



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for August 2010



Land for Wildlife

**Saturday 21st August 2010
at 2:00 pm**



*The next Landcare meeting will be held
at the Sue & Graham Taylor's property
"Belalla" at 224 Dry Arm Track.*



Many members will have seen the *Land for Wildlife* sign (above) and have wondered what it means. Others, perhaps may have attended a presentation given to Landcare by Amanda Bloom back in April 2006, and know a little of what *Land for Wildlife* is all about.

On this occasion Tony Wells, *Land for Wildlife* Regional Coordinator with the Community Environment Network (CEN), based at Ourimbah, has agreed to provide an update on *Land for Wildlife*, talk us through the Property Assessment he prepared for Sue & Graham, and then follow that with a walk through their property.

The *Land for Wildlife* program is a voluntary property registration scheme for landowners who wish to manage areas for biodiversity and wildlife habitat. *Land for Wildlife* encourages and assists landholders to include nature conservation along with other land management objectives. The program is free for landholders to join and is not legally binding.

Want to know more? Then come along to our meeting on Saturday 21st (after you have voted).

How to get there? Turn into Yango Creek Road at Wollombi (next to Slacks Park) and drive about 2.2 kms to the turn off on the right onto Dry Arm Track. Another 2 kms and turn right onto Moore's Road. The 50 metres over a little wooden bridge and through the gate and you are there. There will be Landcare signs to guide you.

After the presentation there will be a walk along part of the route taken by Tony Wells when he conducted the survey of the Taylor's property, so please wear suitable clothing and footwear.

For more information contact Graham Taylor 4998 3326 or Jane Mowatt 4998 8158

Looking forward to seeing you there.

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 on the topic of Bats attracted an enthusiastic audience of members and friends.

We had an extremely well attended and interesting meeting on Saturday afternoon, 19th June, when Jessie Grace and Kathy Davis travelled from Gosford to give us a talk on bats - both micro-bats and the so-called fruit-bats.

Some of our preconceived ideas were blown away - such as the myth that bats will fly into one's head and get tangled in one's hair. This simply does not happen. The other arresting piece of information is that the much-maligned fruit bats don't eat fruit from choice - it is a second-class form of nutrition for them. They are primarily nectar and pollen eaters, which supply them with both energy (sugar) in the form of nectar, and protein from the pollen. Fruit farmers who are in the know, plant native flowering and fruiting trees around their orchards and the bats leave the fruit alone. This was corroborated by Evelyn Bloom who reported that she watched the fruit bats eat every blossom from one of her callistemons while ignoring the fruit on the peach tree just next to it.



Flying foxes or fruit bats are important members of our native ecosystems and have an intrinsic right to exist. They are great pollinators and also spread seeds of native plants. Microbats eat night-flying insects - moths, mosquitoes, to mention just a few. A bat colony near the house will keep the population of mosquitoes down and Landcare has the plans for a microbat roost that can be easily built by landholders.

There are several types of flying fox in Australia - the grey-headed flying fox is the one seen locally and is the flying fox with the most southern range. The black flying fox, a northern species is now migrating south in increasing numbers. Nobody knows why. There are many species of microbats locally. They produce twins annually, while the fruit bat gives birth to a single pup.

We learned that both micro- and fruit-bats are vulnerable groups, mostly because of destruction of habitat. Fruit bats fly long distances - up to 50km - from their colony sites to food trees. Females carry their young for the first four weeks, and then return to colony sites during the night to feed them. This limits their foraging range and is often the time they will enter orchards to eat fruit rather than fly further from their young to seek out blossoming trees.

The Royal Botanical Gardens in Sydney have been attempting to relocate the colony of flying foxes that has lived there since the mid 1800s. This year has been hard on the bats - land clearing and loss of habitat coupled with regular rainfall that washes out nectar from flowers has led to a mass starvation in the species. The bats in the gardens have not been found to be robust enough to cope with relocation. Their adult weight ought to be 800-1000 grams. Many of the bats in the gardens were only about 600 grams. Jessie says is just a little over the weight of a healthy juvenile - basically the bats are starving, or close to it.

The problem of bat viruses and other diseases being passed on to humans was covered. Bats are known to carry antibodies to the Hendra virus. Horses are susceptible to Hendra virus and can pass it on to humans. There is however no identified transmission of the disease from bats to horses. A vaccine is in the research pipeline. A tiny percentage of bats are also carriers of Lyssa virus, which is in the rabies family of viruses. However, in Australia there are only two fatal cases of people catching these viruses from bats in 200 years - very rare occurrences. The rabies vaccine is effective against Lyssa virus.

