

Inside this issue:

Scouting around for Bugs & Bats	p1
HRLN Projects	p2
Sensory Makeover	p2
Land & Water in Shortland	p2
New Members	p3
Not Castor Oil again Mum!	p3
RLF update	p3
Ecological Connectivity in the Upper Hunter	p4
Dates for Diary	p4
Contacts	p4

SCOUTING AROUND FOR BUGS & BATS

Junior Landcare

Kurri Kurri Cub Scouts have been trying lots of new and exciting activities while working towards their Scout Landcare Interest Badges over recent months.

The boys and girls discussed wildlife corridor issues in Werakata National Park, looked at animals in the Park, threatened species of micro bats and owls and migratory birds who use the Park such as the highly endangered Swift Parrot.

We explored how animals moved from place to place e.g. hopping, flying, swimming, slithering and crawling, threats to wildlife from crossing roads and rivers, denuding of trees and feral pest predators. They were surprised that feral pests like deer are found in the area and discussed land degradation effects.

The Cubs made murals depicting wildlife corridors which gave them opportunity to express their thoughts about their environment in a concrete form.

A 'Clean up the Creek Day' was held locally to remove Salvinia and Giant Reed from the banks of Swamp Creek, with the Salvinia composted and the Reed recycled into garden wall panels for use by local residents.

In November everyone was eager for the Water Bug Survey at Peace Park at Weston. The duck pond was dip netted to collect water bugs like Shrimp and Caddisfly and also Water Boatmen and Dragonfly larvae. In all over a dozen species were found, helping the children count for variety and volume.

A 'Natural Object Treasure Hunt' proved very popular with children also picking up litter along the way. Lomandra tube stock were planted around another pond at the site which is not as healthy. They were able to compare two types of waterways and see the difference plantings will make in the next few years.

The HRLN Deputy Chair presented the Cubs with their Landcare badges at a special ceremony at the Scout Hall in December. We have been asked to participate again soon with other environmental badge work with the Cubs.

As an HRLN Education Ambassador it has been great working with them. Cubs were provided with insight to the variety of Landcare activities to be involved in and that age does not matter when you want to make a difference to the environment.

Helen McClelland



HRLN PROJECTS

- HRLN Website upgrade incl. Landcare Farming & Composting data
- Long term research into climate change in the Hunter for Sustainable Farming initiatives
- River Redgum project—local provenance plantings along the Hunter River
- Regional Landcare Facilitator Initiative—sustainable agriculture & landscape management
- Educational resources - incl. mobile Puppet Theatre
- Workshops - Junior Landcare & Adult education weed control, native vegetation, soil health
- Research project—Landcare and communities
- Landcare facilitation at a regional & state level - representation on Landcare NSW
- Local Council partnerships to address land and water conservation and rehabilitation needs

SENSORY MAKEOVER

After much planning at Speers Point Public School over 1,000 native endemic plants went in the ground at the school this year. This gave opportunity for students, teachers, parents, local council and the wider community to be part of sustainability activities and part of school life. The students were keen to place ground covers, grasses and shrubs around the school grounds and close to some of the classrooms.



Our Sustainable School for the Future project focused on developing and creating a native and sensory garden and outdoor learning area with an Aboriginal perspective that promotes native plants and habitats for local native animals.

An outdoor display mural was painted and supplied by local Aboriginal artist Kerry Patterson and to celebrate NAIDOC Week students participated in painting a mural that represented the community, the environment and our interactions with flora and fauna. They also planted local natives into a 'bush tucker' garden.

Boards were also made showing some of the natives planted like Lilly Pilly and information on plant food use and their benefits to native birds and animals.

They are now on display in the school grounds.

Students, teachers and parents moved so many wheelbarrow loads of mulch!

Cultural days allowed 168 students to explore the different ways Aboriginal people engage with local flora and fauna and people's relationships to land through dreaming, painting and cleansing ceremony. Local plant species and their uses and Dreaming stories that shaped the environment that surrounds them were taught.

