



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for January 2010



Growing veggies in Wollombi **Landcare meeting Saturday 20th** **February 2010 at 4:00pm**

Our hosts for our next meeting will be Nick & Linda Lycos, on their property at 1061 Watagan Creek Road, Laguna.

(Just past the Laguna Wine Bar, turn down Watagan Creek Road and proceed for 10 kms. The Landcare signs will guide you.)

Are you someone who aspires to grow your own vegetables in that little plot of land near your house, but all you have managed so far is to feed the local wildlife and nourish a crop of weeds?



Have you been reading the books and magazines and watched the gardening shows on the telly become even more confused? Then here is an opportunity to visit Nick & Linda's property, marvel at their vegetable garden and ask Nick how he does it season after season, year after year.

And if, after you have studied Nick's techniques and asked all your questions, there is any time left, we can take a walk along the banks of the Watagan Creek and hear and see what Nick has done to preserve the streambanks.

We suggest you wear sturdy shoes, trousers and a hat for the walk. A notebook, pencil and a folding chair might also be useful. 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.

Our last meeting – A visit to Shelagh and John Brigg's property "Injasuti" for the 2009 Christmas Meeting

Once again, on visiting this property I was impressed by the vast amount of work that has been carried out to replace the extensive *Lantana* infestation with two diverse communities of native species.



Removal of the *Lantana* invading up the gully side onto the ridge line has allowed the natural Dry Sclerophyll Forest of Spotted Gums and Stringybarks to regenerate and extend down the slope.

The clearing of *Lantana* is also occurring down the other slope on the house side where there is very little remaining of the native vegetation community. The cleared areas are extending gradually on several fronts down the hill, with this slope almost clear and providing access to the gully and lowest portions of the other side.

In the gully, and on the slopes near the house an intensive planting of rainforest trees has struggled with the heavy wallaby predation, drought and heat waves. Shelagh has fought back with a range of fencing options which has now evolved into individual cages for each tree planted, shading of new plantings in summer and watering by hose. All very labour intensive but experience over time and plantings has shown the extra effort is necessary for the young trees to survive.

Our more intrepid members follow Shelagh down into the gully while others admired the new plantings of rainforest species under the shade of the *Acacia* stand near the house.



One index of the success of the regeneration is when native plants begin to colonise the cleared areas naturally. Several native species of trees, e.g. *Alphitonia excelsa*, the Red Ash, are now into the second generation but still require assistance to compete successfully with the *Lantana*.



After our tour, we settled down on the patio with an impressive selection of food and drink to enjoy the sunset and catch up with other news. Our particular thanks go to Shelagh for the provision of copious quantities of chilled Sangria that were very welcome indeed at the end of such a hot day.

It was also the last meeting attended by Robyn and Stewart Lamond. Robyn has been an active and enthusiastic Landcare committee member since 1997, as President and then Secretary. So in recognition of her contribution, the committee awarded her life membership and as a token of our appreciation presented her with a Wollemi Pine to plant at her new property near Nabic.

Our thanks to Shelagh and John for a very pleasant venue for our Christmas Meeting and an interesting update on the progress of the *Lantana* battle and the progress being made at their property, "Injasuti".

Jane Mowatt

Fox Shooting Program in November 2009

In 2008 Wollombi Valley Landcare Group allocated substantial funds (\$3500), to an initial fox control program with the intention of encouraging regular eradication programs each year, once a viable method is identified. 1080 ground baiting was recommended to us by the NSW Department of Environment as they have found it effective in many regions of NSW, including urban areas. We assembled a list of landholders willing to allow 1080 baiting and had engaged land management specialists to undertake the baiting program. At the last minute, in winter 2009, we were unable to proceed with that scheduled program due to a new ruling on distances of baits from habitations by our new Livestock Health and Pest Authority at Cumberland. So we then arranged a trial shooting program for those landholders who had already committed to the fox control program.

We engaged a specialised control company, Hunter Reptile & Vermin Control, offering small teams of shooters to work on groups of properties in the Laguna and Wollombi areas. A fox survey was done and they advised giving it a try in late November. This attempt at fox control was not as successful as we had hoped. Over a couple of weeks the teams came on 2 night stints working through the night. Cage traps were also set. Some of the hunt is in vehicles and on foot at other times, using red beams to limit the animal awareness of their presence. It is only possible to cover a large area if vehicles can get access. Only 6 foxes were shot, 4 at Laguna and 2 at Wollombi, some of them along roads (which these shooters have a permit to do). They saw plenty of rabbits as well so shot those while they were there. The main factor for the low success rate is probably the time of year. Early summer will not be as good as autumn-winter when the foxes are dispersing to mate.

The shooters were disappointed with the low number of foxes killed as well. They are keen to help local landholders control these pests and are happy to return to the valley to shoot foxes and rabbits at no extra charge for the moment. They may want to camp on some properties or use cabins where available. Also it will be far easier for them to work in our area if as many landholders as possible commit to allowing them access, especially groups of neighbouring properties. Wollombi Valley Landcare can assemble a larger contact list and take advantage of this cooperative approach from the shooters. Email contact will be easiest to notify landholders when the shooters are coming. The shooters will then work from the list of interested properties, making contact where necessary.

