

NEWSLETTER

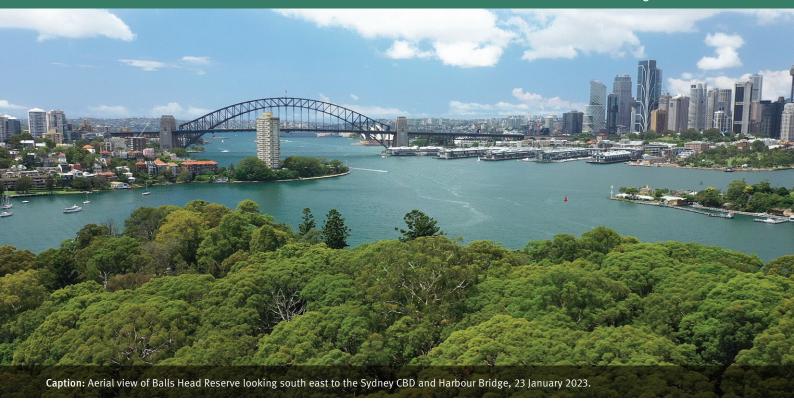
www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare



BUSHCARE AUTUMN 2025 - ISSUE 65

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE

by Gareth Debney Bushland Management Coordinator



Welcome back to North Sydney Bushcare for 2025! The Bushland team have planned a great year of workshops and activities for all our volunteers, program supporters and community members to learn about biodiversity conservation and share their own experiences. As usual, these activities are listed in the Bushcare calendar, available from Council's Customer Service Centre, Stanton Library and The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability.

Upcoming events include Bushcare Essentials training (23 March) – a must for new volunteers and anyone wanting to brush up on their best-practice bush regeneration knowledge. For those of you who like to see the forest from the trees (or maybe it's the other way around), we are celebrating Eucalyptus Day (22 March) with a guided walk around Balls Head Reserve, identifying the different endemic and introduced canopy trees that characterise this iconic reserve and provide such a visual contrast to its 1920s past, when the original forest

had largely been removed and people mistakenly called the peninsula 'Bald Head'.

Speaking of Balls Head, partway through 2024 Council resolved to close the reserve to the public for New Year's Eve, after the bushland suffered extensive damage during the 2023 NYE event. This change in policy had the potential to be unpopular in the wider community (beyond the North Sydney local government area), however I'm pleased to report that the closure went very smoothly with no incidents. Locals and visitors alike gave predominantly positive, understanding feedback.

The leadership shown by North Sydney Council in making this decision is in keeping with the history of the reserve. Council, alongside several influential conservation groups, successfully lobbied the NSW Government in the early 20th century to dedicate the headland as a public reserve, rather than allow the creep of industrialisation to continue beyond the Coal Loader

and ex-BP oil terminal sites. These early conservation groups then worked together with Council to plant trees on the headland and help reinstate the forest that once existed there. The reserve is currently the subject of a State Heritage nomination, citing this unique history and significance in the context of community-led natural area conservation. To learn more, visit the Heritage NSW website – feedback on the proposed listing is open until 13 April.

Our urban-rural partnership project with Boorowa Community Landcare Group and Hilltops Council celebrated a milestone 25 years in 2024. The annual volunteer tree planting weekend has seen over 600 participants plant more than 76,000 trees in the Boorowa district, helping to reverse land degradation and reconnect wildlife habitats. If you would like to contribute to this award-winning environmental activity, join us from 30 May to 1 June this year. To register, email council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 9936 8100.

We look forward to seeing all our regular volunteers returning to Bushcare this February and hope to welcome a few new faces as well. While volunteer numbers have grown over the past few years, a couple of groups need more hands to keep them going. Working to care for and rehabilitate the only remnant bushland in Neutral Bay, Forsyth Park Bushcare Group needs more volunteers to ensure this important habitat refuge keeps improving. If you live in the area

or know someone who does, let them know about the group who meet in the afternoon on the fourth Saturday of the month. As always, Council's Bushcare Supervisor provides all the essentials (training, tools, guidance) as well as afternoon tea – what's not to like about that?

