



GECKO Summer 2009

The Newsletter of the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program



Welcome to the Summer edition of Gecko. We hope you are informed and inspired by the articles and events planned. Many thanks to those bushcare volunteers who have contributed to this edition. Please feel free to contribute articles and photos to the next edition. A special thank you to Barbara Harley for her significant assistance in the production of the insert – *How to use your Montbretia Weed Wiper*.

Wishing you all another good year in Bushcare



Lyndal Sullivan
Bushcare Team Leader

DATES TO NOTE

Details of listed events are contained in this newsletter. Unless otherwise specified the contact for other events is Lyndal Sullivan on 4780 5528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Thursday 12 February - Koalas in the Blue Mountains 7 – 9 pm

Saturday 14 February - Katoomba Falls Creek Valley Microstrobos Morning

Wednesday 18 February - Bushcare Network Meeting 6pm All welcome. Light dinner provided Lawson Library (MCRN meeting room) RSVP for catering.

Sunday 1 March - Clean-up Australia Day

Tuesday 3 March - Swampcare - Kitty Hawke Wentworth Falls
Register with Michael Hensen mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4780 5471

Saturday 14 March - RSPCA Katoomba Shelter Mort Street Katoomba: 9 am – 12noon. Support the work of the RSPCA by helping to protect and restore the woodland and swamp behind the animal shelter, leading down to Katoomba Creek.

Thursday 19 March - Central Park Wentworth Falls Planting Day 9 -12 noon contact Tracy Williams 4780 5623 or twilliams@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Saturday 21 March - Mt Victoria - Post Fire Weeding: 8:30am – 4pm Support NPWS's Great Grose Weed Walk to the headwaters of the Grose River. Contact Monica Nugent NPWS 4787 3108

Thursday 2 April - Provenance Forum 7- 9.30 pm Santa Maria Centre Lawson

Saturday 4 April - Springwood Foundation Day Bushcare display

Sunday 5 April - Microstrobos Morning at Leura Cascades

April weekend TBC Sycamore Weedout Weekend at Jenolan Caves. Join Lithgow Landcare, Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust and NPWS treat Sycamores. Accommodation provided. Contact Trish Kidd on tkidd@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 0423 527 740.

Saturday 18 April - Jamison Creek Catchment Microstrobos Morning

Saturday 25 April - Trackcare at Terrace Falls Reserve - maintenance day

Saturday 2 May - Sassafras Creek Remote Bushcare An all day event working in the upper section of Sassafras Creek Springwood. Bushwalking and weeding to extend the work of the Beefarm Road Bushcare Group downstream.

Saturday 9 May – Spotlight Walk Knapsack Creek 6.30 pm - 8.30 pm Led by local fauna expert Graham Turner. Contact Nathan Summers on 47805 623.

SATURDAY 30 May BUSHCARE PICNIC MEGALONG VALLEY

Deadline for contributions for next Gecko (May-July) 30th March

Clean up Day

Register your Bushcare group now for
CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2009.
 Register online: www.Cleanup.com.au or Call 1800 282 329.

Clean Up Australia Day is on Sunday 1st March 2009

All registered sites will receive support materials. Similar to previous years, BMCC can support you. Also watch out for the 'Clean Up Conversations' – interpretive walks at local sites of interest. Clean Up Conversations will be advertised in the local press and the Bushcare network.

Further information, contact Kristin Wohlers or Robbie Beale on 4780 5739 or rbeale@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Clean Up the Blue Mountains Sunday 1st March 2009

KOALAS IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS ?

Rob Close has been studying Koalas in Western Sydney for 20 years as part of his research program at the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown. He is currently Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences.

Rob will present the findings of his research into the Koalas of the Campbelltown area, as well as other areas on the rim of the Sydney Basin. This research has been heavily reliant on community help.

Perhaps the most interesting finding is that Campbelltown Koalas are thriving, unlike the situation reported from most other colonies in the state. Rob has been compiling data on their movements, survival rates, dispersal of the young, and which trees are used for food and which for shelter. He will discuss questions such as whether Koalas were present in the Blue Mountains in the past and whether they are likely to return.