We also forged partnerships with local business to complete the project.

Diane Wood



LAND & WATER IN SHORTLAND

2011 has been another busy year for Shortland to Wallsend Landcare. The Lower Crawchie Creek downstream site at Northcote Park, Shortland (area 4) saw woody weeds and trees removed and the area poisoned. The south bank of the creek has been covered with jute-bagging and planting undertaken by our partners Trees in Newcastle. With so much rain of late the weeds are having a field day and some intense weeding has already been needed.

Our long term plan is to work towards the western boundary of the creek, clearing and planting in staged sections.

Trees such as Camphor Laurel are currently under removal and will be replaced with natives like Swamp Mahogany and Prickly Moses.

Lomandra's have been planted in beds along Lovell Parade and they have been well mulched to support growth. With all the rain in recent months the plants are looking good.

With a donation of natives from the Australian Plant Society and home grown natives from the school nursery, Our Lady of Victories Primary School students and local Landcarers have planted lots more Grevillea, Wattle, Lomandra and reeds on the school grounds.

Banksias completed the native mix planted at the school. I love the cones they produce and remember the stories of Banksia Men when I was young—just a few years ago!

Jenny Castles

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

One Individual Member

NOT CASTOR OIL AGAIN MUM!

To me the words Castor Oil bring back childhood memories of a thick, syrup like mixture I sometimes had to swallow for 'medicinal purposes'. I was told it was for my own good but I was never convinced!

I recently attended a workshop near Scone where farmers, other rural and urban landholders and Local Council staff came together to learn about and share their knowledge in identifying and controlling local riparian weeds. Organised by CVA's Bush Regeneration Team, we discussed conserving, native plants and trees in our landscape, growing plants from seed, identifying and treating weeds and ways to improve our practical skills to achieve the best outcomes for our properties.

Amongst the weed samples displayed was the dreaded Castor Oil plant, found along many waterways around Scone, in public parks and on private properties. The seedlings of this tall plant grow and spread rapidly, outcompeting local native species. A native of Africa and Eurasia, it can be toxic to humans and some animals and wearing gloves and having eye protection when undertaking weed control is essential.

The CVA staff and local CMA Vegetation Officer brought weed samples such as Balloon Vine, False Acacia, Purple Tops, Native Tobacco, African Olive and one I recently found on my own property, African Boxthorn.

We compared differences in local ecologies—species and ecosystem weed variations between the Lower and Upper Hunter and shared tips on different methods of controlling weeds. A variety of tools were shown and some innovative 'tool adaption' knowledge provided by some of the farmers/landholders.

Ruth Hardy



Regional Landcare Facilitator Summer Update

Managing Horses on Small Properties workshops

HRLN/RLF project workshops conducted by Jane Myers on 3rd & 4th of March at Scone & Singleton

Pasture to Pocket workshop

HRLN/RLF project 3 day course for farmers (southwest Hunter area) late March

Enquiries & registration to Email: rlf.hunterlnc@bigpond.com or Tel: Ruth on 0458 348 110

Symposium for Garlic Growers

14th & 15th January at Gloucester—best environmental conditions for garlic crops. Email: jcolleran@bigpond.com

Funding Opportunities—Federal & State grant closing dates:

- Environmental Stewardship (Caring for our Country) 8th February
- Action on the Ground (Carbon Farming Futures) 8th February
- Caring for our Country (Open Call funding incl. Hunter River Estuary Coastal Hotspots) 9th February
- Biodiversity Fund (Clean Energy Futures—coastal floodplains, wetlands, riparian veg.) 31st January
- Environmental Trust (Community Bushcare—large, long term projects) 31st January

New website providing easier access to *Caring for our Country* funding opportunities at www.nrm.gov.au

FeralScan

Two new websites added: ToadScan—for mapping sightings of Cane Toads in eastern and northern Australia and FeralPigScan for mapping feral pig sightings or damage. Go to www.feralscan.org.au

Green Nomads

The Green Nomads programme links retirees travelling in Queensland to volunteering for local Landcare activities. You could be counting Turtles, collecting broken ghost nets, planting trees or helping with paperwork for a local Landcare project. Email: www.greennomads.com.au or Tel: 07 3252 7154.