There is concern expressed by some that if we kill the foxes, the populations of rabbits will grow even more. Professional advice suggests that the fox diet is so varied it will make little difference to the rate at which rabbits breed. So for the protection of your ground cover, watercourses and biodiversity it is critical to have an effective rabbit control program as well.

If you would like to be part of a future fox (and rabbit) control program to restore some balance in our natural areas and give our native wildlife a better chance of survival, please contact Wollombi Valley Landcare Group, c/o Wollombi Store or

wollombi.landcare@gmail.com with all these details:

Your name / contact phone numbers / email address / property address / Lot & DP.

The European Red Fox preys on frogs, lizards, small mammals (such as bandicoots) and ground dwelling and feeding birds (lyrebirds and wrens) as well as domestic animals and livestock like chickens, ducks, geese and their eggs and lambs and calves. Fruits and insects (even dung beetles) are also part of their varied diet. Foxes will travel several kilometres in search of food and typically will collect 3 times as much food as they need, burying it for lean times. They therefore contribute greatly to wildlife and stock loss as well as the spread of weeds. Foxes also spread diseases like sarcoptic mange that is infecting our Wombats. Predation by the European red fox was declared a key threatening process across NSW in 1998 by the NSW Scientific Committee. They have been identified as a primary threat to about 40 threatened native species including locally, the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby.

WANT TO HELP SUFFERING WOMBATS?

Do you have a resident wombat?

Is he/she suffering with mange (i.e. out during the day? blind? deaf? presents with visible hair loss with patchy scaly skin? whitish around the eyes?).

Mange will kill the wombat and only after a long period of suffering and extreme discomfort.

Think you know the location of your resident wombat's burrow and.....



WANT TO HELP?

The mite that causes mange can be killed. There is an easy, low cost method for the busy landowner or irregular weekender.

OUR EXPERIENCE. We tried for a few months to net or creep up on sick wombats to dribble some treatment – *Revolution*, *Ivomec* or *Cydectin* – on the back of the wombats' neck. We succeeded only in considerably improving our walking fitness! The one or two wombats we managed to treat presumably became a little better. It was then more difficult to get close enough to continue the treatment. Very frustrating!

We are now having some pleasing success with wombat burrow flaps – a self-treatment method. See pictures. The basic design is available from the *Wombat Protection Society* www.wombatprotection.org.au. We use either a plastic ice cream container lid or, better as it retains its shape in the hot sun and is less visible, a clear Perspex rectangle cut from sheets available from the local hardware store. The treatment is poured into a milk or OJ cap, which sits in the flap, and we have lately added our own feature – a plastic veranda to stop the treatment being diluted by rain.



If your resident wombat is suffering, the Society recommends weekly "treats" (now used as a noun, sorry readers - meaning refills) for 8 weeks followed by another 8 weeks of fortnightly treats. A "treat" is 1ml of *Ivomec* etc for every 10kg of wombat – we generally use 2-3 mls.



Ivomec is available from agricultural supply stores such as the store at Mangrove Mountain. The Society sometimes receives donations of *Cydectin* that they can post out with the flap design.

If you are unsure whether you have a suffering wombat, a recommended maintenance regime is a monthly treat (for a property owner wanting to prevent infestation) – either removing or retaining the flaps in place between treats.

Now, after 3 months, the sick wombats we were regularly seeing out during the day are not appearing. In the absence of any other information (such as a post card with a photo of a wombat sipping from a fruit cocktail on a sun lounge in a tropical setting) we have optimistically taken this as a good sign that their health is on the improve.

We now have 10 flaps in place in various locations around our valley, 3 on our own property and 7 on the properties of our kindly neighbours who are variously full time farmers, part time farmers and bush loving weekenders.

Author's note: The authors, though well meaning, are not experts nor are their methods very scientific. They keep a diary of their treats and they feel good about their efforts. However readers are referred to the *Wombat Protection Society's* website which contains some terrific information. In particular it will aid in determining the appropriate territory to treat. One wombat can have several burrows. Sick wombats also need a reliable supply of water.

Louise Hicks and Chris Jackson at *Wombat Valley*

What should we do next...? Have your say.

One of the ongoing challenges for the committee is to try and figure out what subjects and topics are of interest to you, our members. With a schedule of six meetings each year, usually on the 3rd Saturday in February, April, June, August and October and the 2nd Saturday in December we try to organise something that might be of interest – something you would like to learn about. Wherever possible we try and arrange the meeting at a venue or property appropriate to the topic. We also sometimes arrange workshops in addition to the regular bi-monthly meetings

Would you like us to organise a meeting on any of the following topics?

