

GECKO Summer 2007

The Newsletter of the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program



Bushfires, heatwaves, cold and rain— I guess it’s summer in the Blue Mountains! The season is clearly the hardest part of the year for Bushcarers, and it’s not just the threat of bushfires. So many more people are put off by the heat much more than the cold. It’s one of the reasons we hold our annual “Thank You” BBQ in Summer, thinking you would rather relax under a shady tree with a cool drink than wrestle with a Broom tree at that time of year. This year it’s on again in the Megalong on Saturday February 17th. We will have more hats, drink bottles and other prizes to giveaway. Plus a lunch supplied by the labor of your very own ever appreciative BMCC Bushcare Officers! See the invitation in this issue for all the details.

We are also sorry to say our goodbyes to our long time Bushcare Officer Brit Rollo. Brit is leaving us to move to New Zealand. She has made a massive contribution to the Bushcare program and achieved a great deal with all her volunteers. Her dedication to conservation and her volunteers has been exemplary. We wish her all the best.



Chris Dewhurst
Bushcare Team Leader

DATES TO NOTE

Sat 17 Feb 2007, The Volunteer “Thank You!” BBQ
Megalong Valley Showground starting at noon for all Bushcare, Landcare and Streamwatch Volunteers. RSVP to Chris Dewhurst by 15/2/2007. See your invite in this Gecko for full Details.

Wed 28 Feb 2007, Bushcare Network Meeting
at 6pm have your say on Issues that face Bushcare and Landcare. A light dinner provided. Contact : Chris Dewhurst 4780 5528



Sun 4 Mar 2007, Clean Up Australia Day
Register your Bushcare Group! See the article in this issue.



Biological Weed Control

In early November Council's Bush Regeneration Team participated in a CSIRO project to release biological control agents to assist national efforts controlling the weedy European blackberry. This involved infecting a large blackberry plume at the western edge of Wentworth Falls Lake Reserve with 9 new strains of the rust species *Phragmidium violaceum*. This species of rust already exists in significant quantities in blackberry populations throughout the Blue Mountains and the release of a further 9 new strains will complement existing control techniques. We should note that rusts do not, on their own, cause the death of blackberry, they just serve to reduce the overall health of infected individuals thereby reducing their reproductive vigour.

Rust can be seen on the under surface of blackberry leaves and on stems and is an orange powdery substance. The orange spores are spread by wind and water and are known to spread 300-500 kilometres in one season!

We will be monitoring the release site for signs of successful introduction and sending samples and reporting to the CSIRO over the coming months. If you would like further information contact Chris Graves on 0414 195 381 or (02) 4780 5336.



Rob and Chris covering blackberry canes infected with rust spores to maintain humidity levels for 24 hours.



Register your Bushcare group now for CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2007. Register online: www.cleanup.com.au or call 1800 282 329.

Clean Up Australia Day is on **Sunday 4th March 2007**.

All registered sites will receive support materials. Similar to previous years, council can support you. Also watch out for the 'Clean Up Conversations' – interpretive walks at local sites of interest. Clean Conversations will be advertised in the local press and the Bushcare network. Further information, contact Kristin Wohlers or Adrienne Murphy on 4780 5739 or kwohlers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Clean Up the Blue Mountains
Sunday 4th March 2007



Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink monitoring program off to a flying start!

A full house of 73 people packed into the Wentworth Falls School of Arts to hear Ian Baird's fascinating presentation on the Giant Dragonfly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink on Tuesday the 12th of November. They were treated to a talk full of interesting facts, anecdotes and images outlining the ecology and habitat requirements of these rare and endangered species and the threats posed to their continuing existence in the Blue Mountains.



Inspired by Ian Baird's infectious enthusiasm for the Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Swamps in general, over 40 people signed up for the field-based workshops designed to train volunteers to independently monitor for the presence of the Giant Dragonfly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink in the Blue Mountains Swamps in their locality. If you want to get involved in this project contact Michael Hensen mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



URBAN SWAMP REHABILITATION WORKSHOP



Council and contractors in action implementing some of the swamp rehabilitation techniques.

In early December a two-day workshop was held on 'Upland Swamp Rehabilitation and Management'. Attendees at the 'train-the-trainer' style workshop included key Council and NPWS staff and representatives from local bush regeneration contractors. The workshop was held as part of Council's Upland Swamp Rehabilitation Project, which has received \$87,000 of federal funding from the Natural Heritage Trust, through the HNCMA's Wetland Management Program. The project will comprise trials of soft engineering techniques, targeted weeding and regeneration works within and above degraded upland swamps primarily in the Jamison Creek and Yosemite Creek sub-catchments. An Environmental Trust Grant (NSW Govt.) is in the process of being assessed, which will secure further funding to extend these works into a further six priority sub-catchments.

