

G E C K O Spring 2006

The Newsletter of the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program



Hello and welcome to another issue of the Gecko. With the weather warming up and the bush in flower and the weeds starting to take off we find ourselves in happy state of business. The anticipation of holding out the weeds in your favorite patch of bush in the coming growth season is always a challenge the Bush Regenerator likes to take on. It requires patience, persistence and a keen eye of observation, but the rewards of seeing healthy bush are worth it.

We have been busy over the last few months with a number of Bushcare Activities taking place such as Stream Bank Workshop, Woodford Biodiversity Workshop and the *Eucalyptus copulans* planting. Whilst the nature of these events was quite varied, they were well supported by the community. It's great to see people's interest in the local environment is so diverse. If people keep supporting these events we will keep running them.

Have a look below for future events and ways to get involved in volunteering beyond your Bushcare Group.

Happy Weeding,

Chris Dewhurst
Bushcare Team Leader



DATES TO NOTE

October 28 - Living Streams Streamwatch volunteer celebration - Wentworth Falls Lake.

This event will incorporate a celebration of the efforts of Blue Mountains Living Streams Streamwatch volunteers, as well the sharing of information about local water quality and relevant capacity building activities. Times and further details to be confirmed. Contact: Amy St Lawrence, 4780 5553.

Wednesday Oct 25 2006 - (6pm to 8pm) Blue Mountains Bushcare Network Meeting.

Lawson Mid-Mts Community Centre. Dinner provided. RSVP / Agenda items to Chris Dewhurst 4780 5528 / cdewhurst@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Sunday Nov 5 - (9am - 1pm) Broom Blitz @ Marmion Road, Leura. Come and help protect a Hanging Swamp from an exploding Broom problem. Special Morning Tea provided by BMCC. Contact / RSVP : Brit Rollo 4780 5623 / brollo@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Tuesday Nov 14 2006 - (7.30pm to 9pm) Presentation by Ian Baird & Michael Hensen "How to Survey the Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink" Wentworth Falls School of Arts. RSVP: mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au / 4780 5471



Stream Bank Workshop Report



Brad Davies (CMA) explains the river processes in action along Minnehaha Creek, Katoomba

A Stream Bank workshop was held on Sep 1 2006 for all interested professionals and community volunteers. The day was facilitated by Linda Thomas from BMCC and involved experts such as Brad Davies (CMA), Bruce Hundy (CMA), Paul Bennet (CMA) and Lyndal Sullivan (A&S Bushcare). 35 people attended and they were treated to excellent presentations both indoors and on-site. Some of the key points which came out of the day included:

- Lateral stream movement within valley confines is normal, but bed lowering (increasing bank height) is a much more severe problem.
- Encourage stream “roughness” (vegetation, sticks, snags etc.) in your local creek.

A full report and more advice from the experts will be in the next issue of Gecko.

Pulling no punches in New Zealand!

I spotted this strongly-worded sign post on a trip to a Kauri forest in New Zealand recently. Australia and New Zealand share many of the same weeds, including broom, privet, pampas grass and ginger, but in New Zealand the wild ginger is up there as a pest of the same severity as those other noxious weeds, and is included with them as a weed that must be controlled, by legislation. It grows along roadsides, bush fringes and stream edges, from rhizomes and bird-spread seed, and seems to be similar in its level of invasiveness to Montbretia in the Blue Mountains.

Two months later I still have awe-filled memories of the Kauri Pines (*Agathis australis*) I saw...up to 16.5 metres *wide!* That's wider than my house is long. And 2000 years old, quietly standing in the forest. I recommend a trip to the Kauri forests of NZ to any lovers of trees and massive ancient things.

Jill Rattray



Spotted in northern New Zealand in August



PIPPAS PASS BUSHCARE GROUP CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF LOOKING AFTER THE BUSH!

After ten years of looking after the bush at the track head of Pippas Pass, this group celebrated in style with afternoon tea of delicious cakes, tea and coffee. It was also a goodbye to two long standing members, Peter Geelan-Small and Sandra Rogers who have gone off to live in the city. Farewell to them and come back to visit sometime.

