



**Wollombi Valley Landcare
Group
News for February 2009**



Special Event

Saturday 21st February 2009 at 3:00 pm at Laguna Hall

The dramatic changes to Wollombi Brook and its tributaries since European settlement and what caused them

by Wayne Erskine

Professor of Natural Resources at the University of Newcastle

(An author in "The Way of the River - Environmental Perspectives on the Wollombi", 1994)

A summary of research over the past 30 years on historical channel changes, floods, sediment movement, rainfall trends and channel recovery together with an outline of current research on Dairy Arm, ongoing analyses of rainfall records and planned research on fish, chain of ponds and recovery of incised channels in the Wollombi catchment.

Here's a taste of the channel changes
experienced on the Brook:

*Murray's Run before the 1949 flood,
showing a vegetated, small capacity
channel.*



*Near the same location immediately
after the June 1949 flood*



Looking forward to seeing you there.

For more information phone Robyn Lamond (4998 8415) or 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.

Indigenous art sites of the Wollombi Valley

Wollombi Valley Arts Council invites all locals to an informative seminar on the significant indigenous art sites of the Wollombi area.

Saturday 14th February at Laguna Hall at 4pm

It's time for all of us who live in this area to make ourselves aware of the importance of the indigenous art sites on our doorstep, so that we all can help preserve, protect and understand the art and cultural treasures which surround us. These art works need the local community's guardianship as they are slowly and surely being destroyed by mismanagement, unchecked development, potential mining, tourism & vandalism.

Speakers will include:-

- Gary Jones
- Paul Gordon & Peter Crousen (Binghai Art Site Survey Team)
- John Clegg (archeologist)
- Gionni di Gravio (archivist)
- John Fryer (dating & survey) and
- Wayne Erskine (hydrologist)

Senior aboriginal speakers will include Paul, Andrew Snelgar and, if available, Steve Brereton (NPWS).

We hope to enhance public appreciation and understanding of the international significance of the many thousands of art sites along the Wollombi and explain why they are here and what they represent.

Valentine's Day refreshments afterwards at approximately 7pm
Enquiries (02) 4998 8347 or visit www.wollombi.org

Salvinia program making headway on Wollombi Brook.

A joint strategy involving the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Hunter Councils, Cessnock City Council and landholders working together has continued to evolve and is achieving marked success in controlling the outbreaks of Salvinia on Wollombi Brook and adjacent waterways.

Eva, the Regional Aquatic Weeds Coordinator with Hunter Councils, will be giving an update on the Salvinia Program at the next Wollombi Valley Progress Association meeting to inform the community and encourage more involvement to keep this noxious water weed in check.

Saturday February 28th at Wollombi Hall at 10am

We can all help in this program by being more aware of what it looks like, alerting authorities when there is a new outbreak and helping with small scale removal.

Robyn Lamond

Biodiversity information on Cessnock Council's website

There is a new section on Council's website www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au to provide information on local fauna and flora species to promote a better understanding of the importance of biodiversity in our LGA. It includes related links and resources.

Extract: 'The Hunter Bird Observers have noted that the Lower Hunter has records of 424 bird species which is at the peak of diversity in Australia. The dry woodlands of the Cessnock area provide an important 'cross-over point' between coastal species and more inland species such as the Brown Treecreeper and the Regent Honeyeater.'

Mynah bird trap

We are still waiting for information on the location of our local flock of Mynah birds. The trap is ready and available if these birds are infesting your place. Contact Catherine Craig (4998 3236).

Report of December meeting and Christmas party

Now, in the sweltering heat of early February, can you recall the lovely, cooler summer weather of December? For our end-of-year activity we visited the Woodward's property on Stockyard Creek. It was delightful sitting around on the lush green grass under the shade of many low boughs. Jane had several issues for us to discuss and we had invited two guest speakers. With a site visit as well, it was a full schedule before we could sit back and celebrate Christmas.



Sean Gough lead us through the mire of the defensive action being initiated by WAGE against the test drilling and potential mining of coal seam gas in the valley. He also suggested that more information about the precious natural resources in our valley is needed for anyone to refer to when there is an outside threat like mining and even for when we are lodging our own Development Applications with Council. Landcare can work with our agency contacts to help improve access to information about significant species and ecosystems in the Wollombi Valley.