1. An introduction to property planning
2. A plant keying workshop
3. Conservation agreements on private property
4. Eucalypt ID workshop
5. The Land for Wildlife program
6. A visit to the Kooragang Wetlands and City Farm
7. Lavender farming
8. Active weed control
9. Fauna of the Wollombi Valley
10. Seed collection and propagation
11. Pastures for grazing
12. Streambank management
13. Establishing and protecting wetland remnants
14. Applying for funding assistance
15. Birds of the Wollombi Valley
16. Native vegetation communities in Wollombi Valley
17. A bush regeneration workshop
18. Land management issues
19. A planting workshop

Perhaps you have some ideas of your own? Either way, give one of the committee a call and let them know.

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

Why not join the Landcare Committee?

With the approach of our Annual General Meeting, to be held in conjunction with our April meeting, we are eager to add some new faces to the committee. Why not join the committee as a 'junior' member to see just what we do and hopefully you can take up a position as an office bearer at a later stage?

The current committee comprises

President	Jane Mowatt	4998 8158	janemowatt@activ8.net.au
Vice President	Catherine Craig	4998 3236	cicadahill@gmail.com
Secretary	Shelagh Brigg	4998 0092	injasuti@aapt.net.au
Treasurer Public Officer Membership Database	Louise Hicks	8901 0366 0419 919078 4998 8660	louisehicks@bigpond.com
Minutes Secretary	Lesley Williams	4998 8205	g.l.williams@iinet.net.au
Information Coordinator	Graham Taylor	9981 6317 0412 034978 4998 3326	graham.taylor@tech@gmail.com

As an existing member of Landcare we encourage you to get involved and participate in setting the future direction of our organisation. Please call any of the committee if you would like to give it a try.

'Just to the North'

We have successfully completed our move to the mid-north coast and are being kept very busy with a string of tasks to get the property sorted out. Now that the boundary fences are checked we'll have to get some cattle in as the grass is getting very thick with all the rain of late. We're enjoying the birds and animals that visit including the Eastern Rosella, Pied Butcherbird, Rufus Fantail, Eastern Grey Roo, Red-necked Wallaby and Pademelon. But the most fascinating is the call from what some knowledgeable Wollombi visitors think will be the Pheasant Coucal. When calling together they sound like a bunch of baboons. Our area name, Wang Wauk, could easily have been named after all that noise.

I have a spot planned for the Wollemi Pine, a very generous gift on our departure from Wollombi Valley Landcare. We have a dam to the south of the house that will also be the source of water for the cattle troughs. We'll be fencing off that dam and many others to keep the water clean. I think the slope down to it will be a good, protected spot for this 'living fossil', in view of the house.



We are enjoying impressive support from the CMA on soil health and sustainable grazing and can join a string of different landholder groups. We're hoping to start a Holistic Management course that starts locally in a few weeks. That will be very timely for us, being new to grazing. There is a great Landcare 'network' in the area, and we benefit from the activities in Great Lakes, Manning Valley and Gloucester so there is a string of things on each month.

It's great that Wollombi has been getting lots of rain too, greening it all up again. It was very brittle when we left in mid December. We enjoyed a 'Wollombi-like' event last weekend with a lunch at Harrington with 3 bush poets as part of a series of events called *Poets by the Sea*. Many things like this will remind us of our times in the Wollombi Valley.

We look forward to keeping in touch, *Robyn & Stewart Lamond*

Wollombi Landcare Planting Group

Our Landcare Group has members who are experienced in mass plantings of native trees and are prepared to assist landholders who need help when undertaking the daunting task of planting out up to several hundred trees and/or shrubs.

The protocol consists of a visit to the property by one of the team to see what the intended work consists of, and a checklist of things which the property owner has to undertake to prepare for the plantings, e.g. prepare the sites, slash grass, weeds for each plant, buy the plants (native, of course, and local, as much as possible) and rabbit guards and stakes, and arrange for things like availability of water at the planting site. The team arrives on the due date, there is a brief demonstration of techniques, and the planting goes ahead.

We are also asking for people who can volunteer to be part of the planting group - level of expertise is not an issue as on-the-job training can be supplied, and there are plenty of jobs on a planting day which require no experience whatever. The idea is to harness enthusiasm to help each other enhance our properties and improve the biodiversity of the valley in general.

If you want to get involved, either to make use of this offer of help, or are offering to help others, please contact:

Jane Mowatt on 4998 8158 or Shelagh Brigg on 4998 0092

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.

Contact details for members to arrange to borrow Landcare equipment

Wollombi Valley Landcare has a range of equipment etc that members can borrow. So if, as a member, you would like to borrow an item then please contact the relevant person.

Fox & Myna bird traps	Catherine Craig	4998 3236	"Cicada Hill" 34 Cedar St, Wollombi
Bush regeneration Equipment	Chris Jackson & Louise Hicks	4998 8660 / 0419 800896/ 0419 919078	250 Finchley Track, Laguna
Library books & DVDs	Jane Mowatt	4998 8158	387 Knights Rd, Laguna
Tree planting equipment	Loris & Lindsay Self	4998 8066	630 Yango Creek Rd, Wollombi

