



Wollombi Valley Landcare News for April 2012



AGM and a Walk along the Brook

Saturday 21st April at 2:00 pm

The Wollombi Valley Landcare Annual General Meeting (AGM) is being held on Saturday 21st April at 2pm at the Tennis Club Rooms located in Negro Street.

We encourage you to come along and consider joining the committee as they work to provide you, the members, with an interesting and diverse range of meetings and activities throughout the year.

There are typically no long drawn out ballots for contested committee positions, so the AGM should be completed in as little as 20 minutes.

Chris Jackson, who has organised a team of members to help regenerate the banks of the Wollombi Brook between Negro street and the steps down from the Wollombi Road, will then walk with us along the Brook where the team has been working. And, if time and interest allows, we will be able to get our hands dirty. Just bring yourselves - tools and excessive advice will be provided.



This will be followed by afternoon tea and coffee in the Tennis Clubrooms and question time.

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

Not sure where Negro Street is? It is the street off Payne's Crossing Road in Wollombi village between St John's Church and the tennis courts and opposite Yango Creek Road and Slack's Park.

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.

Our last Landcare meeting was a visit to Louise Hicks and Chris Jackson's property to learn how they are regenerating their bush block

Recognising that many of us are literally up to our ears in weeds this year due to a remarkably wet cool summer, our February meeting gave us an opportunity to look closely at Louise and Chris' property, *Wombat Valley*, along the Finchley track, where the weeds are losing the battle to Chris, a trained bush regenerator.



The meeting began with a report from Burrellong Landcare on the continuing saga of their battle against *Salvinia*. After receiving an official weed notice from Cessnock Council they employed a private company to spray the infected ponds. A return visit to treat a pond missed on the first visit, means that overall results will not be known for another month or so. As always follow up is expected to be required.

Su Morley of the CMA (Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority) then gave us a helpful briefing on the grants available e.g. small grants of under \$10,000 are available till the 10th of April. If anybody is interested she can help in the filling out of the forms and give advice on the sort of project that would be suitable for funding.

Su is also going to talk to the State Government and Congewai Landcare about woody weed control along the Brook and its tributaries.



Chris Jackson then gave us a short talk sprinkled with useful hints on bush regeneration and weed control, with special reference to the problems being encountered locally.

He also explained the important distinction between two different approaches, namely **Bush Regeneration** where the native community of plants recovers from disturbance with human assistance and **Bush Revegetation** involving the planting of natives in an attempt to establish a new community of native species.

Obviously, regeneration is a much better option. In order for it to work, the seed bank in the topsoil must have survived. If not, then you get weeds instead of the original bush species. To assist regeneration, layering of loppings of natives can help to increase germination and establishment. Chris has used loppings of *Hakeas* and *Casuarinas*, amongst others, which carry seeds on the branches and can drop them into the shaded and protected areas under the pile.

Remember to always work from good bush areas to bad, allowing the natives to colonise the spaces left by weeding. Keep the soil disturbance to a minimum since weeds are adapted to disturbed soils much better than most natives. Avoid compacting the soils, since natives hate

compacted soil, they evolved with only fairly light soft footed animals.

If the native community is too badly damaged to regenerate then bush revegetation will be required. Revegetation can be just a "quick fix" if not done properly, resulting in a requirement for continuous weeding.

Glyphosate (the active constituent in Round Up amongst others) is still recommended if a herbicide is required although some plants can develop resistance while Bio Active Glyphosate is better near water (the 20m clearance is still required).

Starane is the herbicide of choice to kill broadleaf weeds if native grasses are being encouraged. For example, it kills *Tradescantia albiflora*, and can be useful if the only broadleaf plant on the ground is *Tradescantia* and the possible colonising neighbours are native grasses. If you want to see this situation come and look at the end of Negro Street, especially on the left hand side of the track. Alternatively, if you want to encourage the native relative of *Tradescantia*, called *Commelina cyanea*, then hand weeding of the boundary is the only way.

After the talks, Chris took us on a tour of the property showing us areas where weeding had successfully regenerated a ground cover of native grasses which was also encouraging the spread of other native ground covers.

Chris has waged a largely successful war on our new invasive ground cover problem *Richardia brasiliensis*. Several people recognized this plant with some dismay as occurring on their own block.

Jane Mowatt

President's report 2012

This year has been dominated by a very unusual weather pattern - rain. We had a wet winter, with minor flooding but continuing rain, drizzle, mist and rain. Followed by a wet spring, ditto and a very similar summer. Autumn actually has provided 2 weeks of dry sunny weather but now its back to clouds and rain.

The result of this for Landcare has been a concentration on the results of the "best growing season for decades": WEEDS.

On the plus side, there have been no immediate worries about bushfires, and we have had an opportunity to think about fire precautions in the longer term at our August meeting.

Its been a very good year for establishing plantings and we visited two local nurseries with very different ranges of plants to widen our ideas about what can be done around the house.

But most of the impetus is on weed control. We are fortunate that Chris Jackson is becoming increasingly active in several areas of weeding including proposing a Landcare Project. Something we haven't had for awhile. As a group, and under Chris's direction and expertise, we are beginning to tackle the weeds along the walk in Wollombi from Negro St to the Steps. More on this is elsewhere in the April newsletter and meeting.

We have had a record number of washouts for the Laguna Market, but I with others have continued with a stall offering advice and plant identification on those days when it wasn't raining.

My thanks to all members of the executive for their efforts this years and for agreeing to stand for election for another year. My especial thanks to Graham Taylor for the newsletter.

Jane Mowatt

WARTS update

The Wollombi Area Regeneration Team (WARTS), has been building momentum in the last month or two and now meets every second Thursday. We are currently a group of six or so who meet and work along the Wollombi Brook between Negro Street and the steps that come down from the main Millfield Road. This stretch has previously undergone various degrees of restoration and beautification works but are currently looking a bit tired. However, not all the old work has passed its use by date, so if we can maintain a consistent level of people involvement, we will hopefully soon see the emergence of an improved amenity. At the moment that is still in the eye of the true believers, only those with Warts could possibly notice any improvement.

However, this site has so much potential to be a truly lovely spot. It is right in the middle of town following a nice stretch of a babbling brook. A lot of the hard work has been done previously and there is a good path, seating and stair access to build upon. However, the restoration/rehabilitation work needs to be long-term and ongoing, because creeks being rivers means that weeds are always coming in and floods have a way of making life a bit difficult.

Initially, we have been concentrating on saving what we have which has mainly entailed liberating lomandras from the creeping Trad as well as getting the Moth and Madiera vine out of the tree tops. Don't have a clue what I'm talking about? Come along and find out. More details in a minute.

Our major concern at the moment is the group name. Some of our members aren't happy being identified as a Wart. One suggestion was "Wollombi Brook Regeneration and Propagation Team" or WBRAPT for short. Another suggestion was "Thursday Lunch Group" which from my observations would be quite appropriate.

Whatever the name, the group meets fortnightly on a Thursday from 10am through to lunchtime (about 12.30pm-ish). Please note it is a "from" time, so feel free to turn up anytime after 10am. We will be somewhere nearby the Negro Street steps.

If enough interest is shown we would love to expand both the time zones and areas that Warts operates in. Maybe we could have a weekend version (called We Warts perhaps) operating on a flexible, occasional, non-binding, social basis for those not fortunate enough to live here or who have to occasionally work for a living.

For enquiries re dates/times etc contact
Chris Jackson ph 49988660
Email: <louisehicks@bigpond.com>

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.

Renewal of membership now due

The financial year for Wollombi Landcare is from April to March, so renewal of membership is now due! Membership dues remain unchanged from previous years, \$15 per property per annum or \$40 per property for 3 years.

Treasurer's Report

WOLLOMBI VALLEY LANDCARE GROUP Inc.

APRIL 2011 – MARCH 2012

This report includes a statement of earnings and expenses for the year ended 31 March 2012 and a balance sheet as at 31 March 2012.

- As of March 31, 2012, Wollombi Valley Landcare Group Inc. had cash at bank of **\$13,960.26**.
- This was represented by accumulated funds of **\$8,334.34** and unused tied grants of **\$5,625.92**.
- Income for the year was **\$976**. Membership fees accounted for **\$825**. Book sales and DVD and auger hire comprised the balance of these earnings.
- Costs of **\$465.40** for the acquisition of a new sandwich board and one new textbook were met from the Catchment Management Plan Tied Grant.
- Total expenses for the year were **\$664.25** and included the usual insurance premium, production and distribution of the newsletters and sundry costs associated with meetings and workshops.
- Excluding costs met from the grant, this financial year income exceeded expenses by **\$311.75**.
- A number of memberships expired at the end of March 2012 and as is our usual practice we will be shortly sending reminder letters.