Leanne Bell from the Wollombi Volunteer Fire Brigade then gave us the benefit of her knowledge and experience on having our properties prepared for the fire season, which was a timely reminder. There were also brochures to take home to review later. We kept Leanne busy for longer than she expected with many questions.

Brian Woodward then shared the history of the works to address the degradation along their part of Stockyard Creek over decades. There has also been a comprehensive research project on their land, to test the effectiveness of reintroducing debris to the stream. Many different styles of structure have been built across the stream to mimic what might have been there originally. Following the long awaited rains of 2007, deep pools have formed and many stretches are holding permanent water, supporting the adjacent vegetation and even fish. As no stock graze along this part of the stream, there has been a successful return to a natural river course supporting healthy habitats and good water.

After a stroll to see some of these river structures we then retired to the lush lawn to share our platters of Christmas fare. Later the festive spirit was enlivened with Toby on stilts tossing flaming torches, a stunning sight against the dark.

Thank you to Brian, Sally, Toby and Holly for being our gracious hosts and to our guest speakers for their valuable insights into how we can improve our property management and work towards better protection of our local resources.

Robyn Lamond

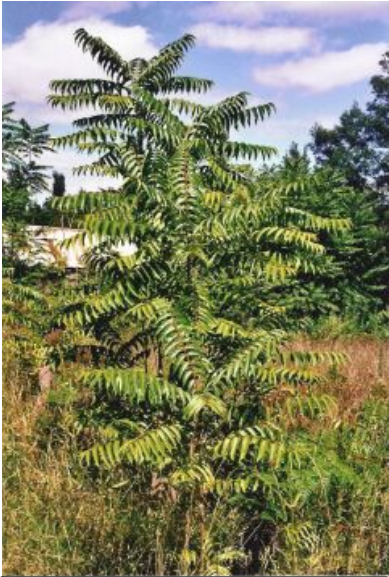
Have your say

Cessnock City Council is undertaking a Social Needs Survey. This will be a snapshot of social issues and concerns to help planning for the future. Available Feb 1 to March 31.

Get a copy of the survey at:

Cessnock Council City Administration Building
Cessnock Library
Tel: 4993 4118 or www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au

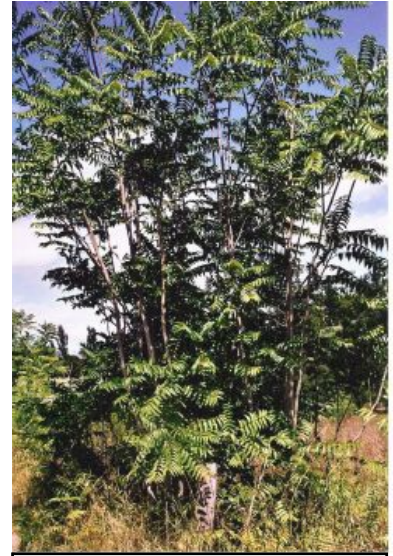
Tree of Heaven identification & control in the Wollombi Valley



Tree of Heaven – young regrowth

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is one of our most aggressive colonising trees. Originally planted as a garden ornamental it spreads over short distances by vigorous suckering from the roots and over longer distances by its winged seeds.

Initially the trees were found along the creeks but they can, and are, now establishing in drier habitats, upslope from the riverbanks, even among rocks and relatively undisturbed Dry Sclerophyll Forest.



Tree of Heaven – multi-stemmed stand typical of regrowth after cutting down of parent tree

The densest stands are along the Wollombi Brook between Millfield and Wollombi and north, with extensive colonies along Sweetman's Creek clearly visible from the road.



Tree of Heaven – close-up of leaf. Note: Leaflet present at end & notches at base of leaflet

We are also noticing new isolated stands appearing at Knight's Arm and Narone Creek.