The presentation and discussion will be held on **Thursday evening 12th February** at Blaxland Primary School Hall, in Baden Place. The presentation and discussion will be from 7 pm to 9 pm. Tea and coffee will be provided. For inquiries contact Lyndal Sullivan on 4780 5528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



Photo: Rob Close



THE SCIENCE AROUND CHOOSING PLANTS !



Can planting Australian natives create problems? How can harm be done by planting a species of plant which occurs locally but has come from seed from elsewhere?

These questions are important to consider when selecting plants for a bushcare site, or even our own gardens in the Blue Mountains.

Bob Makinson, Coordinator for the Centre for Plant Conservation at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney will present the latest thinking on these issues at a forum to be held on Thursday evening 2nd April. Bob will discuss the issues of genetic integrity and climate change and how our plant selection should take these into account.

There is much confusion about the term 'native plants' in the broader community. Most bushcare volunteers understand the importance of planting 'local' native plants because we have seen 'native' plants from other areas spread; eg Cootamundra Wattles moving into the gullies of the National Park.

Amongst bushcarers and local nurseries there is more debate about the importance of protecting 'genetic integrity' by planting only plants originating from the local area (of 'local provenance'). Does Climate Change alter the practice of selecting only plants of local species from the same vegetation community, grown from seed collected from within a 5 km radius?

The forum is open to all interested bushcarers, bush regenerators, nurseries, gardeners, students, conservationists, and permaculturalists. No previous knowledge of provenance, bioregionalism or other such terms is needed – they will be explained and discussed.

This forum aims to assist us all make sense of the range of scientific evidence and opinion. It also aims to assist those in the Bushcare program work towards developing best practice guidelines for revegetation works as well as what is 'best practice' for adjacent Blue Mountains gardens.

The Forum will be held on **Thursday evening 2nd April at the Santa Maria Centre Lawson** from 7 to 9.30 including a supper break. Parking is available along Kitchener and Mary Streets or on the highway. Please RSVP to Lyndal Sullivan on 4780 5528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.

GREY HEADED FLYING FOXES VISITING

This young Grey-headed flying fox, Blossom is having her first taste of Grey Gum. She instinctually knows to lick the nectar from the *Eucalypt punctata* blossoms.

Blossom was found at Glenmore Park in November and is being cared for by Pam Gardiner at Valley Heights

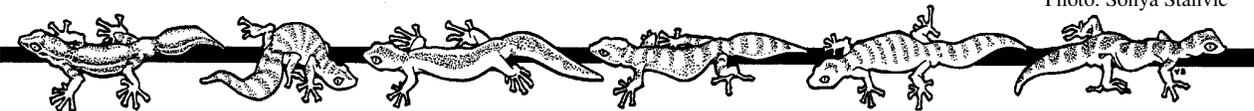
Many of the bats are feeding on *E. punctata* flowering between December and January in the Warrimoo/Valley Heights/Sun Valley area. Grey headed flying foxes are Vulnerable under the NSW Threatened Species Act.

One bat fitted with a satellite transmitter at Stradbroke Island (Qld) in July 08, was tracked to Lismore, Emu Plains, and then feeding in Valley Heights in December.

Sonya Stanvic



Photo: Sonya Stanvic



TRACKCARE

Trackcare has been steadily growing over the last year. Council has been working with members of the climbing community who have been constructing a formal track to the popular climbing area at Bardon's Lookout, near Mount York. On completing this section they will be moving onto an eroded section of historic track near Mount Piddington. This work follows on from an initiative of climbers in the mid 1990's under the banner of Cliffcare, as an effort to protect climbing sites from further degradation.

Two Bushcare groups (Jamison Creek and Sublime Point) have run Trackcare days in 2008 as part of their program with the support of Councils Track Team .

One day events are planned for bushcare volunteers wishing to learn trackwork skills, socialise and help in the management and protection of our valuable community assets.

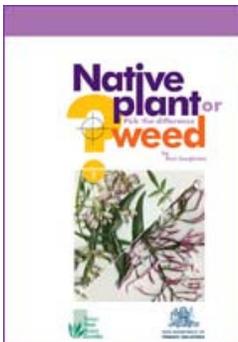
Two Trackcare days are scheduled for 2009, one on Saturday 25th April at Terrace Falls Reserve, Hazelbrook, and one on Saturday 29th August at Sassafras / Magdala Gullies in Faulconbridge Springwood. Both days will undertake track maintenance activities such as pruning vegetation and clearing drains.

