



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for April 2009



A visit to a valley restored and our AGM

The next Landcare meeting will be held at 2:00 pm on Saturday 18th April at Colin & Aynette's property, "Willowra" 510 Blaxland's Arm Road, Laguna

Colin & Aynette have kindly allowed us to visit their property and marvel at what they have achieved over a number of years in restoring the degraded stream flowing through their property in Blaxland's Arm. Into deeply scoured sandy banks, they have planted 1000's of Lomandras and other shrubs and trees to stabilise the banks and provide a verdant oasis with deep pools.



Photos courtesy of Robyn Lamond

After an extended drought the ultimate test was when the fast flowing floods of June 2007 swirled down the stream. But it has survived well and when Prof. Wayne Erskine (who gave a comprehensive presentation on flooding in the Wollombi valley at our last meeting) visited their property recently he was very impressed at how it has recovered from the degraded condition he had seen when he had previously visited the site many years ago.

Directions to the Towill's property:

From the Blaxland's Arm turn-off on the Wollombi – Sydney Road just south of Laguna, proceed 5kms down Blaxland's Arm Road past "Morningside" to "Willowra" - Collin & Aynette's property (no. 510).

Our AGM is upon us again. If there are anyone interested in taking on any of the roles on the committee or just becoming a supporting member, then please let me know. We are particularly in need of a Treasurer since Linda has requested a replacement. The role is not onerous and training is available from the grateful retiring Treasurer.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

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.

Fasten Your Seatbelts for an exciting ride through the Wollombi Valley...

That was the advice from Bill Hicks, highly esteemed landcarer of Watagan Creek, on Saturday 21st February when he warmly welcomed Prof. Wayne Erskine at Laguna Hall to present the results of over 40 years of research on the Wollombi Brook. Sixteen years ago, as the then chairman of Wollombi Valley Landcare, Bill had also introduced Wayne and the other guest speakers at the *Way of the River* Field Day at Cedar Creek, June 1993, when a broad cross section of the community came together to share knowledge of the Brook.

At the recent event, over 50 people, who obviously also have an interest in and love for Wollombi Brook, heard of the "Dramatic Changes to Wollombi Brook and its Tributaries Since European Settlement and What Caused Them". With an account of the major floods and the massive changes to the channel in those events, we were not disappointed with the 'ride'.

Wayne gave us comprehensive information from the extensive research he has conducted in conjunction with his colleagues, students and local landholders, some of them no longer with us. Research has been both on the ground and from delving into archives.

Geomorphologists like Wayne are excited by the information provided by flood events. The river corridor changes for many reasons and these have fuelled his research. 'Erosion happens in pockets in the most sensitive parts of the landscape'. There was a different history for each section of the Brook with surveys, photographs and data about Fernances Creek, upper Wollombi Brook (above Wollombi), Dairy Arm, Blaxland's Arm, Milson's Arm, Yango Creek, Watagan Creek and Congewai Creek. The most obvious changes are when channels are deeply incised by the fast flowing waters, with the added problem of this sandy sediment being deposited downstream as a 'sand slug', as we see in the 'reach' between Dairy Arm and Laguna.



Wayne has more studies of the Brook planned, with a particular focus on the status of fish populations. The Brook should support over 20 species (17 native and 3 alien). Recent research has found only 15 species, with the alien *Gambusia* being the most abundant. Our local streams have been largely rated as having a fair or poor fish status. In a shallow, exposed sand filled river fish get sunburnt and are vulnerable to predators. Deep ponds with sunken logs, overhanging grasses, shrubs and trees are where fish will thrive.

Blaxland's Arm was once described as having a chain of Mullet holes; wouldn't that be nice! "Loss of the 'chain of ponds' and the creation of sand slugs are the 2 most important reasons for a poor fish community. There is a need for additional ecological and biological work on Australian Bass, Mullet, Galaxiids, Herring and Bullrout."

We are very grateful to Wayne for the depth of his presentation and look forward to collaborating with him in the future. We have recorded the presentation onto a DVD. Copies are available on request. Contact me on 4998 8415 or talumberi@bigpond.com

You can obtain brochures about native fish and how you can be a fish friendly farmer at the Landcare stall at Laguna Market (3rd Sunday each month).

For advice and assistance with your waterways projects contact the Hunter-Central Rivers CMA on 4930 1030 or hcr@cma.nsw.gov.au

Robyn Lamond

Our next meeting...

The Wollombi Landcare meeting on the 20th June will be at Bow Wow Creek Gorge. Please be there for a 10 AM start.

We will begin the day with a three hour tour of the gorge with the owners, Pam and Colin Fitzsimons. The walk will be at a leisurely pace with plenty of opportunities to look at the features of the gorge. You will need to wear sturdy covered shoes and be prepared for leeches/ It is also advisable to take a hat, water bottle, camera and binoculars.

