Federation style homestead has magnificent views of the surrounding valley. Two watercourses merge below the homestead, providing continuous underground flow and wells and bores pump water from them for use on the property. The 9.5 kms. of double-sided riparian zone is also fenced off from stock.

Cressfield is two thirds through our 35 stage "Property Development Plan" for natural regrowth of Native Vegetation. We plant and maintain vegetation for soil stabilisation, flora and fauna habitats, stock shade and natural aesthetics. Adjacent to our alluvial flats are 500 hectares of natural steep, wooded bushland in wonderful condition (along with some introduced flora and fauna). The natural regrowth is spectacular with thousands of trees and shrubs where before there were just cleared grasslands (fencing prevents stock accessing this area). The CMA is advising us on the collecting of native seeds for our own nursery and planting thousands of "homebred" natives on Cressfield.

A preliminary bird survey identified several threatened species and over 35 types of resident native birds and a planned, detailed study will go to State Registers and the Australian Bird Registry.

These projects, our riparian zones works and Property Development Plan help us participate in the Hunter Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GERI). A Conservation Partnership and connecting our protected corridors of environmental interest to surrounding ones, especially nearby State Nature Reserves, shows what landholders can accomplish with time, expertise, funds and effort.

GERi staff help us broker partnerships with DEECW, CMA, Landcare and Greening Australia who advise on works priority areas, funding and grants. Go to <http://www.greasternranges.org.au/partnerships/partnerships/hunter-valley> (includes link to short video featuring Cressfield).

Wayne Bedggood



HRLN PROJECTS

- HRLN Hunter Indigenous Aquatic Plants Nursery - seeds being collected
- Farmer/landholder Field Days in early 2011 - using Organic Recycled Waste Techniques
- HRLN Website upgrade including Sustainable Farming & Composting data
- Research into climate change in the Hunter for Sustainable Farming initiatives - starting early 2011
- River Redgums, Singleton to Greta - media campaign, ABC Radio News, Newcastle Herald & local papers
- Landcare Assistance Funds to local Landcare Groups in the Hunter Water Corporation catchment
- Educational resources for schools - includes the Lorax Puppet Theatre for young children
- Workshops/Field Days on - Wildlife Corridors, Sustainable Agriculture, Weed Control - March to June 2011
- Landcare facilitation at a regional & state level - representation on Landcare NSW
- Local Council partnerships to address land and water conservation and rehabilitation needs
- McKeachie's Run plantings (riparian and on-land) - completing December 2010
- Resource "Toolkit" for Landcare Groups - completing December 2010

WORLD WETLANDS DAY

The 2nd of February 2011 marks the 40th anniversary of World Wetlands Day (WWD). This international event brings together communities in all parts of the world to celebrate diversity, protect environments and share skills and experiences. Next year has also been declared the International Year of Forests and the theme for WWD 2011 is "Wetlands & Forests".

Events and celebrations are being planned by Landcare Groups and other organisations around the Hunter e.g. Kooragang Wetlands at Ash Island in Newcastle will hold a family fun day on the 6th of February.

Plan an activity with your local Landcare Group, participate in other celebrations in the Hunter and share your knowledge and skills in wetland management and NRM with your schoolmates, family and friends..

Get organised and get involved in celebrating the Hunter's wetlands.

LANDCARE 4 YOUTH

Lake Macquarie based Landcare4Youth project has been trialling various activities and methods to get young people connected and sharing the Landcare ethic. There was planting-a-plenty for National Tree Day with 20 schools making a day of it and 4500 natives planted. Congrats to our first timers Gateshead West, Rathmines Public Schools and Jacaranda Grove Preschool for getting the littlies involved and to all our regulars who have been actively greening for years.

Eleebana Public School hosted the greatly successful, inaugural L4Y Video Conference with Awaba, Rathmines and Gateshead West Public Schools logging in to share their Landcare experiences.

The Eleebana e-team provided a very informative presentation about their vegetable gardens, composting and working with their groundsman. Each school gave an overview of their current projects, from growing the biggest Lemon Grass bush at Awaba, the biggest apple tree at Rathmines and most productive Strawberry patch at Eleebana. Video conferencing was a great way to share how different schools approach Landcare projects and for students to hear about those projects.

We even planned the next one! It was held during Coastcare week on 6th of December and focussed on transitioning to High School and how to empower Primary School Landcarers to continue their conservation and restoration efforts.

The latest L4Y newsletter has lots of information about online resources, current programs, upcoming events, grants, on-ground support and who to contact in Lake Mac if you need a hand.

Go to : http://www.treesinnewcastle.org.au/l4y_forum_term4_2010_newsletter

Suzanne Pritchard



MUSCLE IN OUR CREEK

Muscle Creek Landcare Group, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) and the Coal & Allied Community Trust (C&A) are all partners together in restoring some of the upper reaches of the Hunter River.

CVA volunteers have been working with our Landcare Group over the past year to clear weeds along a 3 kilometre stretch of Muscle Creek, a part of the River that flows through Muswellbrook. The volunteers come from all over the world, spending part of their trip to OZ working on environmental projects in the Hunter. Sponsored by C&A, volunteers each spend five days clearing weeds such as Balloon Vine, Morning Glory, Privet, Madeira Vine, Castor Oil Plant and even Camphor Laurel. They also help maintain existing native plantings along the River.

An essential asset to our Landcare Group, these CVA volunteers make it possible to undertake progressive weed control and riparian revegetation of degraded riverbanks. They clear some difficult and well embedded weeds at times and rocks and rubbish as well. They really put their muscles to work when clearing up the Creek and are usually pretty tired at the end of the day when they head to their local accommodation (provided by our Landcare Group).

