



Wollombi Valley Landcare Group News for February 2012



Bush Regeneration in Wombat Valley

Saturday 18 February at 2:00 pm

Bring your weeds, bring your ideas, bring your friends, its time to revisit Wombat Valley.

Remember back in April 2011 when Landcare promised you a dream event that would solve all your weed problems? However, because of a couple of inches of rain on the day, that dream became a nightmare, or more correctly, a lengthy AGM.



Well time has come around to have another crack at regeneration

techniques and ideas at Wombat Valley, WAY OUT on the Finchley Track. What's a couple of inches of rain now after the rain we've had over the last few months—nothing.

We will also be having a special guest presenter in Sue Morley from the local CMA (Catchment Management Authority). Sue will talk about the sorts of help and advice that the CMA can offer individual landholders in regards to land management issues.

Directions on how to get to Wombat Valley are overleaf. Sturdy shoes or boots are recommended for walking through the bush.

Everyone is welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

For more information contact Jane Mowatt on 4998 8158 or Chris Jackson on 4998 8660.

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.

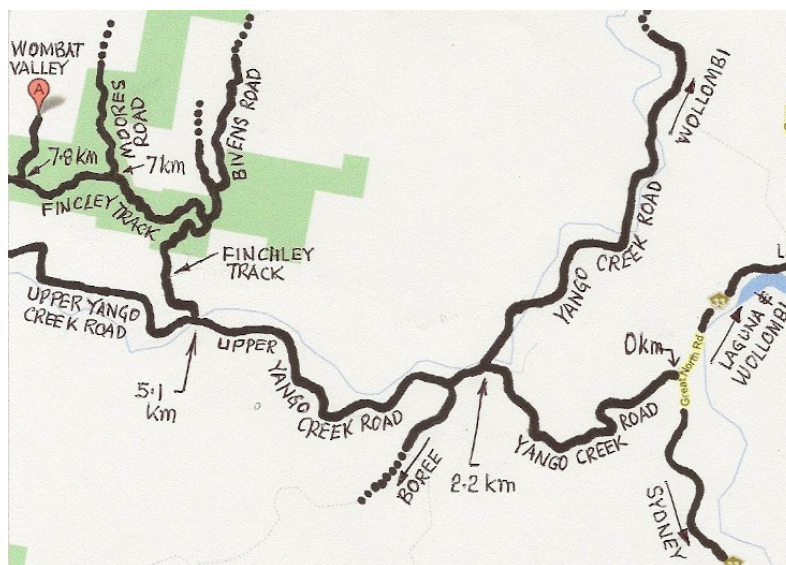
How to get there...

DIRECTIONS TO WOMBAT VALLEY

250 Finchley Track,
via Upper Yango Creek Road
LAGUNA NSW 2325
Tel: 02 4998 8660
louisehicks@bigpond.com

Turn off The Great Northern Road about 1 km before Laguna (if you are travelling from Sydney), or follow Wollombi travel south about 1km past Laguna and turn into Yango Creek Road.

You could set the odometer here - it is 7.8 km, and about a 15-20 minute drive.



Map courtesy of Google, Inc.

1. Drive along Yango Creek Road for about 2.2km (there is a short stretch of sealed road going down the hill). Continue left on this road for 50 metres, (you will pass a turn-off for Boree on the left) and instead follow the signs to Yango Park House.
3. At 3.7km, there is a sign **Wildlife Crossing – Slow Down**
4. At 5.1km you will cross a small bridge.
5. Just after this bridge, at the bottom of a big hill, there are signs for Mellow Wood, private property and 25km speed limit. Keep going up the hill (it's not a private road). Near the top of this hill, there are two/three dips in the road, about 10 metres apart – need to slow right down.
6. After the dips, curve around to the left, and pass a large sign on the left indicating Yengo National Park. (Do not turn right into Bivens Road.)
7. At 7km you will come to a fork in the road with a sign saying Moores Road. You need to take the left fork for Finchley Track. (Not the right fork into Moores Road to Yango Park House or Yanguna.)
9. From here it is 700-800 metres to Lot 174 (250 Finchley Track). The turn-off to the Wombat Valley is almost at a right angle and on the right hand side of the track. There will be a Landcare sign
10. Follow the driveway down the hill 500m to the house.