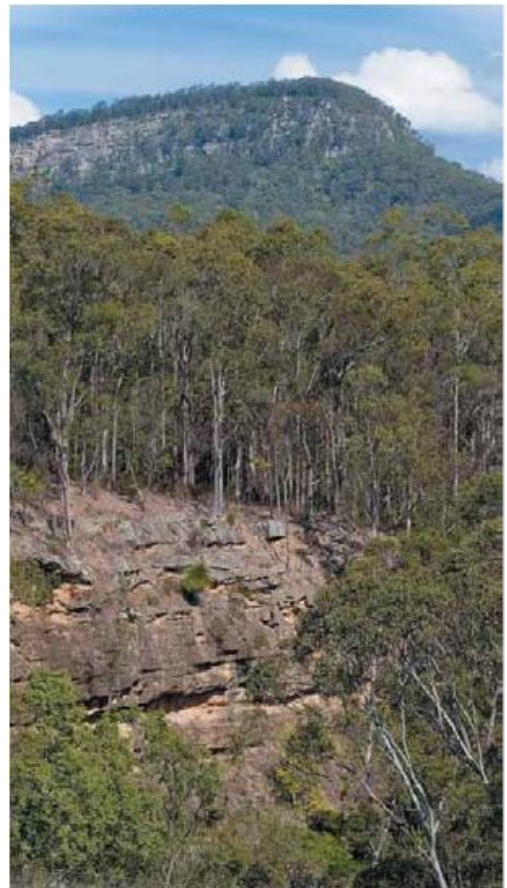
The gorge is a unique geological feature with many fossils, abundant bird life and its own distinctive subtropical rainforest. Colin works tirelessly to preserve the gorge in its natural state and at some stage we could go back to help him weed small lantana seedlings.

After the walk we will share lunch back at the Bow Wow Creek homestead. Please bring a plate of food to share as well as your own utensils.

The Bow Wow Creek property is at 444 Sandy Creek Road between Quorrobolong and Mulbring. Look out for signs on your left shortly after crossing the wooden bridge. Expect to take 35 minutes to drive there from Wollombi village via Millfield, Paxton and Ellalong.

Feel free to Ring Catherine Craig on 4998 3286 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



View looking across Bow Wow Creek Gorge to the Watagan Mountains.
Photo courtesy: Dept of Environment & Climate Change NSW

Assistance with purchasing plants

Landcare still has some money left over from a grant for improving the Wollombi Brook (and its tributaries). For those members of Landcare who cannot face the paperwork of applying to the CMA for a grant to plant along a watercourse we are offering a dollar for dollar assistance in buying local natives up to a maximum of \$200. The planting would need to be protected from stock (and possibly wallabies). It is now autumn, so now is the time to plan and plant through spring.

Local plants are available locally grown and advice on which species would be best to plant is also available.

If you need help planting, Landcare maybe able to assist with a planting team for a morning. We also have an auger for digging the deeper holes for long stems and Hamilton planters for tubestock.

If you're interested in doing some planting let us know.

Protecting our precious bushland

A former resident of Sydney, Jane Scott now relishes the rural life on her 410-hectare property north-west of Gloucester, where she runs 80 head of beef cattle. The property includes a large forested area that forms part of an important wildlife corridor from the World Heritage Barrington Tops through to Woko National Park.

Jane recently applied to the Hunter-Central Rivers CMA for a Property Vegetation Plan (PVP) to set aside two thirds of her property for conservation, ensuring it will be protected forever from clearing or degradation.

Her application was successful, which means Jane will receive a cash incentive to protect the area from threats and impacts, such as livestock, weeds, pests and fire. She also plans to use some of the funds from the PVP to improve the productive area of her property.

PVPs have proven to be an attractive option for primary producers as a viable alternative to logging and grazing. According to CMA vegetation officer Andrew Paget, the number of people bidding for Incentive PVPs has increased from 8-10 in a year, to about 40 in the Lower North Coast alone.

A critical step in the process of applying for an Incentive PVP is having the native vegetation assessed by a qualified CMA staff member. As it is a competitive process, there are no guarantees of success, but the bids that represent the best value for money and deliver the best environmental outcomes, have a good chance. For more information on Incentive PVPs contact the CMA on 4930 1030.

Extract from the Hunter Central Rivers CMA February Edition of Catchment News

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

Recommending rural suppliers

Constructing fences, planting trees, and installing water supply systems are some of the more common activities being undertaken by rural landholders in our region, and with around \$3.5 million of CMA investment going into on-ground projects in the 2008-09 financial year, the need to be able to provide clients with reliable advice and reasonably priced materials is a big priority for the CMA.