We remain in a sound financial position to undertake new activities and projects in 2012-2013.

Louise Hicks, Treasurer
1 April 2012

| WOLLOMBI VALLEY LANDCARE GROUP Inc | | CI Bal |
|--|----------|-----------|
| BALANCE SHEET | | |
| ASSETS | | 13,960.26 |
| Cash at bank | | 13,960.26 |
| Total Assets | | |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| Tied Grant Funds | 2.62 | |
| Blaxlands Arm | 1,199.00 | |
| Bridge to Bridge | 3,344.30 | |
| Catchment Management Plan | 340.00 | |
| Millpond | 229.00 | |
| Nouliaman's Arm | 511.00 | |
| Nudge Pump | 5,625.92 | |
| Total grants | 0.00 | |
| Creditors | 5,625.92 | |
| Total Liabilities | | 8334.34 |
| Accumulated funds | | 13,960.26 |
| STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE | | |
| INCOME | | |
| Book & DVD sales | | 105.00 |
| Membership Fees | | 825.00 |
| Hire auger | | 46.00 |
| Total Income | | 976.00 |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Hire of Premises | 20.00 | |
| Insurance | 350.00 | |
| Propagation workshop supplies | 48.00 | |
| Dept of Fair Trading | 171.25 | |
| Office (including Newsletter) | 465.40 | |
| Equipment / Books / DVD's - new Assets | 45.00 | |
| Subscriptions | 30.00 | |
| Gifts | 1129.65 | |
| Christmas party | -153.65 | |
| Total Expenditure | | 465.4 |
| Excess/Deficit of Income over Expenditure | | 311.75 |
| Less paid from grant | | |
| Net | | 8,022.59 |
| EQUITY | | |
| Opening Balance | | -153.65 |
| Net Income | | 465.40 |
| Adjusted for Expenditure from grants | | |
| Total Equity | | 8,334.34 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY | | 13,960.26 |

LIVING WITH SWAMP WALLABIES – *Wallabia bicolor*

[Living in the valley and trying to grow trees, shrubs, fruit and vegetables can be an ongoing challenge, so I think you will find this account by Shelagh Brigg about swamp wallabies both interesting and informative. Ed]

These pretty wallabies are small and stocky, typically weighing in at about 10 to 20 kg, and about 750 cm on their haunches. They have dark brown, slightly reddish, fur, which is long and coarse, with reddish-yellow patches on the chest and belly. They have a white tip to their tails. Pointy snouts and a light line along the upper jaw bone give them an appealing look, unlike the slightly pugnacious looks of the grey wallaroo. Their life-span is about 15 years.



Other wallabies are just small kangaroos belonging to the genus *Macropus*, but swamp wallabies are the only surviving species of the genus *Wallabia*. Their genetic make-up and tooth formation are different from those of other kangaroos. Their reproductive system is also different. Females become sexually mature at about 15 months, and can become pregnant up to about eight days before the joey of the previous mating is born, thus being able to carry two embryos, each in its own uterus, at one time.

At birth, the joey weighs under one gram. It crawls into the mother's pouch and suckles. The second embryo stops growing until the first joey leaves the pouch eight months later, when the younger joey resumes its development. The older joey suckles for another seven months while the younger one occupies the pouch.

They are very vulnerable while young, preyed upon by foxes and wild dogs, so the female's ability to give birth every eight months is important for the long-term viability of the species. In our area, one of my neighbours shot 22 dogs and foxes in the spring of 2011 (he was protecting his lamb population).



Wallaby on top of the tin shed defoliating a pear tree branch. Note how it has pulled the branch down to get at the leaves, and the other defoliated branches in the background.

In spite of this, only three of the eight or nine young wallabies which I was aware of as pouch joeys made it to a year old and I am constantly finding skeletal remains of wallabies on my property.

In spite of their name, swamp wallabies live mostly in heaths, forests and woodlands where there is dense vegetation for shelter. They are both browsers and grazers, feeding on buds, flowers, ferns, leaves, shrubs, grasses and new growth on larger trees. With their long legs and short arm, they can reach up to about two metres into the trees, pulling the branches down and browsing on the leaves, buds and flowers.