If you would like to be involved contact Soren Mortensen on 4780 5742 or smortensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



Work on the Bardons Lookout Track

WEED IDENTIFICATION BOOKS



At last weed identification books that help tell the difference between weeds and those 'look a like' natives!

Tocal College of the NSW Dept Primary Industries has produced

Native Plant or Weed: Pick the difference

(by Ann Loughran). It has

full page colour photos of each weed with the similar native species, and a written explanation of the differences without all the confusing botanical terms.

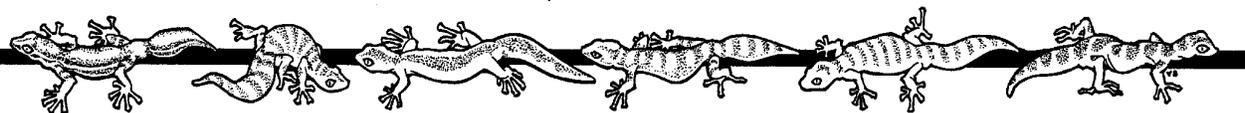
All Bushcare Officers have a copy of each of the 2 volumes for volunteers to use on site. Copies can also be borrowed from any of the local libraries. If you wish to purchase your own copies, they are being stocked by two local bookshops – the Turning Page at Springwood and Megalong Books in Leura. Alternatively you can contact Tocal College directly on 1800 025520 or go to <http://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/reader/tocal-publications>

Free Trees to Offset Carbon Vehicle Emissions

As part of improving overall sustainability, Blue Mountains City Council's Operations branch is aiming to offset vehicle emissions caused by its fleet trucks, heavy plant and passenger cars. A range of indigenous trees suitable for carbon sequestration were selected and given away free to residents. All 2000 vouchers have now been claimed by residents and some Bushcare groups. This project was supported by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

The project will be assessed with a view to repeating it later this year, with potential changes in species selection to better suit requests from residents and groups (e.g. more of the lower growing trees).

Chris Dewhurst - Green Team Coordinator, BMCC.



A Blue Mountains Seedbank



Seed collection can be an important part of revegetation for Blue Mountains Bushcare sites. Are you interested in the idea of developing a community seed bank with the support of Blue Mountains TAFE and BMCC Bushcare? It is hoped that a seed bank will help increase the biodiversity of bushcare sites by having access to a broad range of seed for either direct seeding or propagation by community nurseries.

The idea so far is for the seed bank to be located at Wentworth Falls TAFE and maintained by TAFE students including building and maintaining a data base. It is proposed that seed will be collected and cleaned by Bushcare volunteers, stored in the seed bank and will be

available to BM bushcare groups.

TAFE will offer training to members of Bushcare groups to supervise seed collecting operations within their group. This will take the form of a Statement of Attainment offered in 2009. It will include OH&S and environmental impact issues, codes of practice, legislation, identification of fruit, collection techniques, documentation, cleaning and storage.

Seed collection is an interesting and rewarding activity, changing throughout the seasons and increasing personal native plant knowledge.

If you are interested in learning about seed collection contact Alex Strachan at BM TAFE on 4753 2152 and talk to your Bushcare Officer about covering fees.



Moira Green from Mount Wilson Bushcare Group alongside one of the magnificent *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*, (Monkey Gum) at Gregson Park.

TALL STORIES



This hefty **Turkey Rhubarb** tuber was dug out of bushland in Hazelbrook Creek by Morag Ryder in December 2008. It weighed in at 1.1kg and measured almost 28cm long. Horseshoe Falls Group is laying claim to the biggest Turkey Rhubarb.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION FOR BUSHCARE PICNIC

For all those experienced and budding photographers out there, here is a chance to show us your talents! At the Bushcare Picnic this year, we will be holding a photographic exhibition. The **Bushcare Picnic** will be held on **Saturday, 30 May** at **Megalong Valley Showground** (further details to be advised later). The theme will be your Bushcare/Landcare site, for example, birds, animals, plants, fungi, frogs, lizards, volunteers, landscapes of Bushcare sites, even weeds! If you are interested, please contribute a photo. It is a photographic exhibition, not a competition. Our guidelines for this exhibition are as follows:

Photos to be delivered to the Bushcare office by 3pm Friday, 1st May.