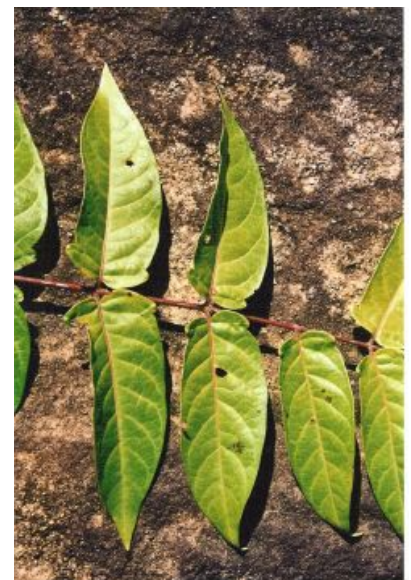
There are undoubtedly many others establishing from wind blown seeds. A few seedlings were found in the Negro Street area.



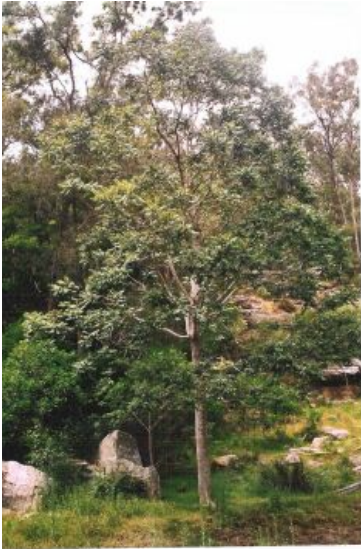
Killing a single isolated tree or a small group of root suckers has been successful in Knight's Arm where both occurrences have been

poisoned (by the Landcare **Tree of Heaven** poisoning team) and have shown no sign (in three years) of recovery.

Tree of Heaven is a very distinctive tree. It is **DECIDUOUS** over winter and has very large divided leaves with a revolting smell when crushed.



Tree of Heaven – close-up of leaflet. Note: Notches present at base



Red Cedar – adult tree

Apart from some planted nut trees, e.g. pecans, the only other tree that occurs locally that can be confused with **Tree of Heaven** is the Red Cedar (*Toona ciliata*, also called *Toona australis*). Both trees are deciduous with large divided leaves but the leaves of Red Cedar do not have an offensive smell.

Since we do not want any Red Cedars to be attacked in a case of mistaken identity, we took a series of photographs to show you the

differences (other than smell) which distinguish the weed from the native.

If you do identify **Tree of Heaven** on your property please ring me on 4998 8158. Small colonising stands can be dealt with in a morning with glyphosate and the right technique.

Please **DO NOT CUT IT DOWN!** This generates root suckers in large numbers and makes it much harder to control. Poisoning should be done in the next month or left to late

spring.

If you have trees that you are uncertain whether they are **Tree of Heaven** or not, please contact either myself or Robyn Lamond and somebody will help you identify them. Let us hope they are Red Cedars!

Jane Mowatt



Tree of Heaven – bark of young tree



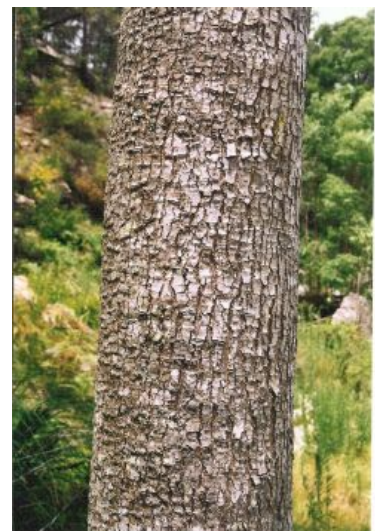
Red Cedar – bark of immature tree



Red Cedar – leaf showing arrangement of leaflets. Note: No final leaflet at end



Red Cedar – Close-up of leaflet. Note: No notches



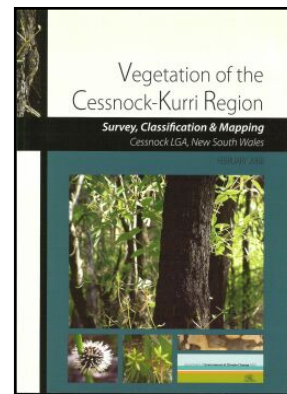
Red Cedar – bark of adult tree

Review of Book Vegetation of the Cessnock - Kurri Region

Survey, Classification and Mapping, Cessnock LGA, NSW Feb 2008,
Dept of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), NSW.

