



# Wollombi Valley Landcare News for June 2011



## **FUNGI AND A NATURE WALK**

Saturday 18 June 2011 at 1:00 pm

### **at Wollombi Common & Recreation Ground**

*On Saturday April 18, we invite you to hear a presentation by Anna Durkin on fungi found in the Wollombi area. Regular Readers of OON will know Anna Durkin's regular segment Fungi Findings. Anna has wide ranging interests and since moving to the Wollombi Valley has increased her knowledge and ours with her most informative writings and pictures.*

*Anna says "she can't remember when she first became interested in fungi as it is just one aspect of this wonderful natural world around us. Each area - ecology, fauna, botany, insects as well as fungi - is fascinating but one could spend a lifetime studying each one."*

*Anna has worked for ten years, with other landcarers to restore the previously wrecked Budgewoi Beach and adjacent beach areas on the Central Coast where the array of vegetation species is particularly rich. Anna has also worked with another team for many years working on a SEPP 14 wetland at Colongra.*



Photo courtesy of Anna Durkin

*Anna has kindly agreed to share that knowledge with us. Please bring your questions for Anna to answer and any specimens or photos for ID. After speaking to us Anna will conduct a short easy walk around the Recreation Ground to look for specimens.*

*Following the presentation on fungi there will be bushwalk led by Catherine Craig for approximately 2 hours in a circuit starting and ending at Wollombi Common which adjoins the Recreation Ground where we will see a range of vegetation types, some nice examples of mature xanthorrhoeas, unusual angophoras (europhylla) and a beautiful turpentine glade, and hopefully a bit of wildlife.*

*A reasonable level of fitness will be required. So wear good shoes and be prepared to do a little bit of bush bashing (i.e. scratchy plants). There would also be a few steep and scrabby bits.*

*There will be tea and coffee available, but please bring a folding chair.*

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

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

*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.*

## Where???

*For those that might not be familiar with where the Recreation Ground and Common are located, it is a short (600 metre) drive south from the Tavern along the road to Sydney to the turn-off into Christina Road. Follow Christina Road for about 1.5 kms. Landcare signs will mark the way.*



## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Wollombi Valley Landcare group held at Louise Hicks and Chris Jackson's property, 250 Finchley Track, Laguna on Saturday April 16, 2011

**MEETING OPENED** at 2.30pm

**ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES:** As per attendance sheet

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Jane Mowatt noted her report had been published in the March newsletter. She advised the meeting that 2 new books had been added to the library and were available for loan (topics: butterflies and rainforests respectively)

Jane asked for approval to the purchase of a new sandwich board at a cost of approximately \$400. This was approved on a show of hands.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Louise Hicks tabled the Treasurer's report to 31 March 2011 and spoke to key highlights – cash at bank \$14k (represented by grant funds of \$6k and accumulated funds of \$8k) and a small net profit of \$61.

### **FUTURE PROJECTS**

Noting that the financial report indicated a need for more project work, the President asked for ideas. After some discussion it was resolved to set up a project group targeting Tree of Heaven in the Wollombi area. The President agreed to talk to Cessnock Council first and then to the Catchment Management Authority. The following persons volunteered to work on the project – Jane Mowatt, Shelagh Brigg, Catherine Craig, Chris Jackson, Anne Kinnear and Ken Wickland.

### **ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FOR 2011/12**

The returning officer, Julie Hartley, assumed control of the meeting, declaring all committee positions vacant and presented nominations received for the following management committee members, which were all duly elected unopposed.

**President** Jane Mowatt  
**Vice President** Catherine Craig  
**Secretary & Public Officer** Shelagh Brigg  
**Information Coordinator** Graham Taylor  
**Treasurer** Louise Hicks-  
**Extraordinary Member** Lesley Williams  
**Extraordinary Member** Chris Jackson  
**Extraordinary Member** John George

**MEETING CLOSED** at 4pm

## The Atlas of Living Australia

The Atlas of Living Australia is a new website which is a very powerful and user friendly online natural history resource. Visit <http://www.ala.org.au> to see for yourself

The Atlas has been designed to improve community access to important information about Australia's biodiversity. The website contains over 22 million Australian species records and can provide descriptions, images and distribution maps of thousands of species. It has a range of great functions and tools to organise and analyse the data including maps of your area – discover what lives around you.



Community members can contribute to the Atlas through providing observations, data and images to help improve Australia's biodiversity knowledge. GER and GER Hunter will be working with ALA to improve its functions and develop new capabilities. This will include:

1. Data mobilisation
2. My place – reporting and analysis on regional, sub regional down to property scale including info beyond data and observations (e.g. reports)
3. Citizen science – tools for laptops and phones.