Since 2005, the CMA has provided clients of its grants programs with a list of suppliers who are able to offer high quality, cost-effective, provenance tubestock for revegetation projects. The CMA has now extended this approach to suppliers of stock watering and fencing materials.

The preferred suppliers list, which is available on the CMA website, includes 20 suppliers from across the Hunter-Central Rivers region that can provide CMA clients with a range of products at predominantly discounted prices. Most suppliers offer additional services and will be demonstrating the proper installation of their products at future CMA training events, field days and workshops. For more information go to the [CMA website](#) or contact the CMA office, ph 4930 1030

Extract from the Hunter Central Rivers CMA February Edition of Catchment News

Good for horses, good for the land

According to respected horse expert Jane Myers, there are many simple changes horse owners can make to improve the health of their horses and their environment. These were shared with participants in the Central Coast at a series of workshops in December, coordinated by the CMA and presented by Jane Myers.

The workshops and field day provided participants with a wealth of practical and cost-effective options for improving the way they manage their horses and horse properties. For example, dung beetles can help minimise manure loads in paddocks, reducing the risk of worm infestation to horses, while also limiting nutrient run-off into local waterways; planting native trees and shrubs along fence lines provides shade and shelter for horses while also creating valuable habitat for native animals; and designing paddocks to encourage movement can reduce the soil erosion and compaction that result from fence walking.

If you'd like to attend future workshops or find out more about improved management of your property contact the CMA Gosford office on 4324 3844 or for horse management tips visit Jane Myers' website www.equiculture.com.au.

Extract from the Hunter Central Rivers CMA February Edition of Catchment News

Dates for your diary

- Saturday 18 Apr Landcare Meeting & AGM. A visit to Bill & Betty Hicks' property on Watagan Creek
- Sunday 19 Apr Landcare Stall at Laguna Markets 9:30am to 1:00pm
- Friday 1 May to Tocal Field Days at Tocal 9:00am to 5:00pm
- Sunday 3 May
- Sunday 17 May Landcare Stall at Laguna Markets 9:30am to 1:00pm
- Staurday 30 May Hunter Region Landcare Network Forum and Muster - Phone 4934 8110 for details.

Tocal Field Days

Informative, engaging and great value
1, 2 and 3 May 2009, 9am to 5pm.

The Tocal Field Days are held in the grounds of the Tocal Agricultural Centre (follow the signs from Maitland along the Paterson/Dungog road. Cross the Hunter River at Lorn, and continue towards Paterson. Tocal Agricultural Centre is 14 km north of Maitland.

2009 promises to be a big year, with plenty of new things in the works as well as the popular regulars. Burning haystacks, fences under construction, handling cattle on foot, horse, quad bike and with dog, and piglets racing are some of the features of 2009.

What's on?

Whether its solar products, farm equipment and machinery, expert agricultural advice or entertainment you're seeking, use the 'What's On' program at www.tocalfielddays.com or buy *The Land* newspaper for the free Guide Book insert.

Check on arrival at an Information Booth for any daily updates on talks, demonstrations and times.

Can't Walk Far?

Free shuttle buses will pick up visitors from the car park and drop them inside the site. Free people movers loop continuously around the site from Nash Park past the Commercial sector to the Skills Centre (working dogs, cattle and horse handling, livestock breeds and animal nursery).

Tocal is a must for anyone setting up or already established on the land. Whether you are seeking information or planning to buy a plant for the garden, a new shed, tank or a new tractor - the special Field Day prices are for you.

One thing that hasn't changed is the price, enjoy the Tocal Field Days at 2008 prices



Environmental Defender's Office New South Wales

The Environmental Defender's Office Ltd (EDO) is a not-for-profit community legal centre specialising in public interest environmental law. We help individuals and community groups who are working to protect the natural and built environment.

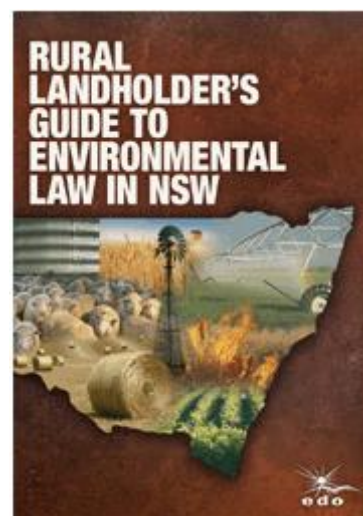


In addition to providing legal advice, the EDO responds to numerous other requests for information, such as EDO publications and workshops.