The group deserves credit for a tremendous and persistent effort over the years. When they started, the

drainage line through this area of Shale/Sandstone Transition forest was heavily impacted upon by highway run-off with dense infestation of Privet and Honeysuckle among other weeds. With grant assistance including a Natural Heritage Trust Grant to employ contractors in 2000, this site has been transformed and subsequently maintained in a very satisfactory condition. The native plantings and regeneration are thickening up, while privet has been cut back where it has been left in the steep gully sides to maintain creekline stability. Looking after this area goes a long way

toward looking after the vast areas of bush downstream.

Andy Forster



L to R: Christine Belshaw, Joan, Heather Hull, Peter Geelan-Small, Sandra Rogers, Hugh Paterson



Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink Surveys



Wanted!-Volunteers to help survey the Giant Dragonfly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink

Are you interested in helping increase the knowledge about one of the largest and most enigmatic dragonflies in the world and one of the rarest semi-aquatic skinks in Australia?

We are trying to identify the swamp systems in which these species live so they can be managed appropriately to ensure their continuing survival .

Presentation:

“How to Survey and Help Save the Giant Dragonfly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink”

Presenters-Ian Baird is a local Giant Dragonfly enthusiast who has studied the ecology and biogeography of the Giant Dragonfly in the Blue Mountains since 2003

Michael Hensen is the Threatened Species Officer with BMCC

When-Tuesday November 14 from 7.30-9 pm

Where- Wentworth Falls School of Arts, Corner Adele St & GWH, Wentworth Falls

Light refreshments will be provided

Where do they occur?

- The Giant Dragonfly is an endangered species which could potentially occur in any suitable Blue Mountains Swamps between Springwood and the Newnes Plateau
- The Blue Mountains Water Skink is only known to exist in 37 swamps between Lawson and the Newnes Plateau

How you can help...

- Come to the **presentation** about the Giant Dragonfly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink to find out more about where they can be found, how to identify them, their ecology, what is threatening them, and how you can help survey for them.
- Interested individuals who can join the survey for the season (Nov-Feb) will receive **field based training on Saturday 25th November** to further develop their skills in identifying these species in their natural environment.

For more information contact BMCC's Threatened Species officer Michael Hensen on 4780 5471 or at mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



Knapsack Biodiversity

Early on a Saturday morning in September, a number of people gathered near Knapsack Oval to do an annual bird survey. This time it happened to be quite a wet day throughout Sydney and the mountains, however we were fortunate enough to have a bit of a rain shadow at Lapstone. Six people braved the conditions and headed out amongst the ironbark ridges, where we were rewarded by much activity. We were privileged to have the benefit of the knowledge of Dick Turner, who generously gave his time to lead the walk. The darker conditions created by the clouds made it difficult to site birds, however the bush was very busy with noise! As with the previous year, we seemed to come across a number of Scarlet Honeyeaters, which tend to be unusual. We also had a Brown Goshawk, a number of different Thornbills, Red Browed Finch, Rainbow Lorikeet, King Parrots, Eastern and Crimson Rosellas, and numerous Grey Fantails. We even observed Magpie Larks feeding young in a nest. 38 birds were sited all up, even amongst the odd shower. Later that afternoon the Knapsack Creek Bushcare group did Streamwatch water testing which revealed reasonable water quality, despite the rain.

Over the past few months, volunteers from Knapsack Creek Bushcare have been doing exchanges on worksites with Emu Heights Bushcare volunteers. We have had productive time removing Lantana in both areas, these activities having strengthened the relations with Penrith City Council Bushcare, and have helped expand the focus of environmental works to the greater catchment.

Nathan Summers



Dick Turner leading the Bird Watching walk at Knapsack.



Members from the Jamison Creek Bushcare Group (assisted by BMCC staff) give the rare tree a new home.

Back from the Brink!

Eucalyptus copulans is one of the rarest and most endangered eucalypts in Australia. In fact only one plant is known to still exist in the wild despite extensive surveys in the Wentworth Falls area where it used to occur. The original *Eucalyptus copulans* population was always limited in its distribution but the urban development of its habitat and the changing fire regimes that accompanied European settlement did not help its cause. After the last known individuals

were killed by the severe fires of 1958 and the site was subsequently developed for housing the species was presumed to be extinct. However in 1993 a single tree was rediscovered in a railway reserve in Wentworth Falls and in 1998 a further individual was found in the Jamison Creek Reserve. Unfortunately the individual in the railway reserve was subsequently struck by lightning and killed.