This will be a valuable resource not only for scientists but also the broader community. Keep your eye out for opportunities to be involved here in the Hunter. For an update see the ALA newsletter article at <http://www.ala.org.au/news/ala-and-the-great-eastern-ranges-initiative/>

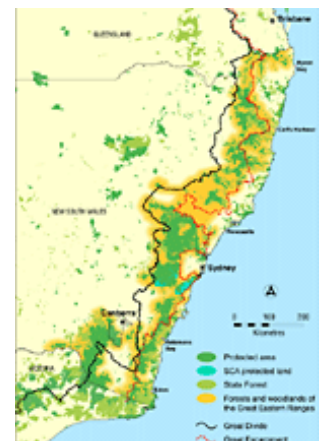
While you are on the computer have a look at <http://www.greasternranges.org.au/>



### WHAT IS THE GREAT EASTERN RANGES INITIATIVE?

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative aims to maintain and improve long-term connectivity conservation of mountain ecosystems running the length of eastern Australia. The 1,200 km New South Wales section of the Great Eastern Ranges is the current area of focus.

Drawing together the efforts of the various community, industry, government and non-government groups already working in the area, the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative will strengthen the resilience of natural ecosystems and the native plant and animal species they support, in the face of climate change and other ecological threats.



## We are always looking for ideas for meetings and activities

Because we haven't heard from you here are a few ideas - what do you think?

Provided we can make the necessary arrangements are any of the following of interest?

- A visit to Kooragang City Farm near Hexham
- Visiting bush nursery
- Excursion Mt Yengo or other National Park
- Other???

## Wattles in Wollombi

At our last meeting in April, Chris Jackson discussed the advantages of keeping “Black Wattles” from the viewpoint of the bush regenerator. He also covered the best way of disposing of those that have to be cleared or fall down of their own accord.

I thought a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of clearing of this major component of our native vegetation would be worthwhile so I have expanded Chris's original talk.

After eucalypts and angophoras, the two Acacia species that are called “Black Wattle” are the most common native trees in our valley. Human attitudes to them vary from hatred to active encouragement.

First let me admit two major disadvantages and five minor ones.

1. Fire Hazard. They burn easily in a bushfire. Their fine leaves catch easily, burn hot and the trees are killed in a fire. Recommendation: keep away from “assets” e.g. buildings particularly downslope and on the north-west and south-west aspects.
2. Falling Hazard. They are shallow rooted and fall easily after rain or during windy weather. Recommendation: keep away from assets e.g. buildings but also proximity to roads and fences.
3. They are “short lived”. This is relative. I have trees that are over 20 years old, but most seem to live only 6-8 years. They can be attacked by borers in the trunk.
4. Their timber is useless for building, fence posts, garden edging, etc. It decomposes too rapidly.
5. As firewood the wood burns rapidly and won't last overnight. Some slow combustion heaters are unsuited to burning highly resinous timbers such as wattles and pines.
6. They appear in large numbers after disturbance by bulldozer, flood or fire in places they aren't wanted i.e. near buildings, along roads, around dams.
7. Some people are allergic to the flowers.

On the other hand, there are several important advantages to having a healthy population of wattles on your property if you want to maintain or establish a native plant community.

1. Wattles are an important colonizer of ground devastated by flood, fire or clearing. They can grow in full sun on very sandy and infertile soils despite the presence of wallabies.
2. They can do this partly because they, unlike eucalypts, can fix atmospheric nitrogen i.e. collect nitrogen from the air and combine it into the ground to the benefit of other plants in the vicinity allowing the establishment of natural vegetation as they die off.
3. They are quick growing even during dry periods, fixing carbon and improving the soil and creating an all year round green landscape.
4. They provide shade, cooling the ground and improving conditions for ground plants and animals (including domestic stock).
5. They provide a beautiful massed flowering spectacle in late winter. A very ornamental yellow flowering tree.
6. They have an attractive scent when flowering.
7. They provide a major and very important winter food source for native wildlife, especially sugar gliders and yellow tailed black cockatoos. Sugar gliders harvest the sap of wattle by chewing cuts into the bark. Their yapping call can be heard where wattles are present. Yellow tailed black cockatoos dig into the trunks more deeply in pursuit of the borers that they can hear chewing away inside.