The second problem with bats which most people are interested in is how to cope with discoveries of microbats inside houses. Kathy is willing to come and assess the situation and give advice on how to solve this problem - just phone her on 4384 6675, and she will travel from Terrigal to do so. She is an expert in finding their points of entry - she says that if you can insert a pencil into a gap - that is big enough for the bats to enter by.

Anyone finding a starving or injured bat can help them. For flying foxes, if possible wrap them in a towel and place them, head down, in a box. For microbats, pick up gently using tissues and place in an inside out pillowslip. Secure the bag so the bat can't get out and hang in safe, draught-free spot. Keep warm but not hot. If it isn't possible to do any of this without risking being scratched or bitten, then don't. Call for help! Don't water or feed them. Simply call Jessie (fruit bats) or Kathy (microbats) who will come and collect them. Handle them as little as possible - nobody wants to get bitten or scratched. Keep pets and noisy people/children away as they will stress the bats.

We are very grateful to these two wonderful people who have dedicated their lives to the protection and conservation of many animals, especially both types of bat, for inspiring us with their knowledge and enthusiasm for the only flying mammals in the world.

Remember when using their services that they would appreciate a donation towards their travel expenses. Their contact details are:



via Wildlife ARC on 4325 0666, Jessie Grace: (h) 4362 1274 (mob) 0407 921 274, Kathy Davis 4384 6675, or write to them c/o Wildlife ARC, P O Box 2308 Gosford, 2250

Shelagh Brigg

Our meeting in October...

Our meeting on Saturday 16th October will be a Bugwatch to check the health of the Wollombi Brook. You may have heard about the local schoolchildren undertaking such surveys and now it is your chance to get your hands wet.

The bug survey will be conducted by Ingrid Berthold, Catchment Officer - Waterwatch, Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority.

The survey will be taken at the Wollombi Public School site at the bottom of the steps looks so comparisons can be made with previous surveys by the school children. See last page for more details.

Future plans...

Although planning to have a presentation by David Edwards from the University of NSW on the geology and landforms of the Wollombi region at our August meeting didn't work out, it is still planned for a future meeting.

Trip to Mt Yengo

The response to the plan for a trip to Mt Yengo and through the Yengo National Park with Jeff Betteridge of NPWS as our guide met with a strong response with about 30 people "signing" up. The date has been fixed for Sunday 29th August with many who have suitable 4WD vehicles agreeing to 'car pool' with those that were keen to take the trip but didn't have a suitable vehicle.

Botanical Walk in September

Another Botanical Walk, conducted by local botanist Dr Jane Mowatt, has been organised for Saturday 25th September in Burralong Valley, Murray's Run.

Numbers are limited so please get in early! If interested please call Lesley Williams on 4998 8205 or Jane Mowatt on 4998 8158.

Those attending will meet at 293 Burralong Valley Road at 9.30am.

Coming from Wollombi turn left into Murray's Run Road, then turn left at the Burralong letterboxes into Causeway Drive. Cross the Causeway and turn right onto Burralong Valley Road. Follow the road up stream with the Brook on your right until you reach number 293. Drive to the house and park in the orchard.

Coffee and cake will be provided and Jane will give an introduction to the local flora. The walk is up a damp, south-facing slope looking at various microclimates to the ridgeline then down through typical Dry Sclerophyll landscape. Plants will be identified and some collected for plant ID during lunch.

BYO own lunch to have after the walk, tea and coffee supplied.

Please wear a hat and bring a water bottle. The walk is moderately steep so please wear suitable sturdy footwear

Lesley Williams

Plant propagation workshop

These workshops have proved popular in the past so we are running another one on Saturday 16th October from 10 AM to 1 PM at Wollombi House, 11 Canning Street, Wollombi. Numbers at the workshop are limited so please make a bookings by calling Evelyn Bloom on 4998 3316.

Bring a small sharp blade to take and prepare plant cuttings. Other materials required, including seed, will be provided.

Please note that this revised date of 16th October coincides with our regular Landcare meeting, but with the Propagation workshop finishing at 1 PM, there should be enough time for anyone wishing to attend the Landcare meeting to get there by 2 PM.

Desperately seeking *Salvinia*

A survey was carried out in July along the south arm of Wollombi Brook by CMA Officers and Cessnock Council Weeds Officers to assess the current spread of *Salvinia*. The officers walked along a 15 km stretch of the Brook, sometimes through dense, difficult ground, from Burrellong Valley to Watagan Creek Road Bridge.



Since 2005 a massive effort has been put in to monitor and contain the spread of *Salvinia* in the Brook, and while the situation appears to be manageable at the moment, continual vigilance will be required over the next few years to prevent another outbreak.