- Only two photos per Group—due to limited exhibition space at the Megalong Valley Hall as there are over 60 Bushcare/Landcare Groups.
- The exhibition is open to all ages. If children wish to advise of their age, the photographs will be displayed in their age range.
- Photographs should be no larger than 130 mm x 180 mm in size and not attached to any mounting (we will organise the mounting and captioning). We will only accept hard copies, not electronic versions.
- Details to be provided: photographer's name, age (if applicable),

the Bushcare/Landcare Group, date and a caption of no longer than ten words.

- Colour, black and white, landscape, close-up, abstract or special effects photos are all welcome within the general theme of Bushcare/Landcare. All photographs will be kept by the Bushcare Team and could be used for future educational displays (with credit to the photographer).

For any enquiries, please contact Karen Hising at 4780 5623 or khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au. Photos can be handed to your bushcare Officer or delivered to the Bushcare Office at the South Street Depot Katoomba.





PROTECTING SITES FROM PHYTOPHTHERA

Gecko readers will know that *Phytophthora cinnamomi* – a pathogen causing die-back disease – has been found recently in the Blue Mountains, Kanangra Boyd and Wollemi National Parks. In September, Dr Ed Liew of Sydney Botanic Gardens presented workshops in the Blue Mountains on the disease and its management.

It is spread rapidly by movement of infected soil and plant material. This means that, at Bushcare sites, the most important thing is to ensure no contaminated material is introduced to the site from elsewhere at the start of the work day, or removed from the site at the end.

Bushcare Officers are introducing basic hygiene protocols to group's work practices to minimise this.

*At the start and finish of the day's work, footwear is scrubbed with a stiff brush to remove adhering soil and plant material, then sprayed with a mixture of 70% metho, 30% water.

*At the end of the day's work, and before going to another site, tool pouches, tools, mats, gloves and any other gear are washed and sprayed, taking care to remove all soil from the pockets of tool pouches.

Pope's Glen Bushcare Group has introduced the scrub-down and spray system shown in the photograph. Water

use is minimised by putting water in large bins, rather than leave the tap running, and long-handled toilet brushes are used for scrubbing. Richard and Sue are scrubbing boots in the bins and Belinda is spraying gloves and tools with metho mixture. We encourage all groups to help reduce the spread of this disease by setting up a similar system as soon as possible and setting aside the small amount of time for these tasks.



Richard Stephens, Sue Nichol and Belinda Selke (from left to right)
Photo and article: Alan Lane

**WANTED: USED 1.5 OR 2 LITRE
PLASTIC BOTTLES
WITH HANDLES**

CLEAN USED CONTAINERS AS
SHOWN IN THE 'How to Use Your Weed
Wipers' INSERT ARE WANTED.

Groups use these bottles cut down to hold
wipers for the treatment of montbretia .

THESE HOLDERS ENSURE THAT
WIPERS DO NOT DRIP HERBICIDE ON
NATIVE PLANTS

PLEASE GIVE THEM TO YOUR
BUSHCARE OFFICER

Bush Regeneration Training

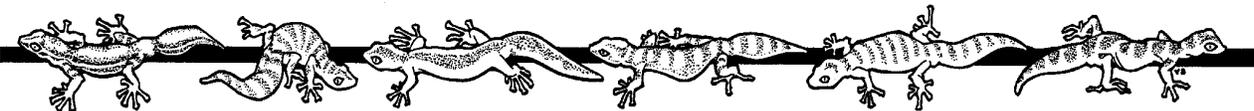
Blue Mountains TAFE is offering a range of exciting training choices to learn about bushregeneration in 2009.

Certificate II in Natural Area Restoration (Bush Regeneration), is the basic industry standard for bush regenerators. Bushcare volunteers would find this and higher certificates interesting and rewarding, aiding their volunteer work – and a possible career choice. Certificate II NAR is run for 6 months 3 days per week or can be completed part time.

Other courses available in 2009 include: Certificate III and Certificate IV in Natural Area Restoration; Bush track construction techniques as a Statement of Attainment.

If you are interested in applying for any of these courses contact Alex Strachan at BM TAFE on 4753 2152.

Enrolments are on Thursday 29th January 2009 1.00 – 7:00pm, late enrolments will be accepted.





