

NEWSLETTER

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BUSHCARE SPRING 2024 - ISSUE 63

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE

by Gareth Debney Bushland Management Coordinator



Caption: Building Bridges to Boorowa volunteers at Elizabeth Mason's property on 24 May 2024 by Andrew Scott.

It's only been three months since the last Bushcare Newsletter, but for the Bushland team, it feels more like half a year! So much has been happening recently that it's difficult to keep track.

Last time, I promised you a more detailed recap of our Building Bridges to Boorowa 25th anniversary planting trip. This year the team was joined by 33 volunteers – including Mayor Zoë Baker and Councillors Lamb, Welch and Santer - for a weekend of planting in Boorowa in May. We celebrated the milestone by re-signing the Memorandum of Understanding with our partners Hilltops Council and Boorowa Community Landcare Group, committing to work together for another five years. Together we planted more than 5,000 local natives across three properties. Over the past quarter century, 648 volunteers have contributed to planting at least 73,884 local native plants in the region!

I am thrilled to share that the Building Bridges to Boorowa project then went on to win the Community Partnerships category at the NSW Local Government Excellence Awards in June. We hope that this recognition inspires similar environmental partnerships between city and country councils.

As you may have heard from recent media reports, Council will close Balls Head Reserve for this coming New Year's Eve, after larger-than-expected crowds crushed their way through bushland and culturally sensitive sites to obtain 'personal' vantage points last year. Wet weather, COVID restrictions and bushfire conditions had kept crowds away for several years previously and the bushland had had a chance to regenerate. Sadly, much of this recovering bushland took the hit in 2023, which prompted Council to close the reserve.

We've hosted some positive, productive events recently – including our annual National Tree Day community planting on Sunday 28 July. Reinvigorating an old habitat corridor in Brightmore Reserve, Cremorne, 83 volunteers (including Mayor Zoë Baker and Cr MaryAnn Beregi) planted 1,349 endemic plants and enjoyed a delicious sausage sizzle, cooked by yours truly!

We also hosted Northern Beaches Council Bushcare, returning the favour after they have welcomed our volunteers multiple times in the past. A small group joined Balls Head Bushcare's regular session and then toured the Coal Loader grounds after a nice lunch.

Unfortunately, wet weather has forced the cancellation of numerous Bushcare Group work days recently. While this can be frustrating, we need to prioritise your safety and avoid potential damage to our bushland from working in sodden conditions.

Congratulations to Victoria Whitney (Brightmore Bushcare Group Convenor) who attended the Premier's Volunteer Reception on behalf of NSC Bushcare in May. The event celebrated the volunteers whose generosity and resilience bring a strong sense of community to our State.

Congratulations are also in order for Anne Pickles, the unrivalled fauna champion of North Sydney, who recently recorded her 10,000th Wildlife Watch online observation. Anne's dedication to this project is deeply appreciated. Thank you, Anne – we look forward to celebrating this (and many more) observation milestones with you in the future!

On a sad note, we recently learnt that two very special members of our Bushcare community had passed away. Heather Robson had been part of North Sydney Bushcare for over 30 years, working mostly with the Tunks Park groups. And founding participant in Council's Adopta-Plot program, Michal Tomaszewski,

was passionate about Cremorne Reserve and the rehabilitation of bushland below his home in Kareela Road. Vale Heather and Michal. You can read tributes to them on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

Caption: Cake to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Building Bridges to Boorowa project on 25 May 2024 by Andrew Scott.



DOES THAT BIRD NEED MY HELP?

During spring, people often find baby birds 'fallen' from the nest, and of course adult birds may be injured at any time. At Sydney Wildlife Rescue we have a 24-hour rescue line (02 9413 4300) and we are happy to rescue and advise.

It is against the law for members of the public to take care of any wildlife, but we do appreciate your help in notifying us of birds in trouble and your help in first aid and rescue where appropriate.