Salvinia molesta is a free floating aquatic fern native to Brazil that can double its size in just a few days, forming thick, impenetrable mats that make dams and waterways unusable for livestock, irrigation, and aquatic fauna. It grows best in low-flowing or still bodies of water and thrives when nutrient levels and temperatures are high.

Reducing fertiliser use and restricting cattle access to streambanks can help reduce nutrient loads in waterways and prevent the proliferation of aquatic weeds.

Salvinia is on the noxious weeds list, which means landholders are legally responsible for the control of the weed on their property. Unfortunately because *Salvinia* is an aquatic weed, a flood event can easily spread it from one property to a number of others, which makes it everyone's problem.

Early intervention is critical, so landholders in the Wollombi area are being encouraged to keep an eye out for the weed floating on dams or along Wollombi Brook. If you suspect you have *Salvinia* on your dam or waterway, contact the Senior Weeds Officer at Cessnock City Council on 4993 4370 immediately for verification and advice.

Report from HCR Catchment News – August issue

Our next meeting...

Our next meeting on Saturday 16th October will be a Bugwatch to check the health of the Wollombi Brook. You may have heard about the local schoolchildren undertaking such surveys and now it is your chance to get your hands wet.

The bug survey will be conducted by Ingrid Berthold, Catchment Officer - Waterwatch, Hunter-Central Rivers Waterwatch, Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority

The survey will be taken at the Wollombi Public School site at the bottom of the steps looks so comparisons can be made with previous surveys by the school children.

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

Climate change – No change...!!!

It is extremely disappointing that with less than two weeks until the federal election, neither of the major parties, Labor or the Coalition, is committing to any real action to address climate change.

Labor has abandoned their proposal for an ETS (carbon trading scheme) until 2015 – another 5 years away! They tried to introduce it previously but were defeated by the Coalition and also the Greens who wouldn't support Labor's proposed ETS when it came to the senate because it involved paying the big polluters billions of dollars in compensation.

Labor had a consensus to address climate change when they were elected in 2007, and recent polls suggest that up to 62% of Australians still support action being taken to address climate change, yet Labor are now promising a meeting, next year, of 150 'ordinary' people that will somehow reach a consensus! The voters are already convinced so what is this assembly for? Perhaps to convince the Labor politicians and give them courage to proceed?

Labor are offering to spend \$1 billion over the next 10 years to fund transmission lines to bring electricity from remote locations where solar, wind and thermal plants will be built to the consumers. But hang on, who is going to build these solar, wind and thermal when there is no ETS to create the financial incentives to build the plants in the first place? To put Labor's commitment into some sort of perspective, in 2006 China committed \$US660 billion to upgrade their grid. And last week there was a report in the *China Daily* from China's National Energy Administration's head of planning and development, that plans would be submitted to the State Council (China's cabinet) outlining renewable energy development plans to the value of 5 trillion yuan – or around \$US738 billion, that it is claimed will also reduce China's coal consumption by 7% in the next 5 years.

The leader of the Coalition reckons global warming is "crap", but to placate the electorate, is offering money to industry as an incentive to reduce their carbon footprint while enlisting an 'army' of 50,000 to plant trees. And some how this will reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to the 5% we committed to following Copenhagen - I don't think so.

There is no way that this modest reduction of 5% of 2000 greenhouse gas emissions levels by 2020 by Australia is achievable without a carbon trading scheme. The Australian Climate Institute www.climateinstitute.org.au is continually assessing the climate change policies of the major political parties. When I looked last week, they assessed that under Labor, pollution levels will increase 19% (or 121 million tonnes) above 1990 levels by 2020, while under the Coalition pollution levels will increase by 8% (by 46 million tonnes) by 2020. By way of contrast, the Greens policies will achieve a reduction of 25% or 137 million tonnes by 2020.

Since the Climate Conference in Copenhagen only 55 of the 193 countries that are signatories to the climate convention have committed to reduce their greenhouse emissions by 2020, however those 55 countries are responsible for 78% of global emissions!

Andrew Grant of CO2 Group Ltd explained, "*Carbon forestry, energy efficiency, improved power generator standards, combined cycle gas technology, renewable energy, improved agricultural practices – all offer here-and-now solutions. We must implement them at scale and with urgency. And to do this, a carbon price is fundamental.*

Prospective technologies such as carbon capture and storage, low emissions coal combustion and geosequestration are important, but in reality they're options for the future. They need further development before they can be considered viable in meeting Australia's emission reduction targets."

