



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for October 2010



Waterwatch on the Wollombi Brook

Saturday 16th October 2010 at 2:00 pm

The next Landcare meeting will be held at the waterhole in the Wollombi Brook at the bottom of the stairs rock off the Wollombi-Cessnock Road in the village.

Car parking is sometimes limited, but you can also park at the end of Negro Street and walk along the track to the waterhole.

Ingrid Berthold, Waterwatch Co-ordinator at the Hunter–Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority will be there to guide us. So it will be an opportunity for the ‘grown-ups’ to learn what the school children have been doing with the Bugwatch program, and to find out for ourselves just how healthy, or otherwise, the Wollombi Brook is.

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. Hunter-Central Rivers Waterwatch will provide equipment and identification sheets.

After the Waterwatch survey tea and coffee will be available at the Wollombi Tennis Clubrooms where Su Morley, also from the CMA, is going to bring us up to date on efforts to rid our waterways of the dreaded Salvinia.

For more information contact Lesley Williams on 4998 8205 or Jane Mowatt on 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.



Water bug surveys

You mightn't have noticed them before but there are literally thousands of tiny creatures living in our lakes, creeks and rivers, and their presence can reveal a lot about the health of our catchments.



Water bugs (or aquatic macroinvertebrates), like all of us, need specific conditions to survive; some need clean water and are very sensitive to changes in water quality, while others are quite resilient.

The Mayfly Nymph, for example, is very sensitive to chemical pollution and low levels of oxygen in the water. They prefer sheltered shady spots in cool water bodies like streams and lakes and are a popular snack for freshwater fish, like trout.

At the other end of the spectrum are the mosquito larvae, which like stagnant waters. Often called 'wigglers', mosquito larvae hang upside down, suspended by the surface tension of the water, twisting and squirming as they suck oxygen from the air through snorkels in their tail.



Conducting a survey of water bugs in a particular stream can help determine whether a stream is in good or poor health. Water Bug Surveys are undertaken by registered Waterwatch groups every Autumn and Spring to assess the health of sites across NSW; but you don't have to be part of a Waterwatch group to get involved in a water bug survey, anyone can take part.

Salvinia: identification, survey, removal and correct disposal

Following the Waterwatch Survey and refreshed with a cup of tea or coffee at the Wollombi Tennis Clubrooms, Su Morley - Lower Hunter Community Support Officer Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority will provide an update on the infestation of Salvinia in our waterways.

Despite ongoing efforts, the rampant water weed Salvinia¹ continues to be a problem in the Wollombi Catchment: and as the weather warms up, growth of the floating waterweed may escalate again this summer. However it isn't inconceivable that *Salvinia* could be eradicated in the future, and with simple identification and survey skills, all landholders can play a role in preventing further outbreaks in the Brook this year.

To assess the extent of the problem, the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA), in cooperation with Cessnock City Council and the community, is currently conducting a large scale Salvinia Survey² along the Wollombi Brook early in the season: from Wollombi out to the North Arm via Millfield and Congewai, and the South Arm past Laguna.

¹ Salvinia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvinia_molesta

² Salvinia survey http://hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/articles/news.asp?news_id=158§ion_id=0

The survey requires physically walking along the Brook and inspecting the waterway for any pieces of *Salvinia*. Where small amounts are found they are simply being removed on the spot.

As the survey is extensive, any assistance that landholders can provide by surveying their own reach of the Brook (or those of neighbours that are less able) is valuable to the success of the program.

This brief workshop session will cover identification of *Salvinia*, tips and clues for doing your own Brook survey, how to remove it safely, and correct disposal of the weed.

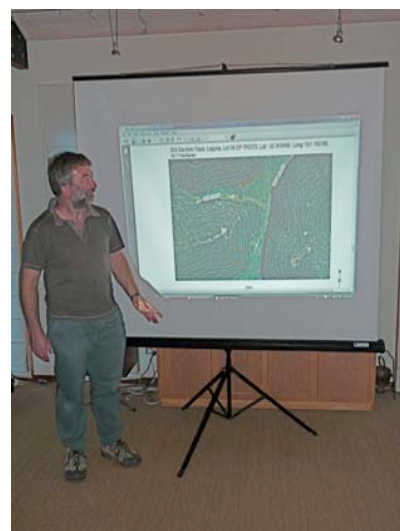
Also as this is Su Morley's first meeting with Wollombi Landcare as the new Lower Hunter Community Support Officer she is hoping to meet as many members as possible and find out the local news.

Special request: Please bring along any old wooden brooms that you can part with. Simple *Salvinia* collection tools - dip nets (aka kitchen sieves on a stick!) are being made and distributed via collection points in Laguna, Wollombi and Millfield so that landholders and community members assisting with surveillance can easily remove small infestations on the spot if located. These simple tools are being made by the Northnet Green Jobs Corps team Cessnock using old wooden broom or mop handles.