BABY BIRDS FOUND ON THE GROUND

- 1. Protect the baby by putting a cardboard box or even a breathable shopping bag over it. This will protect it from other birds and animals.
- 2. Ring us right away we will ask you to take a photo so we can identify the species and age, and check for injuries or blood.
- 3. We will advise on your next move. Some species can be reunited, returned to their nest or put in a small box nest nearby for the parents to come to.
- 4. If the bird is not suitable to reunite or you need help reuniting it, we will arrange for a rescuer to come to you.
- 5. If injured, we may ask you to take it to a nearby vet. You don't pay, but you must give the vet our reference number so we can easily check on it later.

INJURED ADULT BIRDS

- 1. Cover the bird with a box or breathable bag for protection.
- 2. Ring us right away to let us know. We will ask you for the type of bird, if you know how it was injured, and exactly where it is.
- 3. We will advise how you can help. You may be able to help by taking the bird to a vet.

BIRDS FLYING INTO CARS OR BUILDINGS

If you see a bird fly into an obstacle like a car or building and fall to the ground, you can check it for obvious injuries and call us. We may ask you to take it to the vet. If the bird is just 'stunned', cover it and leave in a sheltered place. You can check it after an hour or so. It may have recovered and will fly off. If not, ring us back and take it to a vet if you can.

For non-emergency situations, such as questions about deterring brush turkeys, ducks in the pool, birds destroying gardens and feeding wild birds, contact us through our website sydneywildlife.org.au or email address info@sydneywildlife.org.au

By Bev Young - Sydney Wildlife Rescue Volunteer



Caption: Above – Fledgling Tawny Frogmouths in care by Sydney Wildlife Rescue.

Below – Kookaburra unable to stand in care with Sydney Wildlife Rescue



BLACK AND WHITE BIRDS

Magpies, currawongs, pee wees, ravens and butcherbirds will encourage their fledglings to the ground before they can fly so they can learn to

forage for worms in the grass. They may look lost, but they are learning! If there are no dangers nearby (like cats stalking), please leave them alone.

Caption: Australian magpie

WILDLIFE WATCH UPDATE (JUNE TO AUGUST 2024)

There were many wildlife sightings this season. From bushland to urban areas, Brush Turkeys foraged in leaf litter, White-faced Herons hunted on lawns and White-bellied Sea Eagles flew over Sydney Harbour in search of fish. A possum returned to the nestbox it was raised in, after its mother was seen dead on the road – a timely reminder to look out for animals when driving at night and to consider whether you can add habitat elements to your yard to help local wildlife (from plants to nestboxes).

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos opened wattle trees to find grubs, Whipbird pairs called to one another in the mornings and Tawny Frogmouths slept, unseen by many, during the day. Fox and Swamp Wallaby scats were both found at Tunks Park and the footprints of Rakali were seen along our foreshores.

Winter 2024 sightings included:

- White-bellied Sea Eagle (Waverton) soaring over the Parramatta River.
- Common Brushtail Possum (Cremorne) returned to their nestbox to recuperate.
- Rainbow Lorikeet (North Sydney urban, Wollstonecraft urban, Kirribilli urban, Cremorne Reserve, Neutral Bay urban, Waverton Park, Primrose Park, Ted Mack Civic Park, Berry Island Reserve) eating Liquidambar tree seeds; pair inspecting a natural tree hollow in a gum tree.
- Eastern Spinebill (Berry Island Reserve).
- Little Pied Cormorant (Berry Island Open Space, Cremorne Reserve Open Space, Primrose Park).
- Tawny Frogmouth (Cremorne Reserve, Neutral Bay urban, Coal Loader Waverton) roosting in Casuarina tree; pair asleep together in Callistemon tree.
- Long-nosed Bandicoot (Cammeray urban, adjoining Hamilton Reserve) seen beside road.
- Silvereye (Berry Island Reserve).
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater (Berry Island Reserve).
- Variegated Fairy-wren (Cremorne Reserve, Badangi Reserve, Balls Head Reserve) male in breeding plumage, foraging in a flowering Wattle.
- Australian Brush Turkey (Wollstonecraft urban, Balls Head Reserve, North Sydney urban, Badangi Reserve, Anderson Park Neutral Bay, Cremorne Point urban, Cremorne Reserve) foraging in soil; feeding on Chinese Tallow tree seeds; seen with fishing line around feet; tending mound in same spot as previous year with females visiting; moving leaf-litter along ground to mound 50m away.
- St Andrew's Cross Spider (Cremorne Reserve) tiny iuvenile on Casuarina.
- Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (Badangi Reserve, Neutral Bay urban) several adults gouging trunks and branches of small trees such as Broad-leafed Privet and Wattle and one hungry juvenile calling for food; flying overhead.
- Elegant Snake-eyed Skink (Forsyth Park) sunning itself on a felled wooden stump.
- Superb Fairy-wren (Badangi Reserve).