They are usually solitary but occasionally feed in small groups. They do get along with each other as they will feed alongside each other at the food stations which I put out when there is little in the way of food for them – in the vain hope they will leave my trees alone and let them grow. A green plastic rabbit guard acts as a beacon to them, letting them know there is something tasty inside for them.

I am constantly at war with my resident population of 'swampies', continually having to modify the protection of the seedlings I plant. Rabbit guards had to give way to one-metre high chicken-wire chimneys, each needing a stake. They adapted to this by pulling the growing saplings through the holes in the chicken wire and destroying them. I responded by wrapping the chicken wire with bird netting or cloth covers to keep their little paws out. They countered by either pushing the whole contraption to one side, or going under the bottom

of the wire to get at the succulent new growth. This problem was solved by pinning the bottom of the chimney with metal pegs to anchor them.

So with the 'swampies' ever present, I have given up gardening as such. Plants are put out, and if they are eaten, they disappear. They have devastated all the rose bushes I planted as well as most of the citrus trees, which now have to be protected by a two-metre diameter circle of heavy wire netting. Once in a fairly mature state, some plants will sort themselves out by producing unpalatable toxins in their leaves which discourage browsing – the wallabies often only eat the very young, tender, toxin-free new leaves – as they do when browsing lantana.

Female with joey in various poses My trees have had a good year this year. The wallaby population crashed the previous year, due to two possible causes: firstly, predation by dogs and foxes, until the cull last spring, and secondly due to a reduction in the dense lantana cover which had previously protected them. The vegetation is lush, there is plenty to eat, and there are fewer wallabies. They also seem to be less inclined to get to the trouble of getting a few leaves through the obstacles I have put in their way to protect the saplings. All this will change when the weather does, as it gets colder and drier and the lush vegetation gets eaten. I hope by that time some of my trees will have grown to the extent they are no longer available and/or palatable to these attractive and desirable pests.



Female with joey feeding on garden shrubs.

Shelagh Brigg

Coal seam gas workshop

CSG Development in the Hunter: what you need to know

The Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) will hold a free workshop to explain how the exploration and extraction of coal seam gas (CSG) is regulated in NSW, with a focus on landholder rights and advocacy strategies. The workshop will address current CSG titles that apply in the region.



When: Tuesday 17 April 2012, 3-6pm

Where: Pokolbin Community Hall, McDonalds Rd, Pokolbin
RSVP is essential.

For more information or to RSVP, please contact the EDO on (02) 9262 6989 or email education@edo.org.au

Coal Seam Gas is a threat hanging over every landholder, so I strongly encourage everyone who can manage to attend to do so.

The EDO is an independent, non profit community legal centre specialising in public interest environmental law, who offer a wide range of services and information. The EDO prepared the publications "Your Land has Rights" and the "Rural Landholder's Guide to Environmental Law in NSW", so they know all the details. Have a look at their website at <www.edo.org.au>.

An Introduction to Holistic Management – Advance Notice

We have received the email below from Su Morley, about a forthcoming course by David Ward. To anyone wanting to improve the agricultural output of their land, I encourage you to consider this course.

Why not have a look at the website www.holisticresults.com.au and download the free eBook "IF YOU DON'T HAVE A GOAL FOR YOURSELF: The little book on managing holistically" by David Ward who will be conducting the course.

Dear Landcarers,

A 3 day workshop with David Ward of the Holistic Results group is coming up and I encourage you to take up this opportunity to get great results on your property.

An Introduction to Holistic Management

18-19-20 June

Wollombi

www.holisticresults.com.au

See weblink for course content details. The cost is subsidised by the CMA and will be around \$100 for participants.

Note, the course will also allow eligibility for any landholders who may be interested in applying for the CMA's Sustainable Agriculture funding stream in future rounds.

More promotion and details will follow. Meanwhile please call or email with an expression of interest or any questions.

Kind regards,

Susan Morley

Lower Hunter Catchment Officer / Community Support Officer

Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority

ph. 02 4938 4924 mob: 0417 413 026

email: susan.morley@cma.nsw.gov.au

website: www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.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 or

wollombi.landcare@gmail.com