



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for October 2009



Wallaroos, wallabies and the other mammals of the Wollombi Valley - How to Recognise the Mammals of our Area

Jeff Betteridge, the NPWS Ranger for our area will give a presentation at the next Landcare meeting to be held at 2:00 pm on Saturday 17th October at Wollombi Hall

We would all like to be able to recognise the wallabies (or was that a kangaroo?), wallaroos and smaller hopping animals that wander or dash about the roads and our properties at night.

Could that have been a Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby skulking in the rocks?

In the trees, there are a variety of possums and gliders that are known to occur here but are rarely seen. From the miniscule pygmy possum up through sugar gliders and ringtails to our better known brushtail and even on occasion yellow bellied gliders we have a rich variety of nocturnal climbing mammals. There are koalas in the area, more often heard than seen and the closely related wombats (both very easy to recognise if actually seen). There are also a variety of other smaller native ground animals: bandicoots, antechinus, quolls, etc.

Finally there are the rats and mice. This is a tricky area because it is difficult to distinguish the several species of native rodents in and around our houses from the two introduced pests. How do you tell them apart?

We have asked Jeff Betteridge, the NPWS Ranger for our area to come and give us a talk with illustrations on our mammals and teach us how to recognise both the animals when glimpsed and some of the signs of their presence: claw marks, scats, tracks, etc.

Questions welcome. Tea and coffee provided as usual.

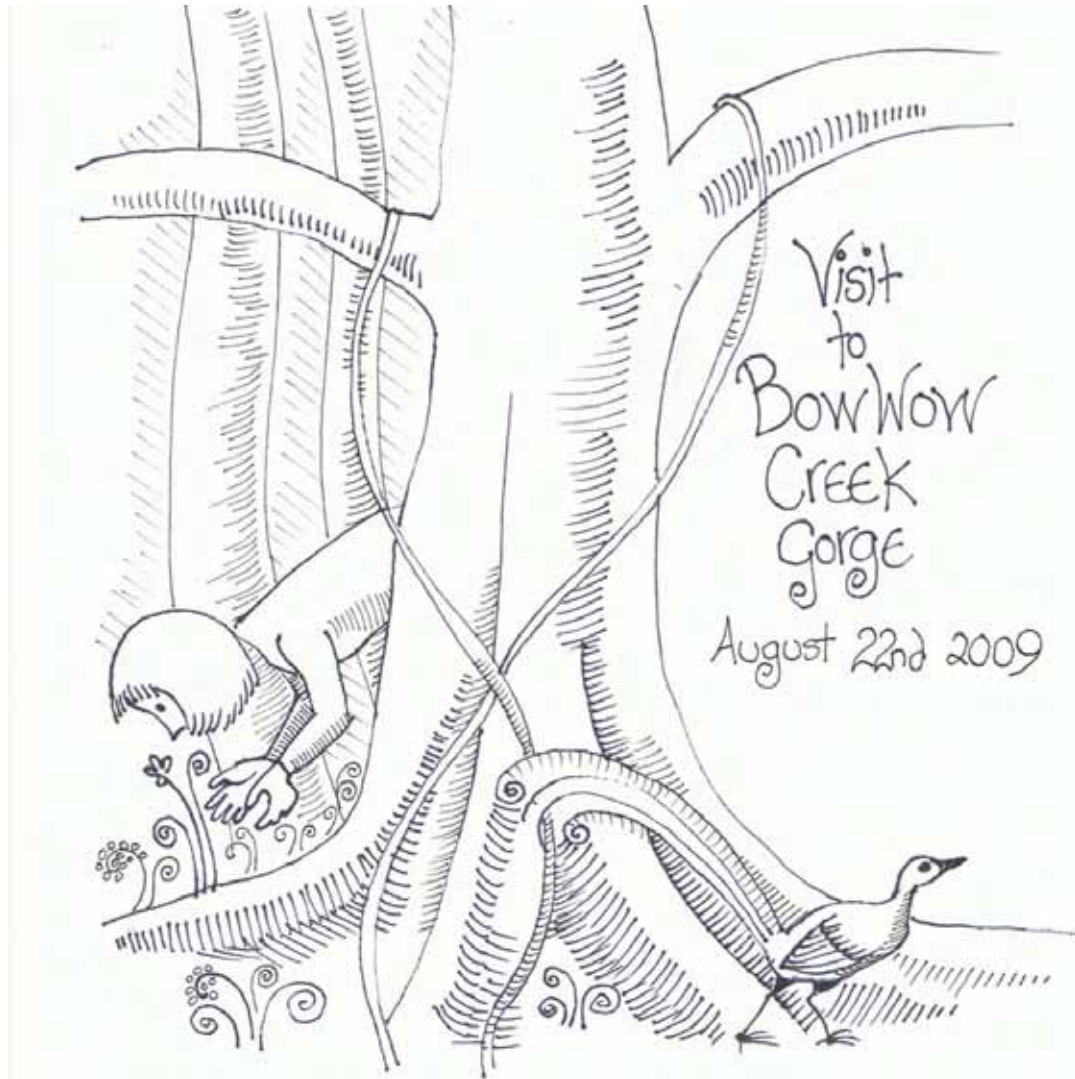
Looking forward to seeing you there.