In young wattles the activity of the cockatoos can break the trunk in half. Many birds and native insects eat the seeds that are often produced in vast quantities and insectivorous birds then eat the insects.

8. Mulched leaves are recommended for dry composting toilets and otherwise make an excellent garden mulch (away from the house).
9. Both species have seeds that are easy to collect and germinate.

### Taxonomy

Acacias are one of the largest and most diverse groups in the Australian flora, ranging from small spiky shrubs to the magnificent blackwood of Tasmania, *A. melanoxylon*.

In our valley two species of Acacia trees are called "Black Wattle".

*Acacia parvipinnula* - *parvi* = small & *pinnula* = pinnule, the smallest segment of the leaf

*Acacia filicifolia* - *filici* = fern & *folia* = leaf Fern-leafed Wattle

At a quick glance they look very similar. They are both bipinnate i.e. the leaves have been divided twice; first into pinnae and then into pinnules. Both species have 2-5 glands on the rhachis (stem) between the bases of each pair of pinnae. And narrow pinnules 0.5-1.5 mm broad, linear to oblong in outline.

To tell them apart:

*A. filicifolia* pinnules are longer usually 6-10 (rarely 3-5) mm long flowers dark yellow in August – September, rarely October trees to 14m high, trunks brown, grey or greyish green in young trees

*A. parvipinnula* pinnules only 3-5 mm long flowers light yellow in September – early December, and also sometimes April – July shrub or tree to 2.5 – 10 m high, the trunk very silvery in young trees.

The flower buds of *A. parvipinnula* are clearly visible now (late May) on the trees in Knights Arm.

### Recommended Method for Clearing Wattles

Wattles that are badly sited e.g. too close to the house or have fallen over can be harvested for firewood. (Trunks of young trees are just the right size to fit into a wood fire without splitting).

The tops harvested for composting toilets and for a very good mulch for the garden. The rest can be left in a heap (well away from the house) which will rapidly rot down. These heaps are a very good wildlife habitat in areas lacking safe homes for small birds (e.g. wrens), lizards and smaller marsupials. The ground below will become more fertile and a good site for establishing new plants.

### In Summary

Much of the dislike of our wattles stems from the clash between those wanting to clear the land for grazing and the wattles' role as the pioneer shrubs and trees for the reestablishment of native forests. This is why you will see the densest stands along the edges of the forests. Occasionally wattles will establish so dense a stand in an area lacking other trees that the other trees cannot establish. A judicious harvesting for firewood may be advantageous.

Clearing all the wattles on your land removes a valuable harvestable resource for both you and your wildlife.



Photo by T.M. Tame – Courtesy of Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust.

Jane Mowatt

## Acting for Climate Change



Sue and I went along to the rally held in Prince Alfred Park in Sydney last Sunday to show our support, along with more than 40,000 others across Australia, in support of a price on carbon to limit climate change.

Like us, you're probably sick of politicians and talking heads arguing on TV and radio about whether Australia should put a price on carbon pollution. It seems that with the political games going on, we've lost sight of the bigger picture: why we need to tackle climate change in the first place.

Why should we care? Because not only does Australia produce more carbon pollution per person than any other country in the world, we will also be one of the countries hardest hit by climate change. The latest science tells us that heatwaves, bushfires and floods will be even worse than previously thought in the coming decades if we don't do something soon.

In fact, a new independent Commission, made up of leading Australian climate scientists, just found that the next decade is the 'critical decade' to stop devastating climate change before it's too late. The report says that decisions we make now will determine the severity of climate change impacts our children and grandchildren will experience. The longer we wait, the more expensive the solutions will become.

And we're already trailing more than 30 developed countries that have put a price on pollution, including New Zealand, the UK and most of the EU.

China may not have put a price on carbon in this way but they are spending enormous amount of money on renewable energy. In the first quarter of 2010, China investment totaled \$US6.5 billion, topping the US with \$US3.5 billion. And where do the majority of the solar panels installed in Australia come from? China!

The carbon price would only apply to fewer than 1,000 of the biggest polluting companies in Australia – it is not a tax on you and me. I think it's time we made them step up to their responsibilities and pay a fair price for their pollution. It means that they won't be allowed to pollute for free any more. Instead, they have to pay a small price per tonne of carbon pollution.

This rewards those companies who do things more efficiently, and gives the ones who wouldn't otherwise try to reduce energy an incentive to clean up their act.

Polluters might still try to pass the costs on to us. But revenue from the price will be made available to households to assist with price rises. That way the policy stays focused on changing the behaviour of the biggest polluting companies.