Dates for diary:

CVA Summer of Discovery
Love Your Wildlife workshops
— observe Koala communities
January 7, 11, 21, 25.

Love Your Coast workshops—
Tours to unique coastal sites
January 4, 18, 28
Tel: CVA 4926 2103

HRLN General Meeting
February 11 at 10.00am at
Hunter Wetlands Centre,
412 Sandgate Rd, Shortland
Tel : 0458 348 110

Managing Horses on Small
Properties workshops
March 3, 4 Scone & Singleton
rlf.hunterInc@bigpond.com
or Tel: 0458 348 110

NPWS school activities –
Wildlife Discovery Tours
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/tours.aspx>

Pelicans & other Friends talk
10th January 7-8pm at
Tomaree Library/Com. Centre
Port Stephens

ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE UPPER HUNTER

As part of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GERI) in the Hunter Valley the CMA ran a landholder incentives project in the Wybong catchment. The GERI committee were asked how it could monitor and report on improvements in ecological connectivity and health so a pilot project is assessing the feasibility of using birds as indicators. The success of habitat protection and rehabilitation works is being used as an indicator of ecological connectivity.

The 1,500ha. Cressfield Stud just north of Scone has been used for this study.

Twelve survey sites were established sampling four different types of habitats modelled as part of the GERI. A standard 2ha. 20 minute survey technique was used. This is widely used in Australia giving the advantage of being able to compare results with other surveys across the country.

Surveys were done each quarter to determine if there were seasonal differences to bird abundance. Summer breeding migrants from the north like the Dollar Bird and White-throated Warbler were recorded and other birds such as the Golden Whistler moving off the high country (like the Barrington Tops).

Local Eastern Rosellas usually habitat the woodland area at the back of the property but move into the lower paddocks when certain plant seeds are available such as thistles.

Over 80 species of birds have been recorded on Cressfield, showing riparian areas support most species, then core areas of intact woodland. When looking at woodland specialists the woodland core supports the majority of these species.

A resident pair of Wedge Tailed Eagles were observed. The property supports a number of threatened woodland birds including Grey-crowned Babblers (3 family groups have been identified so far), Scarlet Robin, Speckled Warbler and Brown Treecreeper.



Scarlet Robin



Speckled Warbler

Photos by Chris Tzaros

The property also supports a number of declining woodland birds such as the Dusky Woodswallow and Jacky Winter.

The survey has confirmed the role the property plays in supporting core habitat and corridors as part of a much broader landscape. Cressfield will continue with its bird monitoring surveys as part of its environmental management system.

A Landholder Field Day was held in October to introduce local farmers, other landholders and local Landcare representatives to the woodland and conservation areas, key bird habitat and the survey methods and results. Participants were able to see firsthand the interconnectedness of woodland and pasture areas for many of these birds.

Cressfield has been identified by the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative as part of a north-south corridor in conservation planning and key areas of the property are conservation managed. A Property Management Plan is also in place with the CMA.

Andrew McIntyre

Environment Protection Authority



Buff-rumped Thornbill
Photo by Dean Ingwerson

HRLN Chair: Ruth Hardy Tel: 0458 348 110 (HRLN Mobile)

HRLN email: hrln@bigpond.com

Shirtsleeves Editor: Ruth Hardy

Landcare NSW Inc: www.landcarensw.org.au

Publicity: Helen McClelland Tel: 4930 1030

Website: www.hunterlandcare.org.au

Shirtsleeves articles to email: hrln@bigpond.com

Landcare Australia: www.landcareonline.com.au

Shirtsleeves is supported by