Caption: A Brushtail Possum safe inside its nestbox home by

- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (Badangi Reserve, Anderson Park Neutral Bay, Cremorne Reserve, Cremorne urban) sitting at entrance to tree hollow in habitat tree; eating White Cedar tree seeds, foraging on grass.
- Galah (Wollstonecraft) feeding on Liquidambar tree
- Laughing Kookaburra (Wollstonecraft urban, Badangi Reserve, Kirribilli urban, Cremorne Reserve, North Sydney urban, Balls Head Reserve, Ted Mack Civic Park) observing the neighbourhood from a large, open tree branch; snuggled up to another at night, asleep high in a
- Rakali (Cremorne Reserve, Willoughby Bay) swimming around rocks on the shoreline between wharves; footprints left behind.
- Eastern Whipbird (Badangi Reserve, Primrose Park) pair calling to one another; another foraging nearby in bracken fern; pair perched and flying around the lower canopy.
- Saunders' Case Moth (North Sydney urban) resting in case attached to fence.
- Crested Tern (Cremorne Reserve) adult being followed by one iuvenile.
- Australian Wood Duck (Primrose Park Open space) pair foraging on the lawn near the water's edge.

For a full list of species, go to northsydney.nsw.gov.au/ WildlifeWatch and click on 'Submit or view sightings'.

Please send in your wildlife sightings and stories for our next newsletter. You can also contribute directly through the Biocollect website or by contacting Council's Bushland Project Officer on 02 9936 8100 or council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

by Karina Hanemann - Bushland Project Officer

TRIBUTE TO HEATHER ROBSON



It is with deep regret that we inform you of Heather Robson's passing. Heather was a founding member of North Sydney Council's Bushcare program with over 30 years of voluntary service. She was a member of Tunks Park East Bushcare Group for all this time, attended Mortlock Reserve Bushcare Group and has been a regular supporter of Tunks Park West Bushcare Group for the past decade. Our Bushcare volunteer database shows that since 2007 (when records were digitised) Heather undertook around 460 hours of voluntary service to help conserve North Sydney Council's bushland reserves.

Heather's cousin Peter Phillips said of her:

"Heather grew up in North Sydney and went to Wenona girls' school. Later she studied to become a teacher and went to work in the country – West Wyalong amongst other places – where she taught art. She enjoyed working for the renowned Australian artist Ken Done for a period and later as a tour guide in the United States and Europe, then returned home to enjoy her pastimes that included studying university courses. Heather would join annual archaeological digs with Sydney University, travelling to exotic places like Jordan. Heather

was a modest, humble and assertive person, a nice lady. Heather's extended family held her funeral at Northbridge Golf Club, where she played golf."

Steve Miles - Tunks Park East Bushcare Convenor said:

"I cannot remember a time at Tunks without Heather. She was one of those regular members who could be relied upon. Discussions with Heather were always interesting and often strayed to politics. She loved archaeology and every year would go to a dig in Jordan. We will miss her."

Kathy Bisits – Tunks Park West Bushcare volunteer said:

"It's very sad to hear about Heather, especially knowing that she had been active in Bushcare until recently. She was very sharp with a distinctive style and wit. Also, a very generous volunteer."

Readers may recall that Heather, along with five other 'Bushcare Champions' with 30+ years of voluntary service, was interviewed last year to celebrate North Sydney Council Bushcare's 30th anniversary. Scan the QR code to watch her interview.





Caption: Tunks Park West Bushcare Group (L to R) – Helen Wilson, David Bell, Andrew Hall, Heather Robson and Ian Clarke on Miller Street, Cammeray on 27 February 2023.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAL TOMASZEWSKI



Caption: Michal Tomaszewski, Mystery Bay, July 2024 by Tiare Tomaszewski.