Some of the money raised is also going to be invested in renewable energy like solar, wind and geothermal – creating jobs working on these new technologies. Australia has all those solutions in abundance already – and they won't ever run out. In fact, did you know that enough sun falls on the Earth in an hour to power the whole world's energy needs for 8 years?

It's crazy that Australia hasn't done more on this already!

The price on pollution is an urgent first step we need to take towards the transition to a clean energy future our kids can look forward to.

I am sick of the inane point scoring and trivialisation that is filling our media. There is vast amounts of scientific and economic data available telling the real story. Instead, we need to finally take a step towards tackling climate change.

Graham Taylor

P.S. I know there are a few people still arguing that climate change doesn't exist, but the fact is that 97% of climate scientists working in the field say it's happening, it's caused by humans, and it's already causing us major damage like more extreme weather events and sea level rise. I figure that even if the 3% who claim climate change isn't real end up being right, not following the advice of the 97% who say we need to reduce pollution now is just not worth the risk.

If you want to read more about the science of climate change, I recommend having a look at [www.climatecommission.gov.au](http://www.climatecommission.gov.au), which has information from Australia's leading climate scientists. Want to know more? Visit [www.sayyesaustralia.org.au](http://www.sayyesaustralia.org.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](mailto:wollombi.landcare@gmail.com)

The success of our Landcare group relies on the input of members, and particularly the committee. Have you thought of joining the committee and contributing your ideas to the future success of the group? The committee meet about once every two months for an hour or two and also help out with arranging future meetings and the setup of the meeting, so the demand on your time is not great. It also is an opportunity to meet others and learn more about Landcare.

## Now is the time to hit *Salvinia* in Wollombi Brook

Cessnock Council weeds officers and Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) staff conducted a number of on-ground surveys of the Wollombi Brook in late 2010 and early 2011 to record any new infestations of *Salvinia molesta* in the Wollombi area.

Infestations were found in the south arm of Wollombi Brook from Burrellong Valley and downstream from Yango Creek to the Williams Bridge where the containment boom is located.

The CMA and Cessnock Council are hosting a workshop on **Saturday 2 July from 1:00pm to 3:30pm at Laguna Hall** to discuss the current *Salvinia* situation in Wollombi and to plan strategic control and containment work for the area over the next six months.

This is a critical time for the Wollombi Brook and coordinated *Salvinia* management must start this winter in order to avoid *Salvinia* choking the Brook once again in spring and summer.

As *Salvinia* is listed as a noxious weed, infringement notices can be issued to landholders who do not take reasonable action in controlling this weed. Landholders with properties on the Wollombi Brook, particularly on the south arm and downstream from Yango Creek, are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to find out about control options and potential resources available in tackling this persistent problem.

Please RSVP to the CMA by Monday 27 June (see attached workshop flyer for details).

### ***Wollombi Salvinia Monitoring Network***

An email network was set up by the CMA in December 2010 for landholders with Brook frontage to assist with detecting *Salvinia* by reporting the results of regular fortnightly checks for *Salvinia* on their section of the Brook.

The number of people using the email network is increasing and their brief email reports have been invaluable in providing a picture of what is happening locally with *Salvinia* distribution and control.

If you are interested in joining this network or want to find out more contact Lorna Adlem at the CMA on 4938 4925 or email [lorna.adlem@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lorna.adlem@cma.nsw.gov.au)

**Let's keep *Salvinia* on the radar and out of the Brook!**



## Controlling Salvinia in Wollombi Brook

***Landholders along Wollombi Brook are being encouraged to attend a half-day workshop for an update on the presence of Salvinia in the Brook and to discuss plans for future containment.***

The Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is urging landholders in Wollombi, Laguna, Murrays Run and Buralong, whose properties front onto Wollombi Brook, to come along to the workshop to find out what sort of support may be available to them for addressing this persistent problem.

Salvinia is on the noxious weeds list and as such infringement notices may be issued to landholders and/or occupiers who fail to take reasonable measures to control it.

The CMA and Cessnock City Council are working in partnership to coordinate a program of works to control and contain Salvinia in the Brook and are encouraging landholders to take advantage of potential support in the coming months.

### ***Salvinia workshop***

***Saturday 2 July***

**1.00-3.30 pm**

**Laguna Hall**

Light refreshments will be provided.

### **To RSVP contact:**

Lorna Adlem

Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment  
Management Authority

[lorna.adlem@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lorna.adlem@cma.nsw.gov.au)

02 4930 1030

by Monday 27 June



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