



GECKO Spring 2009

Newsletter of the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program



Welcome to the Spring edition of Gecko. Thank you Libby Raines for the interesting article about the early days of the Mt Wilson Group. All groups are invited to contribute articles about their sites or some aspect of their work to share. We also welcome Erin Hall as a Bushcare Officer to our team and look forward to benefitting from her wealth of experience and enthusiasm.

Just a reminder if your contact details change, please let us know; or if you wish to change how you receive Gecko (mail or email) or to start receiving the monthly email bulletin (see our contact details on page 8).



Lyndal Sullivan
Bushcare Team Leader

DATES TO NOTE

November—Jamison Valley Weedbuster Program A program of activities in the Jamison Valley and upper catchments. A joint program developed by NPWS with support from Council Bushcare. Contact Arthur Henry (NPWS) 4787 3104 or athur.henry@environment.nsw.gov.au

Sunday 1st November Reconnecting to Country Walk/Talk 10 am Katoomba (see article)

Monday 2nd November Wentworth Creek Swamp, Leura 9 am - 3 pm A swampcare activity Book with Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (preferred) or 4780 5471

Saturday 7th November Swampcare at Lyrebird Dell, Leura 9am – 2 pm A joint project of BMCC and NPWS. Book with Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4780 5471

Sunday 8th Vera Falls Weedout at Wentworth Falls 9 am – 4 pm An all day activity on the Jamison Weed Busters program involving a steep walk in and out. Contact Vanessa Richardson (NPWS) 47873112 or vanessa.richardson@environment.nsw.gov.au

Saturday 14th November Newnes Pine Wilding event, Newnes Plateau 9.30 am - 3.30pm Learn techniques to remove pine wildings from a Newnes Shrub Swamp, invading from nearby Forestry plantations. Book with Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4780 5471

Saturday 14th November Lawson festival 9am – 4pm Come along to the council stall. Bushcare volunteers particularly welcome to discuss Bushcare with local residents contact Robbie Beale if you wish to be involved 4780 5739.

Saturday 14th November - Walk and Weed, Long Angle Creek , Springwood Join us for a pleasant bushwalk into Long Angle Creek and some weeding. An all day event. Inquiries Lyndal Sullivan on 4780 5528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Wednesday 18th November 6pm Discussion of Bushcare issues. Bushcare Network quarterly meeting in Lawson Library building, MCRN meeting room All bushcare volunteers and bush regenerators welcome. Light dinner provided RSVP for catering. Also contact Lyndal Sullivan on lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4780 5528 to suggest items for discussion.

Friday 20th November Hester Creek Swampcare , Leura, 9-1 pm Celebrate with the Hester Creek Landcare group, which has been looking after Blue Mountains Skink habitat Free BBQ lunch. Book with Michael Hensen on mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (preferred) or 4780 5471

Friday 20th November 8pm Talk on Koalas Rob Close will speak at WIRES Blue Mountains Branch public meeting in response to the Koala sightings in the lower mountains during Sept.. Free. Light supper provided. Faulconbridge Community Hall in Home Street Faulconbridge.

Saturday 21st November Reconnecting to Country Walk/Talk 10 am Katoomba (see article)

Saturday 28th November Microstrobos Morning at Leura Cascades Learn about these prehistoric plants, see where they live and help protect them with some practical work. Contact Lyndal Sullivan on 4780 5528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.

Dates to note continued on page 8.....

Deadline for contributions for next Gecko 5th January 2009

Mt Wilson Bushcare Group Celebrate their 10th Anniversary



On Friday 12th March 1999 we first met at Sloan Reserve. The Mt Wilson Bushwalking Group had recently walked along Darwins Walk at Wentworth Falls and saw the work the Jamison Creek Bushcare Group was doing there with honeysuckle, ivy and other weeds. We thought if they can do it here maybe we could try at Mt Wilson. We had a few very dedicated couples Bruce and Sue Garey and Elizabeth and John Mason, Mary Reynolds and myself. Beth Raines had recently done the Bush Regeneration course at Wentworth Falls TAFE. We contacted Chris Dewhurst at the Council and he arranged for us to form a Group.

A few years earlier the Valder family sold their property and left the village. They donated \$6,000 to the Progress Association to use in the village and at that time we were working in the Reserves with the help of the Council trying to restore the Reserves and removing blackberries which were our biggest weed problem at the time.

The committee of the Progress Association at the time decided to use the Valder donation to work at Sloan Reserve which was a real mess. There was an old fence- the grass was waist high, there were huge holly trees, ivy up all the tree ferns, honeysuckle drapes over the trees and huge mounds of blackberry.