Michal Tomaszewski was a founding member of Council's Adopta-Plot program. Michal, along with his two daughters Tiare and Leilani, supported Adopt-a-Plot since 2005, giving about 144 hours of voluntary service and contributing funding for about 219 hours of bush regeneration on Plot #11 in Cremorne Reserve.

In loving memory of Michal Tomaszewski

by Leilani Tomaszewski

As you know, Michal was instrumental in helping the Harrisons set up Adopt-a-Plot nearly 20 years ago. Dad was very passionate about helping Trevor and Lerida Harrison with this application as we had known the Harrisons for a long time, both through sailing, and the younger generation all going to school together. The Tomaszewski home was being engulfed by Madeira vine – it was a veritable jungle and covered every square inch of our plot in front of the home including all over the giant Port Jackson Fig and every other tree, but it was also starting to infiltrate the hedges and encroach on the lawn areas. It was, to put it mildly, a mess. The soil in the plot was like sand... and, as our plot was the worst on the Point, possibly with the worst access, the photos of this weed inundation (a bit like *The Day of the Triffids*) was what got the initial grant over the line – and the rest is history.

When Adopt-a-Plot actually commenced, our family spent many many extra days ridding the plot of Madeira vine. We dug down to a depth of 1m in the soil over the entire area of the plot to get rid of all of the tubers underground. We had a literal army from the family helping — my nephew Jack Hawke, my godfather Brian Fegan, Michal, Tiare and I — plus a few others when they had time. But I remember spending an entire week with Jack getting the vines off the top canopy of two smaller flowering trees on the plot, with Dad taking all the many bulging bags up to the top of our battle-axe block to the street for collection by Council for disposal. Don't get me started on the fig tree — what a task... it seemed insurmountable, but we chipped away each week and gradually the tree lost its mantle of Madeira and emerged triumphantly into the sunlight again. We all became experts at gently untangling

the Madeira vine so that the nodules did not dislodge and fall to the plot floor below.

For quite a few years, nothing would grow. The soil was so degraded by the weeds, it simply couldn't hold any moisture... and then about four or five years down the track, some of the little plants actually took. During all this time we were still assiduously spending hours getting rid of Madeira vine and sticky weed. After about eight years the Madeira was under control, until we got to the edges of the plot where it was too steep to work. But it really felt like a job well done. The shrubs, birds nest ferns and other new plants started to be able to grow and now, many years later, look at it – verdant and lush... just a delight.

Without the dedication and commitment of Council and the continued commitment of residents to maintain the natural environment around Cremorne Point, we would be living in a much-diminished natural habitat area. Without each family's contribution, our visual environment would not be as beautiful as it is now.

Last night, while I listened to the Powerful Owl hooting, I reflected on what a vast and long-standing success Adopt-a-Plot has been, and specifically the contributions of my father, Michal Tomaszewski, plus the rest of the Tomaszewski family and the Harrison family, to the visual environment of Cremorne Point, as a result of their vision for better environmental care of our remnant bushland patch. It has been a long-standing commitment – and it is precisely this extended period of time that has allowed the bush to heal, and the native flora and fauna to thrive again. How fortunate are we to have individuals with passion, vision and determination to create change for the enjoyment of all the international, interstate and local visitors to the Cremorne Point area?

I know that Michal would have hoped that both new and longstanding residents can now see the results of this long-term commitment and its associated benefits to both the local community and to society at large, and that individuals will continue to roll up their sleeves to assist in preserving this unique landscape around Cremorne Point.

LEARNING LOCAL ABORIGINAL HISTORY FROM THE WATER

by Michelle Greenfield - Bushland Interpretations Officer, Lane Cove Council



Caption: (L to R) Jacqui Vollmer, Michelle Greenfield, Karen Smith, Maureen Flowers, Andrew Scott and Dr Ian Hoskins on the Aboriginal Awareness and Heritage Boat Cruise, 23 June 2024.

In June, in the lead up to NAIDOC Week, 74 people boarded the Tribal Warrior's Mari Nawi (Big Canoe) at Jeffrey Street Wharf, Milsons Point for an Aboriginal Awareness and Heritage Boat Cruise of the lower reaches of the Lane Cove and Parramatta rivers. The event was a partnership between North Sydney and Lane Cove councils.