Land for Wildlife

On the 21 August, Tony Wells, the *Land for Wildlife* Regional Coordinator based at the Community Environment Network (CEN) in Ourimbah gave an absorbing insight into the *Land for Wildlife* program to over twenty Landcare members at Graham and Sue Taylor's property at Dry Arm.

Tony had recently undertaken a Land for Wildlife survey of Graham & Sue's property so it provided an ideal opportunity, using the results of that survey, to illustrate just what the program means in practice. Using the assessment report for Graham and Sue's land Tony gave a PowerPoint presentation using the actual data obtained from Tony's earlier visit to the property complete with maps of the area. See extract below:



2. Wet Sclerophyll	3.9 ha	Excellent condition: no weeds, no grazing by domestic stock, plenty of natural regeneration, some large old trees	TREES: Sydney Peppermint (<i>Myrtus laevis</i>), Barked Apple (<i>Angophora floribunda</i>) SHRUBS: Grey Myrtle (<i>Backhousia myrsinoides</i>), Olive (<i>Notelaea longifolia</i>) GROUNDLAYER: Rasp Fern (<i>L. aethiopicum</i>), Weeping Grass CLIMBERS: Five-leaf Water V
3. Dry Sclerophyll (sheltered)	2.6 ha	Very good condition, similar to the Wet Sclerophyll	TREES: White Mahogany (<i>Eucalyptus pauciflora</i>), Grey Ironbark (<i>Eucalyptus pauciflora</i>) SHRUBS: Narrow-leaved Geel (<i>Leptosiphon</i>), Pink Beard-heath (<i>Leptosiphon</i>)
3. Dry Sclerophyll	0.7 ha	This area was not closely observed but assume it is in similar good condition to	TREES: Yellow Bloodwood (<i>Corymbia</i>)

Tony was able to describe to a very interested audience the surprising diversity of plant communities that could be found on one property alone. Graham and Sue's is home to or adjacent to rainforest, dry and wet sclerophyll, pasture, woodland and specifically created bird habitats. What was of particular interest was Tony's observation that certain of the pastures were a good food source for native animals such as wallabies.

Tony also provided Internet links to web based products available for landholders to obtain maps of their own land plus useful State and local council contacts.

A walk around Graham and Sue's property and the adjoining property of Grant and Julie Hartley followed the presentation, where the various types of plant communities could be observed.



Land for Wildlife is particularly interested in recruiting other landholders in our local area with the offer of a similar free appraisal and further useful information about wildlife management, the role of wildlife and native vegetation in sustainable agriculture to control pest species, provide shade and shelter, manage salinity and control wind and water erosion, twice yearly newsletters and a **Land for Wildlife** sign and membership certificate once the property is registered with the scheme.

The benefits to landholders include membership to a nationwide program, free individual consultation on land management issues, access to education programs and activities such as workshops, information on how to collect and grow native plants and assistance in applying for grant funding.

Unlike other conservation arrangements there is no legal restriction on the land - merely an undertaking to notify a new owner of the Land for Wildlife program.

Land for Wildlife assessors can be contacted at CEN on 4349 4756 or see www.cen.org.au.

Louise Hicks

Upcoming Workshop/Field Day Event.

The Hunter-Central Rivers CMA is planning a workshop/field day for the Wollombi area in late November. The event will be held on Saturday 27 November and will focus on soil and water health with nutrient management highlighted through the day.

If you are interested in finding out more about the water quality in Wollombi Brook; commonly encountered algae; geology and soils of the Wollombi area; soil health, structure and microbiology; and how to best retain nutrients in the soil and prevent them entering waterways, then this day is for you.

Numbers will be limited for this event - a promotional flyer will be distributed over the following weeks with RSVP details.

Lorna Adlem, CMA

Trip to Mt Yengo

The trip to Mt Yengo and through the Yengo National Park on Sunday 29th August was a great success with about thirty people attending. The following account was provided by Angus Jon, a new member of Wollombi Valley Landcare who went on the trip. Thank you Angus.

Whether you are an avid mountain climber or just the casual stroller to your front gate, the recent Landcare tour to Mt Yengo was for everyone. Starting from Laguna the combined Bulga/Broke and Wollombi Valley Landcare Groups set off in convoy of eleven vehicles heading out along the Finchley Track. We were greeted with early spring flowers along the ridges, much pink, yellows, orange and cream and a brief halt was made to safely relocate a young water dragon from our path.



First stop was to take in the sensational views from the NPWS erected platform at Finchley Trig. NPWS Park Ranger Jeff Betteridge, our host and guide for the day, gave us insight into the local aboriginal mythology from the creator *Biamie* to the significance of Mt Yengo to Aboriginal legends. This region is arguably home to the richest source of rock art in the world, and Yengo is as an important and significant a site as Uluru is to Central Australia.



Under an Aboriginal joint management arrangement, the government and local Aboriginal people share responsibility for the park's management. The aim to ensure that Aboriginal people have the opportunity to participate in planning and decision making for the park while still maintaining access to parks for everyone. Mt Yengo holds special significance to Wonnarua, Awakabu, Worimi and Darkinung traditional owners and their descendents as well as to contemporary Aboriginal communities within the greater Hunter area.