Bush Regeneration at Wombat Valley

The regeneration we have been working on is booming, along with rampant weed growth. Melaleucas, Grevilleas, Stringy Barks and the beautiful or blighted Black Wattles are fighting it out with the dreaded and very persistent Ricardia and Paspalum.

We will be conducting a bit of a stroll around identifying the good and bad plants so you may wish to wear footwear that doesn't mind getting a little wet and offers some protection from annoying biting things. Also please bring along any plants or suspected weeds that you may wish to have identified.

The CMA has a mainly riparian focus that should be of interest to most people in our group. They provide funding and advice on revegetation projects, internal stock fencing and erosion control. This is a very opportune time to take advantage of Sue's advice, as this years funding is coming around right now. You need to have your funding requests into the Hunter Central

CMA by the 23rd March (but much earlier if possible as Easter in early April makes it difficult for the CMA to meet its 10th of April deadline).

Bring your individual ideas along with you and take advantage of talking them over with Sue on the day. Also if you have any possible group projects in mind let us know as well.

The property is looking really good at the moment, as is the whole area and we hope as many as possible make it on the day. As a special incentive, the usual tea and coffee offerings will be augmented by cupcakes straight out of the oven made by none other than the second place prize winner of the 2011 Wollombi Valley Fair Cup Cake competition. Believe me they are not to be missed!

What is Bush Regeneration?

Bush Regeneration is the rehabilitation of bush from a weed affected or otherwise degraded area to a healthier community of native plants and animals.

The aim is to restore and maintain ecosystem health by helping the natural regeneration of indigenous plants. This is usually done by reducing the effect of weeds and things like erosion and soil disturbance.



Weeds are often the greatest threat to remnant vegetation, and so bush regeneration is closely associated with weed control. Weed management is not the aim of bush regeneration but one of the tools used to help native plants. The management of other factors like fire can be just as important, depending on the ecosystem being restored.

The importance of the workings of an ecosystem rather than just its structure and composition is being increasingly recognised.

[Courtesy of Australian Association of Bush Regenerators]



Bush Regeneration can make a difference

The top photo shows old growth Eucalypt after initial clearing in October 2006, while the bottom photo is the same view in 2008, after 14 months of comprehensive and systemic treatment of weed.

[Photos courtesy of Australian Association of Bush Regenerators Newsletter No 99 March 2008.]

Our last Landcare meeting was a visit to Wallis Creek Watergarden Nursery in Mulbring

These gardens are interesting at several levels.

Terrestrial

I found the establishment of microhabitats approaching those found under a rainforest canopy on land that had been almost totally cleared only 30 years ago inspiring. The original site appears to have had the same disadvantages many of us experience when trying to establish diverse vegetation communities and increase biodiversity on our own land. It had frosts in winter, 30-40° C temperatures in summer, poor degraded soils and only a few remnant Paperbarks (*Melaleuca styphelioides*) left of the original vegetation.

The successful procedure was to first establish a canopy of quick growing Silky Oaks (*Grevillea robusta*). These provide good shade and leaf litter (as well as attracting honeyeaters). Then build up the soil in the garden beds using pond waste that promotes good growth of the rainforest plants. To increase biodiversity epiphytic orchids were tied to the tree trunks with fishing line that survives long enough to allow the orchids to attach themselves. With a piece of sphagnum moss under the plant and a twice a year foliate fertilizer, a range of native epiphytic orchids were flourishing at head height where they can be best admired.

At ground level a very diverse range of ferns has been planted which are now proliferating naturally.

This new environment has dramatically increased the bird population with satin bowerbirds and double bar finches now resident.

White Cedars (*Melia azedarach*) were recommended, amongst others, as rewarding trees to plant with their tip moths attracting Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos. Other trees doing well were Corkwood, Pecans and Queensland Bottle Trees.