Karen Smith, Education Officer for the Aboriginal Heritage Office, spoke about the Cammeraygal and Wallumedegal peoples of the lower north shore of Sydney and their connections to Country. It was a wonderful opportunity to view the local landscape from an Indigenous perspective.

Dr Ian Hoskins, Council Historian for North Sydney, shared local and European history and Maureen Flowers spoke about the Battle for Kellys Bush, the last remaining area of bushland at the mouth to the Parramatta River.

Bushland Officers Andrew Scott from North Sydney, Jacqui Vollmer from Hunters Hill, and myself spoke on the natural heritage of the river and foreshore, and local flora and fauna.

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL NURSERY VISIT

by Andrew Scott - Bushcare Officer

In May, the Bushcare Nursery Group visited Central Coast Council's nursery. The nursery is built on the edge of a mangrove forest at the Council depot in Erina.

Michael Smith (Team Leader Landcare, Central Coast Council) welcomed us and guided us around the facilities. Central Coast Council takes in an area bigger than Canberra and hosts 73 environmental groups. The Council Landcare team is supported by 700 volunteers. According to Michael, volunteering is on the rise on the Central Coast.

The community nursery was started in 2016 to produce the thousands of plants required by Bushcare. It occupies 1 acre, and includes a large potting shed, several good quality poly houses, and a large shade covered area. For 40 years previously, it produced indoor plants and street trees.

The nursery is supported by 30 volunteers, with 10 to 12 people contributing about 50 hours of work each week. They meet on Mondays and Wednesdays, and are looking at starting another group on Fridays. Plant production is driven by the needs of Council projects.

On a typical day, the nursery volunteers fill trays of tubes with potting mix, water them in, do some weeding, and then return to the trays for production. All production is tracked, with past records used to forecast future production. The nursery plants are



Caption: Central Coast Council and North Sydney Council staff and volunteers at the Community Nursery in Erina on 8 May 2024.

mostly grown from local provenance seed rather than cuttings from stock plants.

"This provides diversity and resilience against environmental pressures," explains Michael. "We grow stock plants in the nursery as a calendar for seed collection." When these stock plants flower, the seed collecting group (of about 10 people) knows it's time to collect the seeds from plants of that species.

At nearby Green Point Reserve, Robyn Urquhart (Landcare Officer) gave us a tour of a forested wetland vegetation site. The site was named after Joan Chandler, a local resident, now passed, who approached Council in 2000 to make improvements to the unloved reserve including educational signage.

The Bushland team and volunteers would like to thank Central Coast Council Landcare team and volunteers for being great hosts. We enjoyed learning about your work.



WEED TO WATCH

Family: : Ochnaceae

Ochna or Mickey Mouse Plant (Ochna serrulata)

Distribution: A native to South Africa, Ochna was originally introduced as a popular garden and hedge plant. The seeds are dispersed by birds, allowing it to spread from gardens into nearby bushland. It is a common invasive species found in both dry and moist forests and can dominate the understorey, outcompeting native plants.

Description: Ochna is a dense, erect shrub growing up to approximately 2m in height. The stem is covered in small, raised dots (called lenticels) which allow gas to pass between internal plant tissue and the atmosphere. The alternately arranged leaves are glossy, narrowly oblong shaped and usually 2–10cm long, with finely toothed and often wavy leaf margins. In spring, bright yellow flowers appear, with five petals and green sepals that turn red and bend backwards when in fruit. The fruit is fleshy, egg-shaped and green in colour but turns black as it matures.

Control: So, what to do? The deep, woody taproot makes this plant difficult to treat by hand and incorrect treatment can result in regrowth. Do not try to pull out mature plants as the stem will snap at the kinked node. If the soil is sandy or soft enough, juvenile Ochnas can be carefully hand removed or dug out, making sure all the roots are removed. The scrape and paint method is the best treatment technique for this invasive plant. Using a sharp knife, scrape the stem gently to expose the green layer underneath the bark. Scrape along the stem as far down to the roots as possible and up the main stem, on one or two sides, depending on the thickness of the stem. Avoid ring barking the stem as you want the plant to remain active. Apply herbicide to the exposed vascular tissue as quickly as possible to ensure it is absorbed - check the NSW WeedWise website for the recommended treatment. Watch out for regrowth and treat it in the same way to successfully control the weed.