Volunteers also participated in our Waterwatch project, our monthly testing for temperature, turbidity, pH, salinity, available phosphate and dissolved oxygen. They were dismayed at the results that show high salinity, low dissolved oxygen and high phosphate content, typical of Muscle Creek.

Stephen Thatcher

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Eight new Individual Members

MyRiveR HUNTER

Students in Scone and surrounding areas took the pulse of local waterways and created their own plans of action in November. Belltrees Public School, Merriwa Central and Scone High were among 70 students from 7 schools checking the health of the Hunter River, Dart Brook, Kingdon Ponds, Pages and Isis Rivers and creeks throughout the Hunter Valley.

MYRiveR Hunter program is coordinated by OzGREEN, an environmental leadership organisation that inspires and enables young people and communities to care for their rivers, land and our future. Students tested local water quality, assessed the state of vegetation and looked at river erosion. After collecting data they took to the streets, asking local residents how local river conditions have changed in recent years and what their rivers should be like. Students got together to compare test results, identify concerns and plan for the future before drawing up action plans to work towards their vision for the future of the Hunter and its people."

The *MYRiveR* program gives young Australians the chance to be scientists and investigate the health of their local rivers for themselves. They then decide what action they and their community can take. *MYRiveR* is under the framework of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, to establish a *conservation corridor* along the Great Eastern Ranges to preserve and protect animals and plants in response to climate change, land clearing and other environmental stresses.

See www.ozgreen.org for more information.

Gabriel Anderson



BUSH BASHING FROM BROKE

Landcarers from the Broke Bulga Landcare Group joined with Wollombi Landcare in August for a 4 wheel drive trip through Laguna bushland and into Yengo National Park, in the southern part of the Hunter Valley. We had a great day driving through the Park along the formal bush tracks and stopping to talk about local flora and fauna with our guide, one of the Park rangers. We were given a planning overview from a National Parks perspective and learnt a lot about the protection of the Park's natural environment.

Then it was on to Yengo House for morning tea and a historical talk, including indigenous care for local ecosystems. Then more driving, lunch "on the track" and up to The Trig for glorious views over the Park. We finished back at Yengo House late in the afternoon. Having the opportunity to meet with other Landcarers and share information, experiences and our love of the bush made it a satisfying but tiring day.

Ten years ago Broke Bulga Landcare Group received "Olympic funding" to restore and care for land at Fordwich Crossing. Over the years we have progressively worked on restoring the former "unofficial tip" at the Crossing. Local Council staff cleared the piles of rubbish from the Crossing area before we could get on site and plant the native vegetation.

We have planted numerous tree varieties of natives including Gums, Acacias and Melaleucas (like *Linarifolia*) with our dedicated members checking them regularly to ensure adequate protection, watering and control of weeds has been maintained through "wet and dry" weather patterns.

Recently we planted locally sourced River Redgums at the Crossing and also at McNamara Park in Broke. We are looking forward to seeing these majestic trees growing to maturity in Broke, just part of our Group's commitment to restoring the history of the River Redgum in the Hunter.

Long term planning is an important part of our conservation and restoration projects to ensure our native vegetation is maintained for future generations in the Broke and Bulga communities.

Wendy Lawson

Dates for diary:

NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE - holiday activities
Check NPWS website or your local office for details

WORLD WETLANDS DAY - 40TH Anniversary of World Wetlands Day 2nd February.
Theme "Wetlands & Forests"

NSW COASTAL VOLUNTEERS FORUM 2011
27th February—1st March at Wollongong. For details or to book Tel: 02 4352 1199 or email wycare@bigpond.com

MCKEACHIE'S RUN

Invasive weeds and past farming practices threaten significant native habitat in wetlands resulting in scattered sections of native vegetation becoming isolated from other sites. Work being undertaken at the Oak Hampton wetlands off Aberglasslyn Rd, Maitland is focussed on reversing this decline.

In 2007 HRLN obtained funding from Stocklands to plant native vegetation on foreshore land as part of their land development at McKeachie's Run, once a SQID (stormwater runoff device) and stormwater retention ponds had been completed. Revegetation of the area not only provides restoration of land but acts as stabilisation for the creek banks and flow to the lake.

HRLN purchased over 1,100 locally sourced plants from Hunter Indigenous Plants (HIP) to undertake remedial planting at the site. In early December Lachlan Anderson from HIP (contractor) organised planting of the riparian and littoral zone of the wetlands. The project also had the support of Conservation Volunteers Australia Indigenous Team who worked so tirelessly to ensure a successful day of planting, with Lachlan and HRLN volunteers.

Riparian plants include Tall Sedge (*Carex appressa*), Tall Saw Sedge (*Gahnia clarkei*), Common Tussock Rush (*Juncus visitatus*), Flax Lily (*Dianella caerulea*), Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), Spotted Knotweed (*Persicaria decipens*) and Club Rush (*Schoenoplectus macronatus*). The flat "on-land" area was planted with Heath Myrtle (*Babingtonia pluriflora*), Forest Redgum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) and Snow in Summer (*Melaleuca linarifolia*).

As a result of the significant rainfall over the past months and the expected further rains in the New Year the timing of the planting will see a large percentage of tube stock planted reaching maturity in the coming year.

Richard Pepper
HRLN



Who's Who in HRLN

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Links

Landcare NSW Inc: <http://www.landcarensw.org.au/>

Communities in Landscapes: integrating production & conservation across Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands: <http://cil.landcarensw.org.au>

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