Finally, on a sadder note, our Bushcare community recently lost two local environmental legends. John Nearhos

was a member of the Balls Head Bushcare Group for several years and participated in other volunteer greening projects around Waverton as well. Similarly, Richard Waterfield* volunteered with the Tunks East and Mortlock Reserve Bushcare Groups in Cammeray between 2014 and 2017, while also working with Bushcare groups in the Willoughby and Lane Cove council areas. Vale John and Richard – your legacy of local conservation action will endure.

*Richard Waterfield wrote a story about his career as a bush regenerator in the Bushcare Newsletter, Autumn 2015 edition that has been archived with NSW State Libraries IndyReads (use your State Library card number or Stanton Library number, in the latter case select Shorelink). Willoughby Environmental Protection Association wrote a very nice tribute to him in their e-newsletter from 11 February 2025.

HOW TO HELP DISPLACED WILDLIFE

By Bev Young - Sydney Wildlife Rescue Volunteer

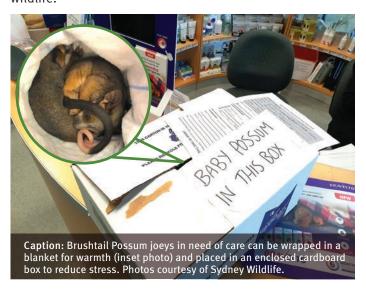
Waterbirds trapped in fishing line, lost or injured baby possums – our native creatures face daily threats from predators, traffic, pollution and loss of habitat. If you come across injured or displaced wildlife, there are some simple steps you can take to give them the best chance of survival.

Firstly, if it is safe to do so, ensure the animal is away from danger. If possible, gently contain it by placing a box or towel over it. Warmth, dark and quiet can all help minimise shock.

Then, call one of Sydney's wildlife rescue organisations. They offer free, 24-hour phone services you can call for help and advice. When you speak to them, they may give you instructions or organise for a licensed wildlife volunteer to come and collect the animal from you. Alternatively, they may ask if you can take the animal to the vet for a free check – you will not need to pay anything. All going well, the animal will be rehabilitated and re-released back in its home environment.

Contact:

Sydney Wildlife Rescue – 9413 4300 WIRES – 1300 094 737 Sydney Wildlife has a greater presence in the North Sydney area. They're also available via email at <code>info@sydneywildlife.org.au</code> to help with animal-related questions such as possums in roofs, wildlife-friendly pest control, habitat gardening and feeding wildlife.



SUMMER BUSHLAND OPERATIONS

by Tom Windon - Bush Regenerator

Over the holiday period, while the volunteers took a well-deserved break, the Bushland team have been looking after the Bushcare sites. We have been controlling herbaceous weeds and hazards to health and safety by stabilising slopes, capping star pickets, removing standing deadwood and flagging unmarked bull ant nests.

We have also been preparing Badangi Reserve for a hazard reduction burn later in the year by thinning out the shrub layer mesic species including Pitto (Pittosporum undulatum), Cheese Tree (Glochidion ferdinandi), Blueberry Ash (Elaeocarpus reticulatus), Coffee Bush (Breynia oblongifolia) and Port Jackson Fig (Ficus rubiginosa) to create the necessary fuel load.

National Tree Day will be held at Hamilton Reserve this year next to the previous planting site from 2023. We will be busy preparing the site including keeping it weed free, reducing hazards and removing glass, rubbish and deadwood. We will also flag bull ant nests and pre-dig holes for the planting.

See you in the bush!

WILDLIFE WATCH UPDATE (DEC 2024 TO FEB 2025)

One sighting that captured the imagination this season was a flock of what appeared to be 200 White-throated Needletails in the sky! These birds are a migratory species, coming to Australia after breeding in the northern hemisphere. They feed and live mostly on the wing, catching flying insects such as termites, ants, beetles and flies. Their bodies are so adapted to being in the air, that their very long wings and short tail make taking off from the ground difficult when compared to other birds. White-throated Needletails can fly at speeds of up to 130km/h and have protective feathers around their eyes. They are listed as vulnerable under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

Other species seen around included many chicks, from migratory Channel-billed Cuckoos calling to their foster parents (Currawongs), to the familiar Brush Turkeys who, unlike the former need no assistance to feed post-hatching as they are born independent. Buff-banded Rails were again spotted sheltering under Lomandras and skinks were found stuck in stairwells and released back outside. Some Ringtail Possums were found heat-stressed and sleeping in odd places, which is a good reminder to try and create safe, connected habitat in your yard for them and place water out – especially on hot days - in a safe location for any wildlife.