It is significant as a spiritual and religious natural feature and forms the central point of connection for all of the major rock art sites from northern Sydney to the north of Newcastle and the upper Hunter Valley. Mt Yengo is also home to numerous cultural teaching and educational sites that support inter-generational learning and cultural skills transfer. The views from a top the Finchley look out platform provides a full 360 degree vista, from Mt Tomah in the west, to far off mountains near Orange and the Barrington Tops to the north.

The drive from here follows the ridgeline offering ever closer glimpses of Mt Yengo with the last view before reaching the main gates revealing just how big this tabletop mountain

close up really is. Arriving at the locked gates of Big Yengo the convoy at this point bunched up in order to close and lock the gates behind us.

After about another 5 kms we arrived in the main valley with our next destination the homestead sitting on the rise ahead. The original homestead was destroyed by fire in 1974 and subsequently rebuilt. Big Yengo was originally a cattle-grazing enterprise now acquired by the NPWS and incorporated into the National Parks over all management plans.

The homestead can be rented so why not contact the NPWS for details? It has 240-volt solar power, hot showers, a wood fireplace and cooking utensils. It sleeps nine people, but larger groups can make use of a separate cabin, Haddens Hall, 100m away which has an extra five beds. Contact NPWS Gosford office on (02) 4320 4203 for a full list of facilities.

While NPWS plans to allow the vast area of cleared valleys previously grazed to revert to dry eucalypt forest the immediate surrounding area of the homestead, including several farm sheds and original cattle yards will be kept slashed and clear. The European touches of garden plants, fruit trees and ornamentals also will be retained in and around the homestead.

Being a first timer to a Landcare morning tea my eyes glazed over at the assortment of fresh baking that just seemed to appear. Many thanks to those cooks in the group. I do hope no one was counting :)



From here we set off to Bluegums campsite, a short drive along the north west valley. A quick check was made that all vehicles were suitable for the drive as the road from here climbs steeply up the base of the mountain. A relatively short time later we parked the vehicles, making the last trek on foot up onto the unusual ledge feature of this mountain. The views from the lookout point here simply spectacular. Looking out across to Little Mt Yengo, Putty Road, Howes Valley and beyond. A special feature of this location is the rare velvet wattle (*Acacia fulva*) found in only a few locations. Being observant Landcare members we also spotted the local wombat out grazing in the sunlight with sarcoptic mange of course. Time for reflection, a few photos and tit-bits from the lunch boxes and we were on our way down.



The convoy from this point then followed the old road that takes you around to the back of the mountain, through varying forest types, at one point a deep glade of rain forest thick with vines, grand old turps, red cedar and ferns. Every few 100 metres the landscape appeared to change with new plant species and the surprising amount of flowers. Our special lunch stop selected by Jeff had us perched on the rock edge with the full panoramic south side view of Mt Yengo looming large in front of us. The road from here descends into Ironbark forest still showing some signs of the '94 fires then down to the creek bed, soon after bringing us back into the open grass land once grazed by some 250 strong herd of cattle, managed previously all by horse back.

Arriving back at the Homestead once again it was an ideal time with afternoon light to take a few more pictures of the old farm sheds and rusting machinery buried in the long grass and to say our farewells and thank our host and tour guide Jeff Betteridge.

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.

Our next meeting...

Our next meeting will be our Christmas meeting although the actual date, Saturday 4th or 11th December has not yet been finalised. So watch out for our next newsletter that will contain all the details.

Some times it is a struggle to find enough material to fill our newsletter. But I know there are those amongst our membership that have the skills to make a contribution. So if you know something or have an experience that you would like to share with other members then why not get out the pen or the keyboard and send us your thoughts for possible inclusion in the next newsletter? Perhaps you have heard about an activity that is being planned and might be of interest to Landcare members then let me know.

Graham Taylor

Are you interested in permaculture?

Allyn River Permaculture are running a 3 day "Introduction to permaculture" course on the 5th, 6th & 7th of November 2010.

Commencing with lunch at 12 noon on Friday, the course starts at 1.00 pm and continues until 5.00pm. On Sat & Sun the course time will be from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Cost of the course is \$230.00 (Permaculture Hunter Region members 10% discount) that includes lunch, morning and afternoon teas. If you wish to stay on site during the course an extra \$25.00 per night will cover dinner and breakfast. For those staying on site the evenings will be filled with discussion, selected DVD's on permaculture and related issues, or quiet contemplation on the riverbank.

For bookings or additional information please contact:

Peter Brecknock 02) 4938 9748 or 0418) 209 307

E info@allynriverpermaculture.com.au

W www.allynriverpermaculture.com.au

Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Contacts

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Items for newsletter: Graham Taylor - 9981 6317/4998 3326 wollombi.landcare@gmail.com

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.