The gardens are a very successful blend of native and introduced plants establishing an oasis surrounding a little section of Wallis Creek.



Aquatic

The even more impressive achievement is the establishment of the water gardens. A mix of personal interests and commercial operation, a wide variety of ponds have been built. They range from the “natural” surrounded by rocks and complementing and merging into the surrounding gardens (Photo) often with fringing reeds and grasses to the strictly utilitarian rectangular ponds housing the commercial nursery (Photo). These ponds grow a wide range of both native and introduced aquatic plants and featuring an extensive range of water lilies both tropical and temperate and in a wide variety of colours. They also have a range of Lotus spp, both native and introduced. Despite my impression the Lotus was a tropical genus, the Chinese varieties have thicker leaves and survive frosty winters. We were warned that the very impressive growth rates allow Lotus to dominate large water bodies and that they should be kept away from the possibility of escape. A half barrel or small pond with a little soil

in the bottom is recommended. Not dams.

For those that are interested, Wallis Creek Watergardens have a very informative website www.walliscreekwatergarden.com.au with information on the plants they sell including a pamphlet *Cultivating Water Lilies and Water Plants*.

Constructive

Hints on how to build your own pond: Recommended depth is 40-50 cm (60 cm is too deep keeping the roots too cool and slowing down growth).

Line pond with black builder's plastic, 2 to 3 layers thick and without joins. This has lasted 17 years, as long as the edges are covered with either cement, rocks, or thick plastic to protect the black plastic against UV light which will destroy it. Official Pool Liner is also good but very expensive. Fertilize with Nutricote or any version of pelletised chicken manure. Mosquitoes are not a problem in permanent ponds due to predation by fish and frogs.

Feel inspired?

Jane Mowatt

And our Christmas party...

After the pleasant and interesting wander around the water gardens, we all trailed up the hill to Shelagh and John's property "Injasuti" on the Mount View Road to finish off the year in the traditional Wollombi Valley Landcare fashion with a barbeque and a couple of celebratory drinks.



Considering how wet it has been in the last couple of months, we were lucky to have a really quite summery evening for the party. As usual, besides the barbeque there was a great selection of tasty and interesting salads, and sweet things for 'afters'.

It was good to have time to relax and chat to people and celebrate the end of another

'Landcare' year in such a pleasant spot. Thanks again to Shelagh and John for having us again.

Sue Taylor

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 or

wollombi.landcare@gmail.com

Next meeting in April includes the AGM

Have you considered joining the committee? Landcare relies on the good work and enthusiasm of our members who form the committee. They meet about four or five times a year for a couple of hours to discuss and plan our activities. Don't leave it just to the few – why not join the committee, learn more about Landcare and have an input in our future.

Wollombi Landcare now has WARTS (again?)

WARTS = Wollombi Area Regeneration Team (Sort of)

Sort of, because we are just in the process of getting WARTS up and growing. Now that we have planted the seed we are calling on volunteers to join this new (or maybe born again) branch of Landcare. Six people put up their hand at last years AGM to be part of a weeding team and I suspect have thought we had forgotten. We did not forget, maybe had a memory lapse but we have your names in the minutes. You six will hopefully form the initial seedbank of WARTS volunteers. Don't know who you are? You'll hear from me soon!

WARTS will be a grass roots group whom will enjoy getting their hands dirty whilst at the same time helping save a small part of the planet. Our first project will be the "Negro St." site in Wollombi that involves a stretch of creek bank that has been worked on before but is badly in need of some help.

Traditional bush regeneration techniques will be used and taught. No previous experience is necessary, but hopefully we will all learn a lot. This will be a medium to long-term project with a lot of work required initially but slowly dropping off over time as the natives out compete the weeds (hopefully). We will do our best to vary the type of work so that it is interesting and fun.