The blackberry was sprayed and the hollies felled and it was decided to build a bridge across the little stream so we could walk easily along a path which was made through the Reserve. Coachwoods and sassafrass were propagated and donated to the Reserve, which are doing well.

When the Bushcare Group was formed Sloan Reserve was the obvious choice and we started on the eastern side and worked our way down from beside the road which was carpeted with ivy.

In 2000 to mark the Olympic Games in Sydney, we were able to get a Landcare grant with which we purchased some rainforest plants and planted them on 5th August 2000 on the southern boundary which are also growing well.

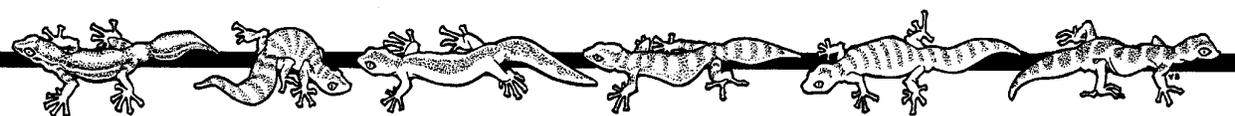
Since then the Bushcare Group has worked in all the Reserves in the village clearing truckloads of weeds which Chris Dewhurst, our Bushcare Officer, would cart to Katoomba Tip. Over 43 people have helped us during the past 10 years and we are very grateful to them all. The Reserves in the village are much freer of weeds now and much of the rainforest has been restored.

Libby Raines



10TH Anniversary Celebration 11/09/2009

Photo: Tracy Williams



Beware! JUMPING ANTS



Do you have jumping ants on your Bushcare site? Be aware they will be active throughout the summer months.

Jumpers are found in bushland areas along the south-east coast of Australia as well as parts of SA and WA. They are quite an active and aggressive species that have a very potent sting with a well developed vision and often display jerky, jumping movements. They can also jump from surrounding vegetation. Jumping Ants are carnivorous scavengers and play an important part of the nutrient recycling process. Most Australian native stinging ants are from the genus *Myrmecia* sp.. This group is broadly subdivided into "Jumper ants" and "Bull Dog ants". Bull Dog ants are large, around 15-25 mm long, whereas Jumper ants are generally smaller at 10 to 15mm long. Jack Jumpers have a black body and orange/brown jaws/pincers and limbs.

Their nests are usually mounds 20-60mm in diameter, and may have a sprinkling of fine gravel or plant fragments around the entrance. Multiple entrances are not uncommon. Most nests are small with only a few hundred workers but some groups can have up to a few thousand workers.

Like bees and wasps, they do not bite but instead grasp prey with their pincers piercing the victim with the stinger located on the abdomen. Wearing heavy clothing such as boots and gloves when in the bush or when gardening seems sensible, but the ants can still sting through heavy clothing. If you do find a Jumping Ant nest on your site, it is best to mark it with an old plant stake with red tape attached for future reference. Fairy Dell at Springwood, have marked a nest like this and we find the ants are more docile in the winter months, so we take this opportunity to weed around the nest area.

In the lower to upper Blue Mountains, species of *Myrmecia* forage on the ground or on low vegetation, primarily during the day, or night in some species. They collect nectar and plant juices as well as animal prey, the latter being fed to their larvae. Larger sentry ants are present at the entrance and will swarm if disturbed, so keeping an eye out

for any movement is a good strategy in areas where jumping ants are present.

Most species of *Myrmecia* sp. have large, fully winged queens which establish new nests nearby. However, some species lack this type of queen and have worker-like queens instead. Some other species don't have queens at all and will attack another colony if they establish new nests by having a



Jumping Ant Knapsack Creek .Photo : Matt Rudge 2009

queen invade the established nest of another species, kill its queen and use its workers to raise the brood of the invading queen. One species has lost its worker caste altogether and its queens and males are found permanently in the nests of other species.

Jumping Ants are responsible for allergic reactions in some people. Local swelling is a mild reaction but some people may have more severe symptoms. If you suffer from allergies it may be necessary to get some medical advice on management of an allergy.

Tracy Williams

Information on stinging insect allergies:

<http://www.allergy.org.au/aer/infobulletins/index.htm#anaph>

References:

http://anic.ento.csiro.au/ants/biota_details.aspx?biotaid=37361

<http://www.allergy.org.au/content/view/147/1/>



Are you ever tempted to wear your tutu to Bushcare?

During these long hot summer days it is very tempting to turn up to Bushcare in shorts and a singlet. By doing so, your skin is exposed to harmful UV radiation not to mention the potential for scratches from plants and reduced protection from herbicides and biological hazards (such as snakes).

As you may be aware from your Bushcare Safety Induction, it is a requirement under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983 that appropriate protective clothing is worn on work sites. Appropriate clothing for Bushcare includes a long sleeved shirt, long pants, enclosed shoes, hat and gloves. Council supplies gloves and a hat, and where needed also safety glasses. Remember it is your responsibility as a Bushcare volunteer to turn up in the right clothing for Bushcare work. So leave your tutu, shorts, miniskirts and dancing shoes at home this summer!

Natalie Knipler



Mike Purtell all dressed up for a dance!
Photo: Nathan Summers



Hi, my name is Erin Hall and I am the new Bushcare Officer. I am delighted to be working in such diverse bushland and close to home. I feel very enthusiastic about the sites I get to work on and the volunteers I have met have been very welcoming! I have come from running the Bushcare program in Parramatta and have worked in Bushland management for the past nine years. I am looking forward to meeting the rest of the volunteers at the next Bushcare Barbeque!

Plant Study Group

The Plant Study Group of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society is open to new members. Would you like to join and learn about native flora?

Our monthly field trips are an easy way to develop knowledge of local flora for Bushcare or Swampcare. We do notice weeds, however our focus is to learn native flora. We share our knowledge with each other about flora and work as a group in the field. We learn the botanical structures of flowers, leaves and fruits, and use botanical terminology – it is a good learning experience, as well as a challenge. Sometimes we look at small things, like peering into the flowers of *Drosera spathulata* looking for divided styles to differentiate it from another *Drosera* species, or count leaf teeth on an *Allocasuarina* to determine its species. We are always on the alert to find interconnections between invertebrates, animal species and plants and sometimes we look at the bigger picture of plant communities, e.g. swamps.



Leucopogon fletcheri ssp *fletcheri*

Jane Miller

In September 09 we discovered a community of *Leucopogon fletcheri* ssp *fletcheri* in flower at Winmalee. It is an Endangered Species and as some plants had been burnt in a hazard reduction we have decided to follow up the recruitment of seedlings in future years, as a project for ourselves.

If you are interested in joining us, it is helpful to have a familiarity with the local plants covered in *Native Plants of the Blue Mountains*, by M. Baker & R. Corringham as a starting point. The second Sunday of each month is when we have our short rambles in the bush. Enquiries to Meredith 47824823.

Meredith Brownhill





BMCC Environmental Directory Oct 2009

Role & Projects	Name	Phone	Email
Building complaints, illegal land use matters	Stephen Toohey	4780 5561	stoohy@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bush regeneration on Council land	Andrew Rhodes	4780 5336	arhodes@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare group support (Fri & weekends)	Erin Hall	4780 5623	ehall@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare group support (Fri & weekends)	Jill Rattray	4780 5623	jrattray@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare group support (Fri & weekends)	Karen Hising	4780 5623	khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare group support (Fri & weekends)	Natalie Knipler	4780 5623	nknipier@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare group support (Fri & weekends)	Nathan Summers	4780 5623	nsummers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare group support (Fri & weekends)	Tracy Williams	4780 5623	twilliams@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushcare/Landcare coordination of program	Lyndal Sullivan	4780 5528	lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushfire management on council land; fire trails etc	Peter Belshaw	4780 5741	pbelshaw@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushland management - vegetation management & public land grants	Eric Mahony	4780 5539	emahony@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Bushland management – walking tracks, signage & fencing in reserves	Soren Mortensen	4780 5742	smortensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Community education re Blue Mountains Aboriginal history & culture (Thurs & Frids)	Elly Chatfield	4780 5726	echatfield@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Coordination of bushland operations Team (bush regeneration, noxious weeds, bushcare, walking tracks & fire mitigation)	Chris Dewhurst	4780 5343	cdewhurst@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Environmental education – consultation & re sustainability issues, events, sustainable gardens	Jasmine Payget	4780 5788 0414 195744	jpayget@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Environmental education –schools & environment awards, Clean Up Australia Day, Reconnect to Country Project	Robbie Beale	4780 5739	rbeale@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Environmental scientist – aquatic issues, stormwater,	Geoffrey Smith	4780 5751	gsmith@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Environmental scientist – environmental technical advice	Matt Chambers	4780 5694	mchambers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Manager environmental management	Frank Garofalow	4780 5579	fgarofalow@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Noxious weeds (Team Leader)	Dave Whiteman	4780 5331	dwhiteman@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Private land conservation, grants for private land; weed education	Linda Thomas	4780 5612	lthomas@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Private land programs - Bush Backyards & landholders with Endangered Ecological Communities	Trish Kidd	4780 5600	tkidd@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Rangers—enforcement re illegal activities in reserves eg dumping, vandalism, stray & feral animals	Jim Fishlock	4780 5698	jfishlock@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Strategic planning matters	Michelle Maher	4780 5450	mmaher@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Streamwatch, aquatic management & monitoring	Amy St Lawrence	4780 5553	astlawrence@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Threatened Species issues, Swampcare,	Michael Hensen	4780 5471	mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Waste and Recycling Education	Rebecca Tempest	4780 5621	rtempest@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

A handy cut out to keep on the fridge



How about some extreme weeding?



While most volunteer bush-regeneration programs focus on the urban fringe, some volunteers find themselves dealing with weeds in remote bushland.

The Remote Bushcare program at BMCC offers one day bushwalking with weeding opportunities. The Great Grose Weed Walk has a program of events with overnight and day walks, some of which are organised jointly between NPWS and the Bushcare. The Jamison Weed Busters program is extending this concept to the Jamison Valley.

The Friends of the Colo (FOC) tackles major weeds in the Colo River and its tributaries. Along with its largest tributary the Capertee River, the Colo winds through nearly 100 kilometres of amazing wild gorge country. Other tributaries including the Wolgan and Wollangambe Rivers, and Wollemi Creek, are similarly contained within spectacular ravines.

This is the Wollemi Wilderness. It is the most rugged country on the Australian mainland. It is also substantially weed-free. However, it will not remain that way without attention.

When FOC was formed almost 10 years ago the main focus was on willows (mainly *Salix nigra* or black willow). In order to get enough volunteers and equipment down the river extensive use was made of rafts, and helicopter. The programs were dubbed WOW (Willows out of Wollemi).

Now, with the willows controlled, the task is different. The weeds being targeted include cape ivy



Some challenging walking on the Wolgan photo: Andy Maqueen

(*Delairea odorata*), lantana (*Lantana camara*), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*). Most of the target areas are best reached by bushwalkers.

If you are a bushwalker with a taste for adventure, and want to help keep the wilderness pristine, the Friends of the Colo could be for you. Activities vary from weekend walks to particular sites on the river, suitable for the average overnight-walker, to multi-day walks and 'lilo' trips in more remote sections. For the most adventurous, there is the 'Colo Colossus'—a 7-day bushwalk held each spring and autumn, starting at Glen Davis or Newnes and finishing at the Culoul Range. Specialist equipment and logistic expenses are covered, thanks to an Environmental Trust grant and support from NPWS.

As FOC president Carol Isaacs says, if you've got the capabilities to get right out there, and are passionate about the bush, then it is tremendously rewarding to be involved in remote area conservation.

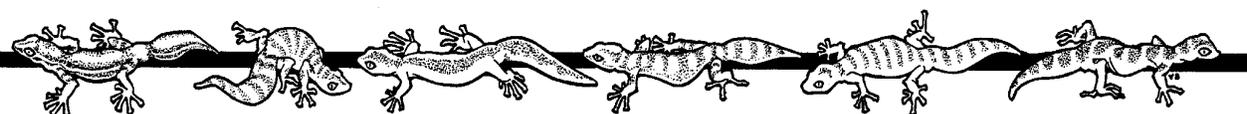
You can read more at <http://www.friendsofthecolo.org.au/>.

If you are interested in getting involved, contact Carol Isaacs at carofe@bigpond.net.au, or Andy Macqueen at andymacqueen@internode.on.net.

Andy Macqueen

Besse Bramsen

Does anyone have a photo or anecdotes about Besse who died in 2003. She was born at Mount Irvine 100 years ago. Irvine was her middle name. She was very involved in Bushcare at Fairy Dell and Birdwood Gully. John Merriman is collecting information on her for the local history section at Springwood library and would be very interested to hear from you on 4780 5044.



Workshops on your Local Vegetation Communities

Have you ever wondered why some plant species grow together in groups in various areas of the Mountains? Would you like to know more about some of those plant groups or vegetation communities?

Two Workshops will be held to better understand vegetation communities, which will include both a theory component and field visits. The Workshops will be presented by Peter and Judy Smith, local and highly-respected ecological consultants.

The Workshop in the **Upper** Mountains will be held on **Sunday 29 November** and will focus around the Katoomba area. The Workshop in the **Lower** Mountains will be conducted on **Saturday 12 December** and will focus on the Springwood area. Workshop times: 8.30 am - 1.00 pm.

A mini-bus will be available to transport participants from the theory area to the various field sites and return. Morning tea will be provided. Numbers are limited and bookings are essential. These are introductory workshops designed for people who have not undertaken TAFE studies. For further details and bookings, contact Karen Hising on 4780 5623 or khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au (usually Fridays)



Eucalyptus deanei at Murphy's Glen

Photo Peter and Judy Smith



Reconnecting to Country - Conversations with Bushcare

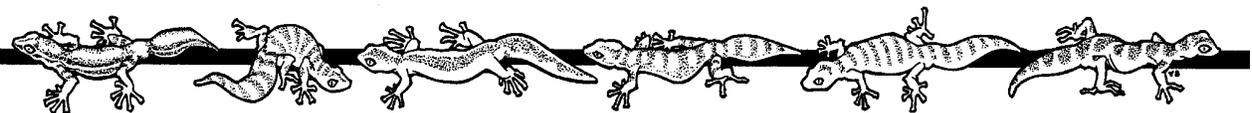


Bushcarers enjoying a walk and talk in Wentworth Falls in September 2009

Join with fellow Bushcarers on guided walks with Aboriginal people from our local community and hear about Aboriginal culture, history and heritage in the Blue Mountains.

Please bring a hat, drinking water, sunscreen and wear sturdy shoes. Children are welcome with the supervision of an accompanying adult.

Bookings are essential, numbers are limited. For more information and to book your place, please contact Elly Chatfield at BMCC (Thurs & Fri) Tel: 02 4780 5726 or echatfield@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.



DATES TO NOTE ... continued



Sunday 29th November Vegetation Community Workshop – Upper Mountains (see article on page 7)

Saturday 5th December Reconnecting to Country Walk/Talk 10:00 – 12:00pm Wentworth Falls. (see article page 7)

Saturday 12th December RSPCA Mort Street Katoomba: 9 am – 12 pm Join the 3 monthly Landcare group working on the bushland behind the RSPCA shelter. Contact: Shiela Dye 4782 9994 or Lyndal Sullivan 4780 5528, lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Saturday 12th December Vegetation Community Workshop – Lower Mountains (see article on page 7)

Sunday 10th January 2010 8.30 am – 12 noon Introduction to Local Plants with Jill Dark Join local ecologist and author Jill Dark for an interpretative walk at Fairy Dell Springwood. The focus will be plant identification for beginners, and possibilities of observing birds. Bookings essential, numbers limited. Contact Lyndal Sullivan 4780 5528, lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Sunday 23rd January Reconnecting to Country Walk/Talk 10:00 – 12:00pm Hazelbrook (see article page 7)

Saturday 6th February Reconnecting to Country Walk/Talk 10:00 – 12:00pm Megalong Valley (see article page 7)

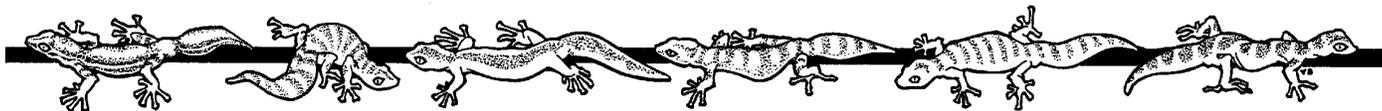


Photo Daniel Long (BMCC)

In June, the pictured gecko play equipment was installed in the park area of Else-Mitchell Park, Springwood (also a Bushcare site). This play equipment was chosen to link in with the surrounding bushland area and provide an additional play area for children. It was funded through the Australian Government Community Infrastructure Programme and project managed by Blue Mountains City Council.

The gecko play equipment was created by Ishi Buki Sandstone Sculpture. Further information is available at www.ishibuki.com.

Your Newsletter: This newsletter is compiled by Lyndal Sullivan (assisted by Sharon Huxley and Erin Hall) from Blue Mountains City Council with contributions from Bushcare volunteers and Council's Environmental Management Staff. It is sent to Bushcare volunteers and other interested people. Contributions and suggestions are always welcome, as are requests for alterations to the mailing list. We can be contacted at Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba NSW 2780 or 4780 5528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



If undelivered please return to

Locked Bag 1005 Katoomba NSW 2780



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