Caption: White-throated Needletail by Jack Shick courtesy of BirdLife Photography

Summer 2024–25 sightings included:

- **Brown Goshawk** (Brightmore Reserve) perching in and sweeping between tall
- Channel-billed Cuckoo (Neutral Bay. Cremorne urban) chicks begging for food from their foster parents
- Galah (Cremorne urban) pair allopreening (social grooming) on a gum tree branch near a hollow
- Scorpion-tailed Spider (Cremorne Reserve) seen with egg sacs on a Lomandra
- Australian King Parrot (McMahons Point urban) feeding on Lantana fruit
- Variable Ladybird (Cremorne Reserve) on Breynia oblongifolia
- Australian Brush Turkey (Primrose Park, Badangi Reserve, Balls Head Reserve, North Sydney urban, Neutral Bay urban, Cremorne urban) maintaining mounds; chicks seen about; adult with deformed right foot; dead on footpath, nearby docile cat
- Barred-sided Skink (Neutral Bay urban) found inside building and relocated to the garden
- Eastern Koel (Badangi Reserve, Anderson Park, Cremorne urban) seen and being chased by Noisy Miners
- Buff-banded Rail (Waverton Park) sheltering under a Lomandra

- Eastern Water Dragon (Cremorne Reserve) male seen crossing the footpath
- Crested Pigeon (Cremorne urban) sunbathing on the roof
- Eastern Whipbird (Badangi Reserve, Cremorne Reserve) male and female calling to one another
- Grey Butcherbird (Balls Head Reserve, Carradah Park) juvenile searching for invertebrates in a dead tree trunk; also eating a cicada
- Jewel Bug (Waverton urban) instar on Breynia oblingifolia together with adults
- Little Black Cormorant (Cremorne Reserve, Waverton Park) roosting in gum tree; fishing
- Common Ringtail Possum (Crows Nest urban, Neutral Bay urban) rescued from the jaws of a cat; dead under powerline
- Australian Pelican (Berry Island Reserve) flying overhead
- Rainbow Lorikeet (Balls Head Reserve, Coal Loader parklands, Neutral Bay urban, Sub-Base Platypus North Sydney) feeding on banksia flowers; feeding on hybrid grevillea flowers; dead in gutter; pair investigating a hollow in a sandstone retaining wall
- Fig-leaf Beetle (Carradah Park) on Sandpaper Fig

- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (Gore Cove) emerging from and feeding chicks in a tree hollow
- Eastern Osprey (Coal Loader Wharf) female seen perching on wharf and nearby tree branch
- Leaf-footed Bug (Cremorne Reserve) on Eucalyptus tree
- Variegated Fairy-wren (Balls Head Reserve, Badangi Reserve) males in breeding plumage
- Swamp Wallaby (Tunks Park) scat and animal seen
- Tawny Frogmouth (Neutral Bay urban) roosting on a dead palm frond caught in a Crepe Myrtle tree
- White-browed Scrubwren (Primrose Park) on Lantana

For a full list of species, or to enter your own, go to northsydney.nsw.gov.au/ WildlifeWatch or search for Wildlife Watch on our website and click on 'Submit or view sightings'.

You can also contribute sightings by contacting us at Council. We would love to hear your wildlife stories! Contact Council's Bushland Project Officer on 9936 8100 or email council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

> by Karina Hanemann -**Bushland Project Officer**

BUSHCARE KAYAK - CATTAI CREEK



On Sunday 24 November 2024, North Sydney Council Bushcare partnered with Friends of Mitchell Park Bushcare, Brewongle Environmental Education Centre and Western Sydney University for a Platypus awareness activity on Cattai Creek in Mitchell Park. Two Greater Sydney Landcare Officers tagged along for the adventure.

Steven Body, Principal for Brewongle, and fellow teacher David, both qualified kayak guides, provided a fleet of kayaks and their services for the activity.

Richie Benson, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Bushcare Coordinator at Mitchell Park, co-hosted the event and interpreted points of interest along the way.

Our group of seventeen paddled the length of the park boundary on Cattai Creek, about two or three kilometres return, which took about two hours at a casual pace. Along the way, we observed the yellow green foliage of grand Water Gums casting shadow over the water's edge, behind them towering Cabbage Gums with their slick light grey trunks accompanied by shorter paperbark and bottlebrush trees. The feathered seeds of Monkey Rope, a native vine, caught on the wind, floated about us. Half a dozen Eastern Water Dragons were camouflaged among the fallen trees along the riverbank, Azure Kingfishers alarmed by our approach darted

ahead, and a gigantic Diamond Python with a swollen belly sunbaked in a dead willow.

Dr Michelle Ryan, Western Sydney University and Hawkesbury Nepean River Keeper Alliance member, pointed out a potential Platypus burrow. Michelle is heading up an environmental DNA (eDNA) project in Western Sydney to detect the presence of Platypus in our waterways. She also spoke about threats to Platypus including Opera House traps, which are illegal to use but not to sell.

In places, we observed significant infestations of weeds including Ludwigia, Willow, Coral Tree, Tecoma and Cats Claw Creeper. We had planned to do Bushcare activities on the day, but the paddle and talk took a bit longer than expected on a hotter than usual day.

A huge thank you to Steve, Dave, Richie and Michelle for this unique experience. We learnt a lot about Platypus and hope to return soon to help preserve their habitat along Cattai Creek.

Friends of Mitchell Park Bushcare meets on the second Saturday and Sunday of each month, 9am to 2pm each day. Visit the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service website for more information. Search 'Mitchell Park Bushcare' or go to www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/friends-of-mitchell-park-bushcare

FLOATING LANDCARE - MACKEREL BEACH

On Sunday 1 December 2024, nine North Sydney Council Bushcare volunteers joined the Bushland team and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for a Floating Landcare activity at Mackerel Beach in Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park on Pittwater.

Our group arrived early in the community bus to Taylors Point, Clareville where we met our host Bettina Tuerk-Rochl, NPWS Officer, and the NPWS volunteers.

Brett Hogbin from Hawkesbury River Tours ferried our merry band in two boat loads toward West Head where we passed panoramic bushland vistas, that included gnarly Sydney Red Gums (*Angophora costata*) hanging atop yellow, pink and grey sandstone outcrops.

We last visited Mackerel Beach in 2018. The previous NPWS coordinator, Jude Morris, said: "Mackerel Beach was originally a campground. Bushcare work started in 2014 to protect the lagoon and its Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest and Coastal Saltmarsh vegetation communities. Lantana was climbing over other weeds including Green Cestrum (*Cestrum parqui*) and Asparagus Fern (*Asparagus aethiopicus*) into the canopy of Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livistona australis*), which was eventually reduced to an area of 3 by 5 metres. Bush regeneration contractors, the Navy, a small group of residents and NPWS volunteers and staff have all worked there at one point."

Our crew of volunteers set to work hand weeding a carpet of germinating Farmers Friends (*Bidens pilosa*) and scraping and painting the Green Cestrum with neat Glyphosate, which was tiring work as each of the shrubs' many branches required treatment on both sides. We noticed Common Grass Blue butterflies (*Zizina otis ssp. labradus*) visiting weedy forbs, including mustard plants (*Brassicaceae sp.*) and Sea Rocket (*Cakile sp.*) as we toiled away.

As is custom, we took a break and enjoyed morning tea compliments of NPWS, and a few adventurous people took a well-deserved dip in the ocean. It was great to be able to follow up on our previous work in this beautiful part of the world.

A big thank you to our great host Bettina once again and to Brett, our barge pilot, for keeping everyone safe and well.

This was the last Floating Landcare activity with NPWS for the foreseeable future. However, Northern Beaches Council Bushland team has invited North Sydney Council volunteers to join them to work at nearby Currawong Beach opposite Palm Beach on Saturday 7 June 2025. See the Bushcare webpage to register: northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare



Caption: Mackerel Beach swamp courtesy of Bettina Tuerk-Rochl. Inset: Common Grass Blue butterfly (*Zizina otis ssp. labradus*) on a Brassica species, 1 December 2024. Photo by Andrew Scott.



BUSHCARE COMMUNITY NURSERY UPDATE - CARING FOR POTTED NATIVES AND WELCOME VISITORS

by Clare McElroy - Bushcare Nursery Supervisor

Recently, I was reminded that it's all too easy to assume that the insights we gain through work experience are common knowledge to all.

I was conversing with a resident who lamented that the native tubestock they'd received on our nursery open day had inexplicably died within days, before it could be planted.

"Did you water the pots?" I asked.

There was a pause. They hadn't. Their logic was that native plants are hardy and could therefore fend for themselves, even in the confines of a small pot.

While our plants are 'hardened off' in the nursery through exposure to the elements, they are also watered daily. I thought sadly of those poor plants struggling to find water in their tiny, dry pots. A pot environment is not the same as being in the ground, certainly not to plant roots, but it seemed a logical equivalence to our resident who saw seedlings surviving in the harshest of bushland conditions.

With so many of our residents living in apartments and small dwellings and gardening in confined spaces, we are often asked if native plants are good candidates for pot culture.

Many local native plants can be grown in containers provided their cultivation needs can be met. This means providing adequate light, shelter from drying winds, an appropriately sized pot (don't over pot), good pot drainage (unless a bog garden), quality native growing media (not soil), regular watering, plant nutrition (eg slow-release native fertiliser) and pest/disease control (remembering that many 'pests' are native insects that benefit the food chain).

Good starters include ferns, palms and cycads, orchids, lilies, groundcovers and forbs such as Native Violets and Flannel Flowers, tussocky grasses and sedges, figs, Lilly Pilly, some slower growing rainforest trees (many will tolerate root pruning to control their size), shrubs with compact growth that tolerate pruning (eg correas, westringia, austromyrtus, callistemon) and climbers such as hardenbergia, billardiera and eustrephus.

A few large pots may be easier to manage than numerous small ones. Large pots can be planted up as 'communities' with several plants that enjoy the same conditions. For example, a Native Violet with ferns or Lilly Pilly, or a bog garden with sedges, reeds and forbs. Wheeled plant bases allow pots to be moved seasonally or rotated for even sun exposure.

For growing natives in pots, our Bushland Projects Officer or Nursery Supervisor can provide more advice on 9936 8100 or via council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au



Caption: Native plants growing in pots: peperomia, Flannel Flower, Lilly Pilly, bottlebrush, Maidenhair Fern and Port Jackson Fig.

We have another nursery birth announcement!

Our huge resident Red Triangle Slug (*Triboniophorus graeffei*) has laid a clutch of eggs in a pot behind the nursery shed. The Australian Museum has great information about these fascinating native animals on its website.

We also had a visit from an Eastern Long-necked Turtle, likely a wandering resident of the Coal Loader wetland, which had temporarily dried out. Luckily, we were able to offer a temporary reprieve in our tadpole-filled nursery pond.





Caption: Eastern Long-necked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) at the Bushcare Community Nursery.

WEED TO WATCH

Green Cestrum (Cestrum parqui)
Family: Solanaceae

Green Cestrum (*Cestrum parqui*) is an erect, multi-branched shrub that grows up to 3 metres high, originating in South America and introduced to Australia as a garden ornamental in the 1920s.

Given that the plant has a sharply unpleasant odour, and is highly poisonous*, its introduction as a garden plant may seem somewhat surprising; however, many of Australia's worst woody weeds arrived this way, including Lantana, Privet and Ochna. Green Cestrum is now naturalised in all mainland states and a declared weed in NSW, Victoria and WA.

Stems are brittle, upright and often sprawling with age. Young stems are green to white-ish with lenticels (raised pores) turning woody and darker grey with age.

Green Cestrum forms tap and lateral roots that are dark yellow in colour, and will sucker (grow new shoots) to form dense thickets if the stem or roots are damaged.

The leaves are lanceolate (shaped like a lance head), hairless, mostly 30–65mm long, 10–25mm wide and arranged alternately. Bright green when young, the leaves turn dark green with age and have an unpleasant odour.

Green Cestrum flowers are greenish yellow, narrowly trumpet shaped, around 2.5cm long and form loose clusters at the end of branches. The plant flowers from spring to autumn, followed by purplish black berries around 1cm in diameter, bearing one or two seeds. Seeds are spread by birds and along water courses.

Although commonly found on alluvial soils along streams, Green Cestrum is adaptable to a wide range of agricultural, urban and bushland environments.

Several herbicides are registered for control of Green Cestrum. As plants tend to sucker when cut, scraping or drilling and poisoning is often more effective than cutting and poisoning of larger plants. Smaller plants can be hand-pulled, but take care to avoid snapping the brittle stems.

*Green Cestrum contains carboxyparquin, a chemical that causes liver and brain damage if ingested and is highly toxic to humans, livestock, poultry and native animals. All parts of the plant are poisonous, even after drying, cutting or spraying. Skin irritation can result from contact with bare skin.

Visit NSW WeedWise for more information.



Caption: Green Cestrum flowers at Mackerel Beach, 1 December 2024. Photo by Andrew Scott.



Caption: Green Cestrum berries and stem at Mackerel Beach, 1 December 2024. Photo by Andrew Scott.



Caption: Treatment of Green Cestrum, scrape and paint with neat Glyphosate 360g/L. Photo by Andrew Scott.

BUSHCARE EVENTS CALENDAR

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

MARCH

- 22 Gum Walk and Talk | Saturday 10am to 1pm
- 31 Nursery Visit Curl Curl | Monday 8am to 2pm

- 15 Family Bushwalk | Tuesday, 10.30am to 12pm
- 16 Family Kayak | Wednesday 10.30am to 12pm
- 23 Bird and Bug Hunt | Wednesday 10.30am to 12pm
- 24 Spotlight Walk and Talk | Thursday 5.30pm to 8.30pm

MAY

- 10 Wildlife Habitat Tour | Saturday 10am to 1pm
- 17 Bat Count | Saturday 4pm to 7pm
- 25 Natives vs Weeds | Sunday 10am to 1pm
- 30 Building Bridges to Boorowa | Friday to Sunday

- 5 Adopt a Plot Annual Meeting | Thursday 6.30pm to 8pm
- 7 Floating Landcare, Currawong | Saturday 7am to 4pm
- 22 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Walk | Sunday 9am to 2pm

VALE JOHN NEARHOS 1948 - 2025

A TRUE ENVIRONMENTALIST BY WAVERTON STREETS ALIVE

Loving husband of Anne and a proud parent and grandparent. John grew up in Dalby, Queensland. He spent much time with his three well-loved granddaughters, taking them to his Bushcare sites and teaching them about the environment.

A gentle man, a true learner, educator and community member. He was a realist but remained an optimist.

John was involved for several years with Bushcare and the Waverton Streets Alive groups. In his usual enthusiastic way, he put a lot of energy and thought into 'his areas' and had a long-term vision.

This involved sites in Balls Head, at Waverton Green, along Balls Head Road Navy fence line, at Wakelin Reserve, Brennan Park and Botanica.

A well-known artist, an illustrator, a doctor, an actor and a family man, he worked for Government Health and the UN. He fought for refugee and human rights.

John built a beautiful studio in his backyard with a frog pond and a thriving garden in a small area.



aption: John Nearhos at Peace Park, Waverton. Photo by Peter Nearhos.

After several years with cancer, which he fought with strength and discipline, John has sadly died. John Nearhos will be greatly missed by his many friends.

Subscribers might be interested to read a story by John Nearhos about Prickly Pear, a weed that crippled agriculture in his hometown Dalby in the Darling Downs, Queensland from the Bushcare Newsletter Summer 2019, page 2. Search the NSW State Library's IndyReads platform.



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 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? Sign up at northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare To update your address or unsubscribe from the print Bushcare newsletter, please email council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au