Whilst a little initial work has been done on the site, we are still in the early days of planning. Please let me know if you are interested. We would be accepting of occasional irregular help. We may have a set half day once a month in addition to a hard core of fulltime locals whom want something more regular. Once I have an idea of the amount of interest, I will send out more precise details.

Hopefully it will be a fun and sociable group. As a special introductory offer any volunteer whom does more than 20 hours a year will get a warm inner glow and many thanks from the Wollombi community when everyone sees how good this spot SCRUBS up.

We are not restricted to this one site but we are a little stuck for ideas. Please let us know if you have a favourite area that may need a little attention.

Any enquires to Chris Jackson phone 4998 8660 or email louisehicks@bigpond.com

Hope to hear from many of you.

Wollombi Valley Landcare supports Action on Coal Seam Gas

Members and friends will have noticed articles in recent newsletters expressing concern at the consequences coal seam gas exploration and potential production on our valley and surrounding areas.



Wollombi Valley Landcare supports both organisations in their efforts to stop the search for coal seam gas that has already resulted in several wells being drilled in our area, while AGL continues their purchase of properties and drilling around Broke.

Both the *Lock the Gate Alliance* nationally and WAGE (Wollombi valley Against Gas Exploration) deserve our support both as a group and as individuals. If you want more information go to their websites, <http://lockthegate.org.au/> and <http://wage.org.au> I urged you to get involved and help to stop the destruction of our land and water.

Graham Taylor



**Stop Salvinia Strangling our
Waterways
A Project Funded by the NSW
Environmental Trust**



Salvinia Biological Control Field Days

**Tuesday 20 March – Pittwater, Sydney
Wednesday 21 March – Hawkesbury, Windsor
Thursday 22 March – Camden
Tuesday 3 April – North Arm Cove/Teagardens
Wednesday 4 April – Central Coast – Cooranbong**

Time: 9am to 12.30pm – with a break for coffee

The NSW Department of Primary Industries, in association with the NSW Environmental Trust is holding a series of half day field visits to salvinia biological control sites as a follow up to the accredited workshops held in 2010.

The salvinia weevil (*Cyrtobagous salviniae*) is one of the most successful biological control agents used in Australia. When used correctly it can reduce entire mats of salvinia to a few scattered plants. This may take anywhere from 4 months to 3 years. Surviving weevil populations often provide an ongoing form of control.

The focus of these ½ day field visits will be on using the salvinia weevils correctly as part of an ongoing biological control program. This includes procuring, releasing and monitoring weevils, defining suitable and unsuitable release sites, and using the salvinia weevils as part of an integrated management programme. The field day will be offered free. **Please wear good shoes and appropriate outdoor wear, as this field day will be conducted at salvinia sites.**

Who should Attend. Anyone who is interested in learning about biological control of salvinia. This includes those who have previously attended accredited workshops and want to revise their knowledge and/or learn the latest techniques and research. Weeds officers and land managers who are new to salvinia biological control are also encouraged to attend.

The field day will also introduce the new publication – The Salvinia Biological Control Field Guide - which is included. We would be grateful if participants read the guide before attending the field day.

How to Express your Interest: Please complete the attached form and return to: Lesley Postle by fax: (02) 4640 6300 or email: lesley.postle@dpi.nsw.gov.au. For any further information contact Lesley on 0457 891 754.



**Department of
Primary Industries**

FAX TO: Lesley Postle Pages: 1 - (02) 4640 6300

Email: lesley.postle@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Post to: Lesley Postle, NSW DPI, EMAI, Woodbridge Road, Menangle, NSW 2568

Salvinia Field Day - Registration and Pre-survey questions

Registration details

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Email Address:

Phone number:

Mobile Number:

I am able to attend the field day on

At.....

I would be interested in one of the attending the Biocontrol Accredited Training Workshops in May in the following region of NSW: (Please tick)

- mid north coast
- far north coast
- south coast
- Camden 31st May

Pre-survey Questions:

Do you have responsibility for Salvinia management in your area?

If yes, what methods do you currently use?

Do you use any biological control for Salvinia?

What would you hope to learn by attending the field day?