Due to the foresight of the NPWS and the Royal Botanical Gardens seed and seedling collections were maintained at the Mt Annan and Mt Tomah Botanical Gardens after the species rediscovery. The planting out of three *Eucalyptus copulans* seedlings for Threatened Species Day 2006 represented the first reintroduction of the species into its natural range and forms part of ongoing efforts to maintain the amazing World Heritage recognised diversity of Eucalyptus species present in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (107 eucalyptus species-15% of the global total).

The honors of planting the *Eucalyptus copulans* seedlings were shared among the members of the Jamison Creek Bushcare group which helps to maintain the Jamison Creek Reserve on behalf of the local community. The commemorative planting was followed by a free Discovery walk along the Charles Darwin Track which highlighted some of the key threatened species of the Upper Blue Mountains area occurring along the Charles Darwin Walk including the Blue Mountains Water Skink, the Giant Dragonfly, the Dwarf Mountain Pine and *Eucalyptus copulans*.



A Fairy Dell Re-Union by John Melville

On Sunday 24th September, 2006, past and present members of the Fairy Dell Restoration Committee and interested residents met for a re-union picnic at Fairy Dell Reserve. During the day members inspected the wetlands on Lot 2 (Adjacent to the Reserve) and the recent environmental drainage improvements undertaken by the Department of Soil Conservation on the silt flat.

The origin of the Fairy Dell committee began in 1987 when local Springwood residents noticed the degraded state of Magdala Creek exposed by bushfire. Over the years the committee applied for and gained numerous grants and in conjunction with the Urban Run-Off Control Program in excess of \$2 million has been spent on environmental works within the Magdala Creek Catchment. This clearly emphasizes the importance for BMCC to continue and expand the Bushcare program. In its formative years the Fairy Dell Restoration Committee was at the forefront of Bushland regeneration promotion and some of their achievements include:

- Lobbying Council to employ their first Bushcare Officer.
- Organising the beginning of the Bushcare Network as a way of raising Bushland Management issues on a united front
- In conjunction with BMCC, organized the first World Environment Day in the Blue Mountains held at the Springwood Civic Centre and Fairy Dell Reserve.
- Organised the first Environmental Forum involving the State Member for Blue Mountains the Hon. Bob Debus.
- Made BMCC aware of the degraded state of the Deanei forest at Springwood.
- Lobbied Council to employ more Bushcare Officers as the Bushcare Program expanded.
- Lobbied Council to purchase Lot 2, adjacent to the Fairy Dell Reserve, for a constructed wetland with funds from the URCP.

Fairy Dell Reserve is an important community asset for Springwood and the Blue Mountains residents as it is a 5 minute walk from the Springwood Railway station to a network of bushwalking tracks through the Fairy Dell Reserve.

After 17 years the volunteers still have much work to achieve as the Reserve is still being impacted upon by weeds and urban run-off from the Springwood Town Centre and adjoining private land. With the help of the Council's Bushcare Program and Bush Regeneration Team the desired result can be achieved.

Yabby Tonic

"Hey you there, yabby in the creek
With your Popeye forearms,
Crikey you're a beauty!
Give us a squiz at those nippers
At your orange and brown camouflage suit
At those eyes on stalks
And how do you do that backwards walk?"

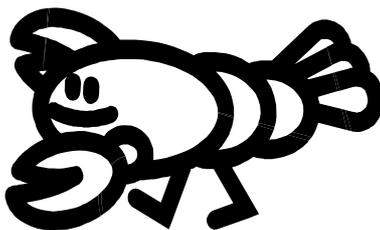
Oh don't be shy
Don't hide under the dappled leaves
I only want to look!"

"Hey you, human in the khaki shirt
Leave me be.
Let me tread the sand of Sassafras Creek
Let me gorge myself on meaty things
Let me grow to the size of your forearm
I want to swim around Magdala Creek
I want to infiltrate procreate populate,
I want to be the rubbish truck
In Magdala's flows and falls and pools,
Hey human, leave me be."