Caption: Ochna serrulata leaves



Caption: Ochna serrulata flower.



Caption: Ochna serrulata fruit

References

- Richardson F.J, Richardson R.G & Shepherd R.C.H, Weeds of the South-East – an identification guide for Australia
- 2. Robinson L, Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney
- 3. NSW Weedwise Ochna serrulata (http://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov. au/Weeds/Ochna)

All photos by Forest and Kim Starr at Maui, Kula Experimental Station, 13 March 2008 (Wikimedia Commons).

BUSHCARE EVENTS CALENDAR

Bookings must be made for all events at: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare or 9936 8100 unless otherwise stated.

SEPTEMBER

- 15 Wildflower Walk North Head | Sunday 8am to 2pm
- 21 Community Nursery Open Day | Saturday 9am to 12pm
- 26 Living with Brush Turkeys | Thursday 7pm to 8.15pm Bookings: lanecove.nsw.gov.au/bushcareevents or 9911 3566

OCTOBER

- 1 Family Bush Walk Berry Island | Tuesday 10am to 12pm
- 3 Family Spotlight Walk Berry Island | Thursday 5.3opm to 8pm
- 4 Wildlife Detective | Friday 10.30am to 12pm
- 5 Seed Propagation Workshop Berry Island | Saturday 9.30am to 12.30pm
- **13 Bushcare Essentials Training** | Sunday 10am to 1pm Enquiries: Bushcare Officer at andrew.scott@northsydney.nsw.gov.au
- 19 Grass ID Workshop | Saturday 10am to 1pm
- 27 Bushcare Visit Campbelltown | Sunday 8am to 4pm

NOVEMBER

- 2 Growing Coastal Plants | Tuesday 9am to 12pm Bookings: lanecove.nsw.gov.au/bushcareevents or 9911 3566
- 9 Weed ID Walk and Talk | Saturday 10am to 1pm
- 10 Frog and Reptile Habitat Workshop | Tuesday 7am to 4pm Diary dates at willoughby.nsw.gov.au or 9977 1000
- 17 Introduction to Wildlife Watch | Sunday 10am to 1pm
- 24 Bushcare Kayak Cattai Creek | Sunday 7am to 4pm

DECEMBER

- 1 Floating Landcare, Hungry Beach | Sunday 7am to 4pm
- 8 Bushcare Volunteer Christmas Party | Sunday 5pm to 8pm



RIZING TO THE CHALLENGE AT FRED HUTLEY RESERVE

Throughout the year, the Bushland team welcomes corporate volunteer groups to help with bush regeneration. On Thursday 30 May, an enthusiastic group of volunteers from Rizing came to help at Fred Hutley Reserve in Cammeray.

The volunteers removed woody weeds and around 2 tonnes of fine fuels, contributing to bushfire hazard reduction before summer. They also planted 130 local native plants including Eucalyptus, Melaleuca, Leptospermum, Hakea and Hovea.

Veronica Gamallo, Rizing's volunteer coordinator said, "We had a wonderful time working in the bush at Fred Hutley Reserve; we felt we had done our country proud. Many thanks to the Bushland team (Tristram, Larissa and Tom) for their hard work and dedication to the bush!"

Many thanks to Rizing for giving their time and helping the local environment.

by Tristram Thomas — Bushland Regeneration Team Leader



Caption: Corporate volunteers and Tristram Thomas (centre) for Rizing's volunteering day at Fred Hutley Reserve on 30 May 2024 by Larissa Kabakov.



Did you know North Sydney Council Bushcare has a Facebook page? Like us at www.facebook.com/bushcare



Visit regenTV the Australian Association of Bush regenerators video platform, view recordings of webinars, field days and forums. www.aabr.org.au/regenTV

For more information or to make a booking for any of these workshops or special events please contact the Bushcare Officer on 9936 8100. Printed on 100% recycled paper.

Gratitude to all our contributors who take the time to put ideas and research into words so we can learn. Thank you.

Would you like the newsletter emailed to you instead? www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare