

Fern Creek Gully Restoration Project

Landcare Support Officer, Daniel Oldfield recently completed a site inspection with Peter Dalton the Landcare Team Leader from Fern Creek Gully Landcare Group. Daniel and Peter walked through the site, as Peter explained the site history and the new up and coming projects for Fern Creek Gully Landcare.

The Landcare group was formed in 2003 and its original objectives have been essentially achieved. These objectives were to eliminate the Bitou Bush, Lantana, Trad and other weeds from the creek line, gully and adjoining slopes and to re-establish a rainforest flora that is consistent with the littoral and temperate species that may have existed on the site before coal mining commenced.

Coal mining commenced in the 1920s and the Spotted Gum and Blackbutt canopy with rainforest understorey was largely destroyed. Except for one or two Blackbutts, which may be over 100 years old, the current eucalyptus canopy is regrowth probably no older than 50-70 years. Coal mining ceased in the 1940s and left the soil profile seriously disturbed or altered. In some places on the site the soil at the time of re-planting in 2005 was little better than mine tailings.

Originally, the rainforest would have been extensive below the cliff line which faces east and southeast, providing shade from the western sun and run off from southerly rain. This rainforest has been almost totally eradicated by the coal mining. Peter and fellow Landcare volunteers have been working extremely hard to restore the rainforest back to its former glory.

The following photos (right) show the creek line regeneration over 15 years, beginning at the time of the major weed eradication and burn prior to re-planting in 2005. An understorey bush fire in late 2003 cleaned out much of the Bitou Bush and Lantana on the northern side of the creek line.

Planting Day

Peter is coordinating a planting day on Friday 20 March 2015 to add to the rainforest planting around Reay Park. Volunteers will be meeting at his place at 9.00 am. A reasonable level of fitness is required as there is some steep ground on the site. Contact the LRC on 49210392 if you are interested in helping out and we will put you in touch with Peter.



Left: Lace Monitor spotted during site visit (Photo by Daniel Oldfield)

Right: Showing regeneration of the valley over time - top in 2005, middle in 2010 and bottom in 2015 (Photos by Peter Dalton)