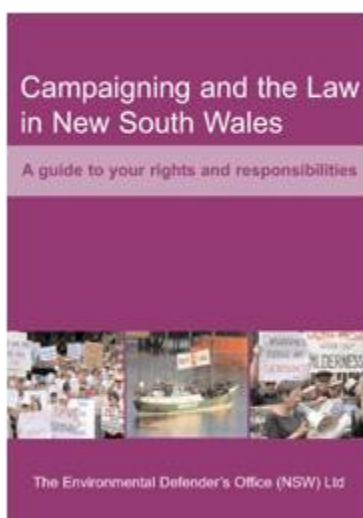
New editions of two invaluable EDO publications are now FREE to download from the EDO website.

The new edition of the *Rural Landholder's Guide to Environmental Law in NSW*, a publication last produced by the EDO in 2006, is now available FREE including postage and handling, as well as online.

The guide is a valuable tool in understanding the law in NSW regarding land management and explains legislation dealing with issues such as vegetation management, protected species, fire management, water management, construction and development, pollution, agricultural chemicals, crops and stock, mining and quarrying, heritage protection, conservation on private land and trading and offsetting agreements.



To obtain your FREE copy of the guide please email education@edo.org.au or call (02) 9262 6989. Boxes of 160 are also available on request for groups or organisations or download a copy at: www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/publications.php



Campaigning and the Law in New South Wales: A guide to your rights and responsibilities has now also been made available on-line on our website. This plain English guide is an essential companion for those interested in learning about their legal rights to protest, and how to make informed decisions when participating in protest and campaign actions. Limited hard copies are available FREE on request.

To access the guide on-line, visit <http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/publications.php#campaign>

Back copies

Back copies of previous issues of the Wollombi Valley Landcare newsletter are now available on the Wollombi Valley Online website at <http://wollombi.nsw.au> by clicking on Local News, selecting News Archive and scrolling down through the listing for the newsletter you want - they are listed in chronological order.

Thank you for taking part in Earth Hour 2009

To all those in the Wollombi Valley who took part in Earth Hour, and on behalf of everyone at WWF, we'd like to say a big, big THANK YOU to all who took part in Earth Hour 2009. Because of you it was the biggest Earth Hour ever. You were joined by millions of others in almost 4000 towns and cities across 88 countries. People who switched off their lights and demonstrated their concern at how our climate is changing.

It was an amazing night. We couldn't have done it without you

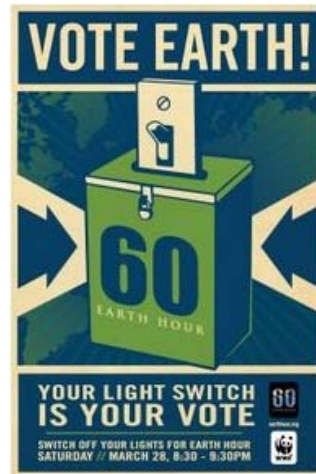
How did we go?

- Around 55% (309) of Australia's local councils committed to Earth Hour
- All Australian capital cities participated in Earth Hour.
- 99 of the ASX100 companies registered their participation
- Australia's major icons switched off: the Opera House and Harbour Bridge (Sydney), St Kilda's Luna Park and Flinders Street Station (Melbourne), Story Bridge (Brisbane), Parliament House (Canberra), WA War Memorial (Perth), Rundle Mall Lantern (Adelaide).

Here are a few amazing statistics of Earth Hour 2009 globally

- 3929 cities, towns and municipalities in 88 countries across 25 time zones participated
- 70 national capital city's participated
- Some 996 global landmarks from mountains to historic buildings and modern architectural landmarks had officially registered to participate in the event. They include: the Pyramids and the Sphinx (Egypt), Eiffel Tower (France), Vatican (Italy), Acropolis (Greece), Big Ben (UK), the Las Vegas Strip and Empire State Building (USA), Christ the Redeemer (Brazil), Bird's Nest (China) and the Petronas Twin Towers (Malaysia).

Again a big thank you to everyone! However our work isn't done yet.



Sustainability & energy saving tips:

Star ratings now applicable to new televisions.

Energy star ratings on televisions, announced by Environment Minister Peter Garrett on December 14, 2008, will now start to appear on televisions for sale on shop room floors to allow consumers to choose a more energy efficient appliance.

One in four Australians buys a new television each year and televisions are now the fourth largest user of electricity in our homes after water heating, domestic refrigeration and lighting. A large wide-screen TV can use the same energy as a medium-sized fridge each day.

The more stars, the more efficient the product – a three star TV for example uses 20 per cent less energy than a two star product of the same size. Choose the TV that meets your needs. And remember: the smaller the TV the less energy it uses.

Voluntary labelling of televisions is the first step to reducing the carbon emissions generated by televisions. This program will transition into mandatory labelling in 2009. Minimum energy performance standards for new TVs are targeted to come into effect on 1 October 2009.

For more information, visit <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/garrett/2008/index.html>