Jane Mowatt (4998 8158)

Everyone is welcome.



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.



Visit
to
Bow Wow
Creek
Gorge

August 22nd 2009

Eleven intrepid Landcare folk joined Pam and Colin Fitzsimmons for an inspirational walk around their gorge. There were ancient fossils, unusual plants, a colossal brush turkey nest and much fun was had by all criss crossing the creeks and scrambling around rock ledges. The Gorge is a monument to the dedicated hard work that the Fitzsimmons' have put into the clearing of weeds and restoring the gorge to its pre European settlement state.

Thankyou to Pam and Colin for your generosity.
Catherine Craig

Plant Propagation Workshop

Evelyn Bloom hosted another very successful cuttings workshop this month. A fully booked event, we all went home with a collection of semi hardwood cuttings from a variety of native bushes growing well locally:

Prostanthera, Correa, Eriostemon, Calothamnus, Calytrix, Dodonaea, Leptospernum, Melaleuca and Baeckea.

As an interesting addition to the morning we were shown how to divide Dendrobium orchids by Shelagh Briggs, how to grow ferns from their spores and given some hints on germinating native plants from seed - including a demonstration of another method of "smoking" them.

All in all a very useful and productive workshop. In thanks, for all her expense and trouble, we have agreed to enrol Evelyn as a Landcare member, waiving the membership fee for every year she runs a workshop for us.

The next cuttings workshop will be September next year and we will try and avoid the day before the Laguna Market.

Let Evelyn know if you are interested (49983316)

Jane Mowatt

Join the Landcare Committee

Welcome to our new treasurer, Louise Hicks!

The current committee comprises

President	Jane Mowatt	4998 8158	j.mowatt@bigpond.com
Vice President	Catherine Craig	4998 3236	
Secretary(& Public Officer)	Robyn Lamond	4998 8415 0419 800896	talumberi@bigpond.com
Treasurer(& Membership Database)	Louise Hicks	8901 0366 0419 919078 4998 8660	louisehicks@bigpond.com
Minutes Secretary	Lesley Williams	4998 8205	g.l.williams@inet.net.au
Information Coordinator	Graham Taylor	9981 6317 0412 034978 4998 3326	graham.taylor@tech@gmail.com

We now have all office bearer positions filled, but would still like there to be several general committee members to help inject some fresh ideas from new faces. Being on the committee is really not onerous and helps to 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.

Are you into Dung Beetles?

As a property owner with cattle or horses you should be. But why do we need Dung Beetles?

Dung Beetle activity helps in:

- Reducing nutrient run off into dams, streams and waterways.
- Reducing Algal blooms in waterways.
- Increasing water infiltration into soil.
- Increasing soil fertility.
- Burying dung and thus nutrients into plant root zone.
- Reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Reducing pasture fouling.
- Tunneling activity of beetles aerates soil.
- Rapid burial of dung pads removes fly breeding habitat and reduces water content in the dung so that larval incubation does not occur.
- Reducing bushfly and buffalo fly numbers.
- Reducing parasite loads on livestock.



Dung Beetles can perform all these tasks, but how do you know if you have got any silently working away on your property? There are some outward signs to look for also such as soil castes on the dung pad and rapid disintegration of dung pads also suggests dung beetle activity.

There are many different kinds of dung beetles and not all are suited to our location and climate. But help is at hand as Landcare Australia has developed an online dung beetle identification tool to help land managers to understand what dung beetles, if any exist on their land. Go to <http://www.landcareonline.com/page.asp?pID=132>

It is important that all dung pads are approached quickly and quietly. Dung Beetles are very sensitive to vibration and will quickly bury themselves if they sense someone approaching. Select pads that are 1-2 days old with cracks in the crust as these pads will be old enough to have enabled beetles to establish.

Slide a spade or shovel under the dung pad where the dung meets the ground. You should try to take the entire dung pad with about two or three centimetres of soil from underneath it. This should be done very quickly so that the beetles do not have a chance to escape underground. Transfer the dung and dirt to a clean bucket. Place only one pad in each bucket to avoid overfilling. Fill the buckets with water and stir well to break up the dung and soil. The beetles will float to the surface. Using a sieve pick these out. Repeat the process of stirring and sieving until no more beetles are found.

While handling beetles be careful that they don't fly away!

If you don't find any beetles it is worth considering a few reasons why before trying to purchase some. Here are some common reasons for beetles not being present:

- Weather conditions - if you have had particularly cold or dry conditions beetle activity may not occur. You should wait for rainfall and try again.
- Changed management practices. If you have only had the property for a short time and it has not previously been stocked it may take time for beetles to fly to you. They fly on average 4 kms per year.
- Parasiticide use - some animal health products can be lethal to dung beetles
- Property size - smaller acreages are at the mercy of the neighbours. You may use a dung beetle friendly product but beetles fly.

Low stock numbers - if there are large numbers of beetles they will find even the smallest amount of dung. However, they are looking for a supply which is large enough to feed and breed in. If you regularly collect the dung they will look elsewhere for a source of fresh dung.

And if all else fails you can buy some dung beetles! The Landcare Australia website www.landcareaustralia.com.au contains details of where you can buy them along with listings of online information resources and dung beetle websites, e.g.

National Dung beetle website: www.dungbeetle.com.au

CSIRO Dung Beetle Project: www.csiro.au/solutions/DungBeetles.html

Article extracted from Landcare Australia website

Landcare library – books available to members on loan

Landcare has bought a further two books for our library that will help identify mammals.

"Tracks, Scats and other Traces. A Field Guide to Australian Mammals", Revised Ed. 2004 and Cronin's "Guide to Australian Mammals". Both books will be available at the next meeting and at our stall at the Laguna Market.

Wollombi Valley Annual Residents Survey

Although titled a 'Residents' Survey, this survey being conducted by the Wollombi Valley Chamber of Commerce is applicable to all landholders whether you live in the Wollombi Valley full time or part time.

This is the first Annual Resident's Survey to be conducted by the Chamber with the support of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development and the Hunter Valley Research Foundation, with the aim to gain a greater understanding of community views and to help identify opportunities for improvement to make Wollombi Valley an even better place to live and work.

Survey forms can be downloaded from <http://wollombi.nsw.au/news/display/538>. The survey comprises two (2) pages of mostly filling in boxes or circling options so won't take long to complete. Sandy Thomas is the author of the survey and is hoping for a large response, so why not complete the form to indicate what is important and needed in the valley. The form does not require you to identify yourself.

Completed forms can be lodged in the black boxes at the Wollombi and Millfield General Stores and the Laguna Wine Bar or posted to the Wollombi Valley Chamber of Commerce, c/o The Wollombi General Store, Wollombi NSW 2325 **by 15 October 2009. by October 15.**

The survey results will be presented to the community at the [November Wollombi Progress Association meeting](#).

Other news of interest

Star ratings now applicable to new televisions for purchase
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>

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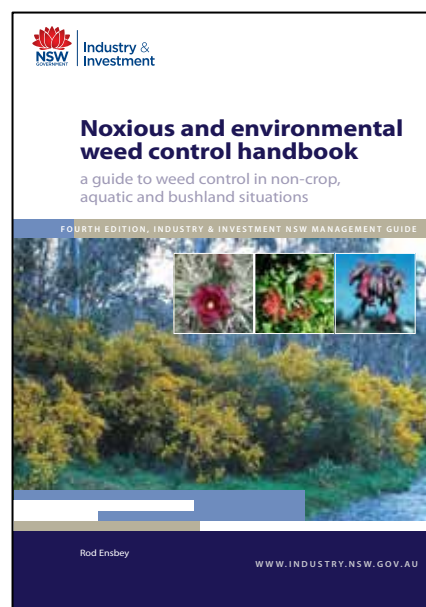
A new weeds publication

Weeds remain as a constant issue for all property owners. For some it is a concern that the presence or encroachment of weeds is effecting their efforts to undertake agricultural activities, while for others it is simple a desire to rid their land of noxious and environment weeds.

The NSW Department of Industry & Environment has recently issued the 4th edition of their weed control handbook, a guide to weed control in non-crop, aquatic and bushland situations by Rod Ensbey. While not advocating the wholesale use of herbicides and pesticides, this 88 page handbook contains a wealth of practical information on a vast range of weeds, some of which you will be ware of and others that you will be glad you do not have. There is also reference to some of the more traditional methods of weed control, e.g. flame, hot water, goats, slashing, mulching and fire.

The use of herbicides and pesticides can be harmful to you as well as the weeds, so great care needs to be exercised in their use. This handbook addresses those important health and safety aspects and instances where a licence is required to use certain products.

This handbook is available as a free 2 Mb download from the NSW Department of Primary Industry website at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture> website



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.

Pasture Topdressing Field Day

Tocal Dairy
Friday 23 October 2009
9.30am for 10am start
FREE

Industry & Investment NSW (Primary Industries) is conducting 2 pasture fertiliser topdressing trials at the Tocal Dairy with support from the Hunter Dairy Development Group and 5 commercial suppliers.

These topdressing trials compare 4 different types of urea at several rates, Progibb (growth promotant), several TNN products, Liquid Blood and Bone, Twin N (biological) and poultry litter.

Program:

- Welcome
- Why topdress pastures : what do cattle need?
- What fertilisers to use : introduction to soil testing & nutrient budgets
- Overview of products used in trials (company reps)
- Inspect trials and review yield and feed quality results

Lunch provided

For further information and to book in to field day please phone Industry & Investment (DPI) Advisory Office, Tocal on 4939 8940

RSVP appreciated to help planning but not essential.

Wollombi Brook catchment

(part of the Hunter catchment)

Catchment Area:

The Wollombi Brook sub-catchment is situated in the south of the Hunter catchment. Wollombi Brook flows from Paxton and Millfield in the south to join the Hunter River near Warkworth. The catchment is bounded by the Myall Range on the south-east (Wattagan National Park and the Corrabare State Forest), Doyles Range to the west, the Hunter Range to the south-west and Broken Back Range to the north-east. A number of tributaries feed into Wollombi Brook including Congewai Creek in the south of the catchment, Wattagan Creek and Yango Creek at Wollombi, and Cedar Creek and Parsons Creek further north. Cessnock City Council and Singleton Shire Council are the local government areas administering the Wollombi Brook catchment.

Population:

Wollombi Brook is home to approximately 9000 people, with the towns of Wollombi and Broke being population centres for the catchment.

Rainfall:

The average annual rainfall is from 600 mm to over 1400 mm closer to the coast.

Geology:

The geological features of the catchment are triassic narabeen sandstone, late permian sediments, and early permian marine sediments. The triassic sandstone has formed a thick layer over the coal measures in the catchment, forming a plateau with heavily dissected tributary valleys. The permian rocks consist of conglomerate, sandstone, shale and coal. This softer rock sequence has been eroded to form the main corridor of the broad Hunter River valley. The permian rocks are derived from ancient marine sediments and therefore contain salt. As a consequence, many of the streams that occupy the central valley floor are naturally high in salinity.

Soils:

The soils of the Wollombi Brook Catchment are predominately sandy and of moderate erodibility.

Land use:

The dominant non-agricultural land uses include urban, rural residential, coal mining and industry. The major agricultural industries include table and wine grapes, fruit, beef, dairying and poultry production.

Vegetation:

The Wollombi catchment originates in the species-rich sandstone areas of the Hunter's southern reaches. These forests are dominated by a wide variety of eucalypt and acacia communities. Common species include grey gum (*E. punctata*), stringy bark (*E. sparsifolia*) on the slopes, mountain bluegum (*E. deanei*) in the protected valleys, yellow bloodwood (*E. eximia*) on the ridges, and cabbage gum (*E. amplifolia*) on the floodplain. Scattered river red gum (*E. camaldulensis*) remain along the lower reaches of Wollombi Brook. Pockets of dry rainforest dominated by grey myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*) occur in narrow protected gullies. The lower reaches of the catchment are surrounded by a fragmented agricultural landscape, where river oaks (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) forms a common creek-line community.

Community involvement:

Landcare groups are active throughout the catchment.

For more information contact:

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