Last month the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in conjunction with the American Bureau of Meteorological Society issued their 224 page report "State of Climate in 2009" with the statement that the "*past decade was the warmest on record according to scientists in 48 countries.*" The planet-wide report "*draws on data for 10 key climate indicators that all point to the same finding: the scientific evidence that our world is warming is unmistakable. More than 300 scientists from 160 research groups in 48 countries contributed to the report, which confirms that the past decade was the*

warmest on record and that the Earth has been growing warmer over the last 50 years."

"The report emphasizes that human society has developed for thousands of years under one climatic state, and now a new set of climatic conditions are taking shape. These conditions are consistently warmer, and some areas are likely to see more extreme events like severe drought, torrential rain and violent storms." Right now areas of Russia are experiencing the worst drought in 100 years with vast bushfires burning uncontrolled causing extreme air pollution in Moscow and several hundred deaths. Closer to home the rains in Pakistan have caused massive flooding that has effected 13.8 million people and eclipsed the scale of the devastating 2004 Tsunami and the Haiti earthquake combined! Already 1,600 people have died and no doubt many more will before the floodwaters abate.

The report goes on to state *"Each of the last three decades has been much warmer than the decade before. At the time, the 1980s was the hottest decade on record. In the 1990s, every year was warmer than the average of the previous decade. The 2000s were warmer still."* The section of the report on Australia, commencing on page 180, is very interesting.

We are already experiencing sea-level rise, changes in growing seasons, changes in river flows, increases in heavy downpours, higher and more frequent extreme temperatures.

Australia needs a carbon trading scheme, and the sooner the better. The sooner one is introduced the sooner that industry can start implementing their projects to provide low carbon (not low cost), solutions that will serve us into the future.

The largest trading scheme is the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, and even the New Zealanders have started their own scheme, while China has said they will introduce their own scheme by 2015. Surely we can get our own scheme up and running if only Labor and the Greens worked together.

China has stated that they will reduce their carbon intensity by 40-45% below the 2005 by 2020. In addition, they have said they will introduce an ETS by 2015.

Meanwhile the Coalition is running a scare campaign that an ETS will be "a great big tax". Well yes, it will impact on our pockets but so will the alternative of doing nothing.

So here we are, with no progress on what is a critical issue that is going to affect everyone. Electricity prices are already going up not because of an ETS, but to fund the electricity generators and distributors who have failed to invest sufficient money into maintaining their plant and infrastructure in the past. When an ETS is finally introduced the electricity tariffs will rise further.

In the UK all three major political parties have recognised and support the need address climate change, that a hotter, drier world will significantly impact agriculture and living conditions, especially in many developing countries, leading to more food and water shortages and additional flooding.

They recognise that a coordinated approach is needed to adapt to the changes being caused by global warming which could cause displacement of populations, human suffering and consequent large additional flows of asylum seekers.

The excuse used by Australian politicians to defer action because we only generate 1.28 percent of global emissions doesn't stand up. The UK generates 1.84 percent and is committed to reducing their CO₂ emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

Global warming is not only a threat but also an opportunity for us to become 'green technology' experts and build a strong manufacturing industry.

So on Election Day I will be voting for the Greens. With the balance of power in the Senate they offer the only chance that something real will be done on this critical issue.

Graham Taylor

Do you know what small creatures are living in Wollombi Brook?



You are invited to check the health of the Wollombi Brook by doing a BUG SURVEY!



Date: Saturday 16th October 2010

Time: 2pm-3:30pm

Venue: Wollombi Brook, waterhole at bottom of stairs rock off Wollombi Rd, Wollombi (near Landcare planting & track).



Water bugs (or aquatic macroinvertebrates) are used as indicators of stream health. Different water bugs have different sensitivities to pollution and changes in water quality—from the *Very Sensitive* Mayfly nymph to a *Very Tolerant* mosquito larvae. By conducting a freshwater water bug survey, identifying the types of bugs present, and the sensitivity rating of the invertebrates we have caught, we can determine if the stream health is excellent, good, fair, or poor.

It will be short (1-1.5hr), and very enjoyable activity if you are keen to know more about the health of Wollombi Brook. It would be great if you could join us!

Please bring along gumboots or waders if you wish to use a dip net to collect the water bugs, as well as closed-toe shoes, sunscreen and hats for working in the outdoors. Equipment and identification sheets will be provided by Hunter-Central Rivers Waterwatch.

If you have any questions, please contact Hunter-Central Rivers Waterwatch Coordinator, Ingrid Berthold, on 4930 1030 or email Ingrid.Berthold@cma.nsw.gov.au

This is a demonstration session provided by Hunter-Central Rivers Waterwatch and the CMA.