No author named but written by S.A.J. Bell & C. Driscoll of Eastcoast
Flora Survey under contract to DECC Nov 2007.

This survey is a very valuable addition to the information available to
anybody identifying species and vegetation communities of this area.



My main disappointment is that it stops at Millfield so that none of our Wollombi - Laguna area is covered. However, the study area, from Wallis Creek in the east to the footslopes of Corrabare State Forests in the west and from the Watagans National Park in the south to the North Rothbury area in the north is covered in fine detail. Thirteen broad vegetation community groups were found in the area and these were broken up into the 37 mapped sub units.

There is a lot of information on which species are growing in each sub unit, how widespread the community is, how much has been cleared, reserve status (useful for arguing against it being cleared!), how to distinguish it from other communities, a distribution map and a colour photo. The identification of species is accurate and confidence inspiring. Also, the spelling of the scientific names is refreshingly free of typos. The identification problems in several groups of eucalypts are discussed e.g. fine leaved ironbarks but tantalisingly, the actual methods used in the study to sort out the confusion aren't given. I could have used a short, easy-to-use key to the identification of local ironbarks.

I was pleased to see a plant species list for the area as an Appendix.

The only other suggestion for improvement would be a little more information to allow people to orient themselves exactly on the maps - a vague location for Kurri, Cessnock and Millfield and the boundaries are all the clues given - including a few roads would have helped.

The report also includes a lot of information (including the dendrograms) on how the communities were delineated. This would be useful for students of vegetation mapping and for anybody intending similar work.

Landcare has a copy in our library which is available at Laguna Markets and meetings. All of the Landcare Executive have succumbed to purchasing their personal copies - \$25 from the DECC. If several more people are interested then I will order another batch.

Jane Mowatt

Dates for your diary

- Saturday 14 Feb Indigenous art sites of the Wollombi Valley at Laguna Hall at 4:00pm
- Sunday 15 Feb Landcare Stall at Laguna Markets 9:30am to 1:00pm
- Saturday 21 Feb The dramatic changes to Wollombi Brook and its tributaries since European settlement and what caused them at Laguna Hall at 3:00pm
- Saturday 28 Feb Update on the Salvinia Program at the Wollombi Valley Progress Assoc at Wollombi Hall at 10am
- Sunday 15 Mar Landcare Stall at Laguna Markets 9:30am to 1:00pm
- Saturday 18 Apr Landcare Meeting & AGM. A visit to Bill & Betty Hicks' property on Watagan Creek

“Sign up for Sustainability” Community Field Day - 19 January

On a hot Monday in Wollombi, in the grounds of the Wollombi Public School, we gathered at 10:00 am for the Field Day organised by Cessnock Council with the support of Hunter Water and the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority. Patricia Ann Stanwell, Council Project Officer - Sustainability Education, provided an introduction to what was a full program of presentations with an emphasis on sustainability and the environment.

Local 'Sustainability Champions', Tony Hawkins and Donna Gargano, who had responded to the Council's invitation to undertake an electricity and water conservation audit, shared their experience and discoveries of what power various appliances consumed. There was also a presentation by Jenny Musicka who shared her passion for living sustainably on their property at Seaham. An avid observer of the plants, insects, wildlife and the climate, Jenny has trialled and tested the growing of vegetables and fruit and developed a clever 'wheel' to record, in an easy-to-read way, the weather throughout the year - rainfall, temperature, wind, and frost are all detailed. And for the children there was a fascinating collection of plants, specimens, and samples collected over many years.

Lorna Adlem and Grahame Price provided an outline of the role of the CMA and the many ways that they can work with and assist the landholder with information and funding. Later they were followed by a presentation from John Asquith of the Community Environment Network (CEN) on their role in coordinating the *Land for Wildlife* program, now available to landholders in the Cessnock LGA.