Key Outcomes of the workshop were:

- Soft engineering (coir logs, straw bales etc) are often preferable to hard engineering solutions as they are cost effective and can be left in situ to become part of the swamp system.
- Soft engineering is particularly effective for spreading and slowing concentrated flows into a more natural pattern allowing absorption.
- Soft engineering techniques are able to be adapted on a site by site basis.

(this full article can be found at www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/news or call 4780 5528)





It's GOODBYE from Brit

It is with a mix of sadness and excitement that I write this final farewell notice addressed to all of you – you being all of the amazing people I have met since joining the Bushcare program in August 2002. It's sad to be saying goodbye to the people and places I've discovered as a resident of our own Blue Mountains. And yet I can't help be excited about the prospect of a new life's adventure in New Zealand, where I plan to be living in 2007.

I am not sure how to express what a blessing and a privilege it has been to participate in Blue Mountains Bushcare. I couldn't have asked for a more fulfilling job – working in beautiful bushland, out in the fresh air, with good people who also want to be out there – to work, learn, talk & connect with their environment and with each other. Thanks to your incredible dedication, enthusiasm and patience, Bushcare is an institution in our community. Each and everyone of the people that I have worked with, makes a unique contribution to this program – be it digging up Montbretia bulbs in the misty rain, braving blackberry thorns in the summer heat, or providing a welcome cuppa to fellow Bushcarer's at the all-important tea break.

I have received all the support I ever needed to do a good job in my

role as Bushcare Officer, and that has not only come from the volunteers I have worked with. It takes quite a team to sustain this program – the other Bushcare Officers that are out there every weekend deserve much praise and applause for their commitment.....so a big thanks to Chris, Nathan, Tracy, Jill, and Andy for being the best colleagues I could have hoped for. There are many other staff within the council who have given great support to me personally & to the program, especially Soren, Linda, Eric, Jasmine, Adrienne, Amy, Anne, Matt, Michael & Geoff – thanks to all of you too!

To all of “my” volunteers and the respective groups they sustain, you have also become my colleagues & friends. You each bring something of yourselves when you come to Bushcare, and for that I offer you my most sincere thanks. Your un-failing dedication to Bushcare month-in-month-out over the years has been, and will continue to be, an inspiration to me. Even when I leave, I know you will still be here, working to preserve our shared public spaces for the future. It gives me hope.

I would also like to make a final and special mention of the kids that have come to join me at Bushcare, and to the parents who have en-

couraged their participation. So to: Kyle & Jamie (Frogs Hollow); Charlie, Harry, Ira, Alec, Max & Rowan (Vale Street); Lulu (North Lawson); Brae, Bronte, Kalem & William (Glenbrook Lagoon); and little Kyla (Wilson's Glen) I offer a special thanks – I hope you continue to enjoy and learn about the places where you live.

Goodbye and good luck everybody! I will be sure to visit when I am back in the country.....I won't have any trouble remembering when you all meet for Bushcare!

May 2007 be a happy time for Bushcare and beyond. With the best wishes and the warmest thanks to all.....Brit

PS: Haven't we had fun!!



Brit on the Job. Photo: B Harley

Blue Mountains Bushcare Network

The Blue Mountains Bushcare Network is a coalition of individuals from various Bushcare and Landcare Groups across the mountains. The Network is run by the Community members and administered by Council Bushcare Staff. It aims to foster a positive working relationship with Bushcare Volunteers and Blue Mountains City Council. All Bushcare Volunteers and interested individuals are welcome. We provide a light dinner and tea & coffee to help facilitate people coming along. The meetings are held in the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson over the following times in 2007:



Wed 28 Feb 6pm
Wed 23 May 6pm
Wed 29 August 6pm
Wed 28 November 6pm



Previous Meeting Agenda Items and Minutes can be obtained on-line <http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/news.asp> or by contacting Chris Dewhurst on 4780 5528.



Marmion Road Broom Blitz



Marmion Road Broom Blitz was great success despite the dreary conditions. Thanks to all involved. L-R: David Schleiter, Pam Studd, Kate Wallace, Ruth Ley, Nelda King, Rick Tanaka, Brit Rollo (BMCC), Shirley Brown, Helen Boudy & Burt the Wonder Dog (Photo: Barbara Harley)

North Katoomba Bushcarers invited to join an evaluation of the local environmental program.

BMCC has a grant to evaluate the role of community partnerships in successful catchment programs. The first round of consultations will focus on the environmental works undertaken in North Katoomba over the past 6 years. The consultations will be conducted by Charles Sturt University during February 2007.

The result of the evaluation will help local government NRM staff to involve community members more effectively in catchment based projects. We are sure that you have lots to offer relating to environmental citizenship both for your area and beyond! We welcome your contribution.

Plant Profile:

Blandfordia cunninghamii, Christmas Bells

One of the seldom-seen glories of summer in the Blue Mountains is the rare Christmas Bell, *Blandfordia cunninghamii*. It is one of four species, all in Australia, but arguably the most splendid in its flowering. Stout, finger-diameter stems are up to a metre high, topped by up to 32 red bells with yellow ends, each bell about 60 mm long. The flowers hang in a graceful cluster that can be seen, like the waratah, from afar.

As the flowers wither and die (in succession from lower stem to upper), green seed-pods develop and break through the corolla, and stand vertically up. Later the seed-pods turn pale brown and split down three sides, to expose rows of small, hairy, brown seeds.

As well as being rare, *Blandfordia cunninghamii* flowers rarely: only one or two in a colony of 100 will flower in any one year, apparently at random.

The leaves, like many lilies, are long and narrow, but lax, so they most often lie down a slope. And slope is important: one never finds *Blandfordia cunninghamii* on a slope of less than 30 degrees. And they must face south. And they must have high rainfall of at least 1200 mm a year.



And they must have a canopy of 30-50%. If you can fulfil these conditions you might just be able to grow them in your garden!

Members of the Sublime Point Bushcare Group have conducted a State-wide survey of *Blandfordia cunninghamii*, and the results are published in *Cunninghamia* 9(4) 2006. As a follow-up in 2007-08 we hope to elicit the effect of fire on flowering.

By David Coleby, Sublime Point Bushcare Group





Around the Groups...

South Lawson Park

The South Lawson Bushcare Group has been busy regenerating for eleven years now. Lawson's first modern name was Christmas Swamp and the Bushcare site contains pockets of swamp as well as the headwaters of Lawson Creek. So its conservation amidst pressures from urban run-off, and other land uses such as the BMX track and other urban development is well worthwhile.

The groups' continued presence here over this time has been vital in obtaining Urban runoff Control Program (URCP) funding in the late 1990s and early 2000s along with subsequent commitment to maintenance by Council. In 2006, the group set its focus into new sections of headwater and swamp at risk from an upstream infestation of Privet, Blackberry and Honeysuckle. A Bushcare Support contract aimed at carrying out the initial heavy workload is being followed up with a Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority grant. The group intends to carry out the ongoing maintenance over the expanded area.



Linksvie Landcare Group

The group began when concerned residents approached council to discuss the restoration of land along the creek from the golf course through public land to Linksvie Road and private land to the northern end of No.11 Linksvie Road. A plan was drawn up by Linda Thomas, Councils' Weeds Officer, from which the group has been working to. They became incorporated on the 11th of October 2005 with a total of 8 members. A golf course group are restoring up to the golf course boundary at the southern end of the groups work area and eventually they would like to meet up with a St Columbas group to the north of the present site, to protect the full length of the creek down

to the junction of Springwood creek. The Group meets on the third Saturday of the month from 1PM to 4PM and welcome new members. Tracy Williams has had the pleasure of working with the group since February this year. "Our work days are very enjoyable as they give the members an opportunity to work and socialise with neighbours who they otherwise would not meet." Chris Gorman – Co-ordinator.

Lapstone Hotel Xmas Dinner

An informal end of year gathering was held again at the Lapstone Hotel. A group of about two dozen people from various bushcare groups in the lower mountains got together and had a nice bistro meal, a few drinks and a good chat. This tradition, which originally started with Knapsack Creek, has taken place for a number of years now.



Your Newsletter: This newsletter is compiled by Chris Dewhurst (assisted by Sharon Huxley) from Blue Mountains City Council with contributions from Council's Environmental Management Staff and members of the Bushcare Network. 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 Phone 4780 5528 or 0414 195 623; e-mail cdewhurst@bmcc.nsw.gov.au; Fax 4780 5555.