"Hey yabby - the camera's rolling
Get a load of those legs - oh! -
Did you see that thing go?"

"Hey human
Don't poke me with your stick
Give me clean water and lot's of it
Give me wild hillsides
As varied as living things in a garage sale
And then, leave me be
I will give you
A tonic for your soul."

23/9/2006



A poem for Fairy Dell Bush-
care Group by
Diana Levy



Ron Lyons and Thelma Murphy with other past members of Fairy Dell Restoration Committee on a track in the reserve.



The present Site was part of portion 28 of a land grant made to Mr A. Finlayson and Mr W. Cope in 1880. The land changed hands on a number of occasions until it came into the possession of Green Acre Park Limited and was purchased by the Shire of the Blue Mountains for the sum of Fifteen Pounds in 1934 with a covenant that the land be used for public recreation only.

The land had never been occupied since the original land grant was made. However, in 1932 it was unofficially called Neill Park, named after the first Secretary of the Warrimoo Progress Association, it was regularly used as a Cricket Oval during the 1930s

In December 1986 the Warrimoo Citizens Association (WCA) wrote to the Local State Member, with a copy to Council, asking that his Government consider donating the land to the BMCC and designate it as public parkland. It was the intention of the Citizens Association to muster local support and develop it as a Recrea-

tion Park and Playground as part of the Bi-Centennial celebrations.

The reply from the State Member was negative. Our hopes for a Bi-Centennial project faded.

If ever the Cross Street land was to be returned to its rightful owners (The people of Warrimoo) then now was the time to pressure the Government to make a decision before the State Election.

The Opposition Candidate for the coming Election met a Representative of WCA and made an irrefutable commitment that if the Opposition gained Office it would return the land to the BMCC as a Recreational Reserve. This commitment made top news in the Gazette.

The Minister for Education, arranged a Meeting with a Representative of WCA.

The Minister pointed out it was the Departments responsibility to safeguard Educational Property, and if sold, to redirect the assets into school improvements.

WCA was adamant that the land had been acquired by the Educational Department for the Warrimoo Primary School. It had not been used for that purpose and should be returned to BMCC and used as Parkland.

The Minister suggested a compromise; land facing Cross Street be sold and the remainder used for recreation. This was totally unacceptable.

However, three days later WCA received a fax from the Ministers Office saying the land was being transferred from the Educational Department to the Department of Administrative Services who would hand it over to BMCC.

The Cross Street land was now firmly in the hands of the Warrimoo residents. BMCC eventually declared the land a Natural Reserve and hence The Cross Street Reserve assumed official recognition.



L to R: Alan Bewley, Tony Montgomery, Denise Scott, Ian Scott, Steve Barret, John Hollis & "Boof" toasting the reserve on their 5th Birthday



HAPPY BIRTHDAY CROSS STREET BUSHCARE

A BIG congratulation to Cross Street, Warrimoo Bushcare Group on their 5th Anniversary in September 2006. On the September workday, we managed to fit in a mighty 5th Anniversary cake, supplied with lashings of other goodies. With at least 10 regular members and a monthly bushcare newsletter, Cross St Bushcare Group has made a significant contribution to their local area and have remained doing so in spite of the rather devastating fires that hit the street in January 2001 and again in 2002.

The main weed issues tackled since the groups inception are: African Love Grass, Cobblers Pegs, Scotch and Montpelier Broom (last seen heading North) coreopsis, and lately we have seen quite a bit of Fuchsia and Whiskey Grass, which we have managed to reduce and will continue to work with.

They are a great bunch with dedication to their local community. Another reason for their longevity, I suspect, has to do with the spectacular afternoon teas, largely engineered by Denise Scott, and contributed to by the group.

Alan Bewley, the Group's Co-ordinator, has kindly supplied the background history to the Bushcare Group with much effort on the part of the local residents was to become a very successful community undertaking.

Tracy Williams



Your Newsletter: This newsletter is compiled by Chris Dewhurst (assisted by Judy Tyrrell) 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.