There was a lot to absorb and much discussion over a sausage sizzle that followed, before Michael Alexander, the Environmental Services Manager outlined the efforts being made by Council to raise awareness of environmental issues in the community. And in a response to an invitation for ideas on what more can be done, there were numerous suggestions including ways to better collect and dispose of the many items that accumulate in our consumer driven society.

And to conclude a very informative field day everyone, received a 'show bag' of samples and information plus a native plant.

Graham Taylor

Earth Hour - Saturday March 28, 2009 8.30pm

Earth Hour is set to be huge in 2009 with World Wildlife Fund aiming to reach one billion people in 1000 cities around the world. Australia is well on the way with all capital cities and 102 local councils signed up and ready to fight climate change in their neighbourhoods.

WWF is proud to announce that street artist Shepard Fairey, creator of the iconic artwork for the Barack Obama CHANGE PROGRESS HOPE campaign, is confirmed as the designer for the 2009 global Earth Hour campaign. Artwork will be available for download shortly so check the website in a week or so.

Australian celebrities are also showing strong support for WWF with a number of new and renewed Earth Hour Ambassadors including musicians Natalie Imbruglia and Augie March, TV personality Jamie Durie, fashion designer Bowie and tennis great Pat Rafter.

A 2006 report has revealed that households are responsible for approximately twenty percent of the 570 million tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted by Australia per year. That's 4.5 times higher than the global average per capita.

"Alone we can do little - together we can make a real difference".



www.wwf.org.au

The following notes reflect the presentation by Sean Gough of WAGE to the Landcare meeting held on the 6th December 2008

- The Environmental Defenders Office has written on behalf of WAGE to the Minister of Primary Industries (DPI), drawing his attention to various defects and omissions found in the Review of Environmental Factors submitted by Sydney Gas with their application for the permit awarded to them by DPI to drill exploratory core holes in the Wollombi Valley.
- Sydney Gas has appointed a new Chairman, Allan Campbell of AJ Lucas and announced the discovery of a major gas field lying between Payne's Crossing and Singleton. Sean explained their statement seems premature as they have not yet determined the quality and flow rate of the gas and that it may be more to do with a lagging share price, a shortage of funds and the appointment of the new chairman who has personally invested a lot into Sydney Gas. Sean also pointed out the growing influence of AJ Lucas over Sydney Gas.
- WAGE now has a T-shirt for sale at \$20, available from the stores in Wollombi and Laguna.
- The Wollombi Valley Arts Council will be hosting a significant gathering at Laguna Hall on the 14th February where various academics will present information concerning the Indigenous History of the Wollombi Valley and demonstrating the importance of this place to the culture of the Aborigines. Descendants of the tribes associated with this area will be present to answer questions.
- Sean described his idea to establish a Project designed to gather proven information pertaining to the Environment, History and Culture of the Wollombi Valley. The database that would develop from this Project would be publicly available and a continual work in progress; though some data would have to remain confidential, such as paleo-art sites. All community groups would be encouraged to contribute as appropriate. Sean has discussed the idea in terms of Flora and Fauna surveys with Grahame Price of CMA who suggested that the involvement of Landcare would certainly add weight to any approach made to CMA who, Grahame thinks, would definitely be interested to assist and through whom grants may be available. Sean believes that it would be a good idea to approach Newcastle University with a view to the Project being hosted and co-ordinated by the University. This would give the outcomes of the Project added credibility and make available additional resources and funds. The value of the Project's database is self-evident and the existence of such a Project would encourage more research into the values of the Wollombi Valley that we all want to protect.

NOTE: Just before Christmas, AGL Energy Pty Ltd made a cash bid of 42.5 cents for every Sydney Gas share. Sydney Gas has recommended the bid to their shareholders and as at the 6th February had purchased 84.9% of Sydney Gas' shares.

For further information regarding Sydney Gas and WAGE can be found at *Wollombi Valley Online*
<http://wollombi.nsw.au>

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

Sustainability & energy saving tips:

The electricity consumed by your refrigerator represents at least 25% of your monthly bill. If you have had your fridge for a few years then it pays to check the flexible door seals. If they are damaged then your fridge has to work that much harder. Replacement seals cost about \$100 and are easily fitted. Also your fridge works better when there is more food in it – not less.