Rare Visitor

A WIRES member was called out in November 08 to investigate a Brush Turkey at Lapstone. The Brush Turkey was harassing chickens, to the extent that they stopped producing eggs, and some had lost head feathers. It had been helping itself to the chooks' food!

The rescuer sighted a female Brush Turkey digging up a compost heap.

This was the first time WIRES knew of Brush Turkeys in the lower mountains. The bird was left alone as she was healthy and would move on as soon as the food had been depleted in the backyard. Sadly a week later WIRES was called to pick up an injured Brush Turkey which had been hit by a car outside the Lapstone Hotel, she later died from the injuries.

The Veterinarian who checked the bird believed that she had laid eggs, so there may be chicks about. Brush Turkey chicks look much like quails, with plain rich brown feathers over their entire bodies. As they mature they lose the feathers on their heads and necks, where the bare skin turns a deep pink colour.

The male builds a huge mound made out of soil, then leaves. If the female is happy with it, she will deposit 18

to 24 eggs inside the mound. The male Brush Turkey makes sure the temperature is kept between 33C to 35C by adding or removing layers to the mound. The incubation period is around 50 days.

The chicks emerge out of the egg fully feathered and dig their way out of the mound and are on their own... they are capable of running very fast!

WIRES would like to hear from any residents that spot a mound, a male Brush Turkey or a chick in their area.

A male Brush Turkey has a bare red head with a bright yellow wattle (loose skin) hanging down from its neck, a broad flat feathered tail. Females and younger birds have dull yellow wattles.

Please do not try and catch these birds. If you should get a visit from one in your yard please contain your dog until the Turkey has moved on. Do not feed the bird or you will never get rid of it!

WIRES can be contacted on 47542946 or National Parks 45885247.

Sonya Stanvic WIRES Blue Mountains Branch 47514000 work 0296715255

No, Xmas dinner for this Turkey!



Photo by Norma Henderson
WIRES

VOLUNTEER LIBRARIAN OR OFFICE ORGANISER WANTED

The Bushcare Office is in need of a Bushcare volunteer who not only likes pulling out weeds but also likes organising information. Over the years we have acquired a large amount of files, books, articles, and photos from many volunteers and bushcare officers. It is a challenge to create a system that many can use and maintain. If this is something that you feel you could assist us with please give Lyndal a call on 47805528 or lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.



Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Microstrobos fitzgeraldii*)

The endangered Dwarf Mountain Pine clings to a precarious existence in the waterfall spray zones on the Blue Mountains southern escarpment between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba. These are the only places in the world where these unique plants occur. Previously known as *Microstrobos fitzgeraldii*, it is now called *Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*.

The Dwarf Mountain Pine is particularly susceptible to the activities we carry out in the upstream catchment and in our backyards. A number of exotic plants have jumped our fences, washed downstream and established on the rock ledges around waterfalls. Blackberry, Ivy, and Montbretia can then outcompete and displace the Dwarf Mountain Pine from its highly specialised habitat. Nutrient runoff from garden fertilizers further assists such weeds.

Throughout 2009 a number of special activities are being run to try and improve the environment for these unique plants, and we need your help!

Council will be working with the community throughout the year to weed out some of the key exotic species above the falls where the Dwarf Mountain Pines live, as well as to look at these unique plants growing in their natural environment.

If you would like to LEARN a little about these prehistoric plants, SEE them where they grow, and HELP protect them with some practical work, please register to come along to one (or more) of these special events. Activities are running from February through to November. Bring your family & your friends.

Morning activities are planned for:

Katoomba Falls Saturday 14th February

Leura Cascades Sunday 5th April

Jamison Creek Wentworth Falls Sat 18th April
and Bonnie Doon, Katoomba (date TBC)

For further details please contact the Bushcare Section of Council on 4780 5528, or email bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



Photo Wyn Jones



Your Newsletter: This newsletter is compiled by Lyndal Sullivan (assisted by Sharon Huxley) from Blue Mountains City Council with contributions from Council's Environmental Management Staff and Bushcare volunteers. 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 e-mail lsullivan@bmcc.nsw.gov.au; Fax 4780 5349.



If undelivered please return to
Locked Bag 1005 Katoomba NSW 2780



POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA

