

GECKO Summer 2006

The Newsletter of the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program



Welcome to another issue of the Gecko, the first for 2006. Last year was a great year for Blue Mountains Bushcare, with some highlights being the launch of the "Springwood Forests" and "Lone Pine Bushcare" fliers, obtaining the Environmental Levy and securing an increase in Bushcare funding for the next 5 years, and many groups achieving the 10 year milestone.

2006 is set to be even bigger; firstly we welcome Tracy Williams, a new Bushcare Officer on-board. I will let Tracey introduce herself later in this issue, but she represents an expansion of our team to 6 Bushcare Staff. This will really help us to start new groups and offer volunteers more support.

Also on the horizon is our annual Bushcare "Thank You" BBQ. Have a look within this issue for your official invitation. As always, the Megalong Valley venue is glorious and I'm sure we will have another great day.

Kind regards,

Chris Dewhurst
Bushcare Team Leader



DATES TO NOTE



Jan 22 (Sunday) 2006 – 10am to 4pm—170 Years Celebration of Charles Darwin Walk

Feb 25 (Saturday) 2006 The Bushcare "Thank You" BBQ – Megalong Valley (see inside for details)

March 11—The Aggie Assault—Valley of the Waters, W/Falls.

Mar 26 The Return Of Remote Bushcare - - (see inside for details)

170 years of the Darwin Walk



A community event lead by Rotary will celebrate 170 years since of Charles Darwin walked down to Wentworth Falls from the old Weatherboard Inn. The event will be held on Sunday 22 January, 2006.

It will be a great opportunity for Wentworth Falls Bushcarers and the Living Streams/Streamwatch people to let others know of their work and to encourage greater involvement by locals. Please join us at Wilson Park, Falls Rd Wentworth Fall from 10am to 4pm. There will be three guided walks throughout the day with special guests to meet along the way. It will be fun no matter what the weather.

A specially designed Charles Darwin walk pamphlet will be launched on the day. It will be a good opportunity to connect with people about biodiversity, history, philosophical thought and other related matters!

Return Of Remote Bushcare

For all those adventurous Bushcare volunteers out there, we are hoping to re-kindle our program of remote bushcare this autumn. The idea is to get at the weeds that are getting further into the good bush, a wee half hour walk down the creeks boldly going a bit further than most Bushcare groups have gone before. The first one will be a return to Fraser Creek, Wilmalee, on Sunday 26th March 2006. It will most likely run from 9am until 4.00pm. It will depend upon a reasonable level of interest so please can you express your interest to me by email at: afoster@bmcc.nsw.gov.au. You can also phone me at Bushcare 4780 5623 (Fridays).

Welcome to our new Bushcare Officer



Hello Blue Mountains Bushcarers! My name is Tracy Williams and I am about to start as a new Bushcare officer. I am very excited on taking on this new role as I am a keen volunteer myself having worked with NPWS, Wildplant Rescue, Popes Glen Bushcare Group, among others, as a way to gain experience and knowledge about this beautiful area we all call home.

I also have been working on Councils Green Team for the past two years as well as two local contractors (A&S & Good Bush People) for approx 3 and a half years prior to that.

I feel the new position of Bush Regenerator/Bushcare Officer created by Council will bring together these complimentary roles and make it easier to represent and bring Bushcare's interests into a more prominent position.

I look forward to meeting you all and working with you to further this already outstanding Bushcare program.

Is this the Original Mud Map?





SEDIMENT PLUGS – TO WEED OR NOT TO WEED

That is the question!

Thank you Naomi and Chris for your articles, raising this issue for discussion. It is very important that it be debated.

The dilemma has always been posed as:

- is it better to remove weeds to prevent them from spreading downstream and infecting good bushland in the National Park; or
- is it better to retain the weeds, in order to protect the aquatic flora and fauna from the impacts of sediment?

I would like to suggest that we need to start asking different questions for different situations. I have observed two very different types of 'sediment plugs' in Blue Mountains creeks, and a variety somewhere in between. These two extremes require different responses.



TYPE A: LARGE STABLE SEDIMENT PLUG WITH TREES OR SHRUBS

TYPE B: SMALL UNSTABLE SEDIMENT DEPOSITS WITH GROUND LAYER SPECIES ONLY

TYPE A: LARGE STABLE SEDIMENT PLUG

Examples of this type of wide stable areas of sediment include the willow patches at Popes Glen (Blackheath), Blue Mountain Creek (Wentworth Falls) and South Lawson.

There are clearly opportunities for planting and using structures, such as check dams, to stabilise sediment and re-divert water flows. While it may take a long time, there are possibilities of replacing weeds species with local natives. This would not be an exercise in regenerating an area back to a previous condition, but rather an attempt in constructing a new community using local native species in preference to invasive species (ie weeds).



TYPE B: SMALL UNSTABLE SEDIMENT DEPOSITS WITHIN A CREEKLINE

Yosemite and Katoomba Creeks in North Katoomba have many examples of small deposits of sand, less than 1 or 2 sq metres in area.

These deposits are subjected to large volumes of fast flowing water after rain. The velocity and the volume being much greater than these creeks were carrying prior to European settlement.

It is, therefore, not possible to consider planting to stabilise such silt plugs, because the plants will get washed away.



Instead, a number of questions need to be asked about each and every sediment plug:

1. If the sediment plug remains, being held firmly by ground layer weeds, will the creek move further around it and start or continue to cut into the opposite creek bank? If so, the choice is whether you release the sediment within the plug in the creek or whether you allow the opposite creek bank to erode and then be released as sediment further down.
2. Is it possible to physically remove the weeds and the sediment? Can the sediment be taken away or left somewhere above the flood line? What removal techniques could be used? Can a temporary sediment trap be constructed across the creek during the 'excavation'?
3. Is it possible to both stabilise the sediment plug and the opposite creek bank? If so, what impact will this have on other sections of the creek bank?

In conclusion, many silt plugs will fit somewhere in between these two 'ideal types'. A thorough look at all the opportunities and consequences is essential, with much informed discussion.

I look forward to hearing other comments on this complex issue.



Lyndal Sullivan, Bushcare volunteer and professional bush regenerator



AGGIE ASSAULT

Valley Of The Waters Bushcare Group will be holding an "Aggie Assault" on Saturday, 11 March 2006. Agapanthus has become firmly established in an area behind some houses and they are beginning to creep further into bushland. Although the Bushcare Group has been steadily working on this problem for some time, we have only managed to put a dent in the number of plants. We have trialled and had good success in cutting and painting with glyphosate the larger or medium-sized Agapanthus plants and the smaller juvenile plants have been easily prised out.

We would like to invite interested people to spend some time with us to further reduce the number of Agapanthus plants in this area. The meeting place is at the bus shelter at the corner of Valley Road and Armstrong Street, Wentworth Falls. We will start from 9.00 am and finish at 12.00 Noon, although any time you can spare in between this timeframe would be great.

Please bring herbicide-proof gloves, if you have them - if not, they will be provided. Tools and training will be available, as well as a delicious morning tea. We hope to see you there.

Any enquiries, please contact Karen Hising on 4757 1929 or karenhising@bigpond.com.



These Aggies days are numbered

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New Group for Medlow Bath

The township of Medlow Bath has begun their first Bushcare Group working in the bushland of Medlow Park. One of the first groups to be supported by the Environmental Levy, the group has been trained by Council officers and already undertaken a number of workdays. The group has begun to follow the principles of Bush Regeneration by slowly clearing English Holly, Honeysuckle and Blackberry from the bushland adjacent to Park St. In the future the Medlow Group would like to see the complete eradication of many large pines that dominate one corner of the reserve. The group works on the first Saturday afternoon of each month from 2pm, meeting at the gazebo in the park. Please call Kerry Brown for more information on 4788 1132.



Medlow Bath Bushcare Group being trained by Council Officer - Jill Rattray



The 2006 Bushcare "Thank You" BBQ



This is our annual day of thanks to all our Bushcare, Landcare and Streamwatch volunteers. If you have been part of a group this past year then you are most welcome. Friends and family are also welcome.

Where is it? The Megalong Valley Showgrounds. Turn left at Blackheath and follow the signs to the Megalong Valley. The showground's are located on the left, 250m past the Megalong Tea Rooms

When? Saturday February 25 2006 – 12 Noon to 4pm

What is happening? BMCC provides all food and drinks for the day (bring a plate and cutlery). We also have entertainment and games for kids.

Awards! As always we will present awards to groups and individuals for special recognition. This will include the Hard Yakka Award and Bushcare Legend of 2005. Barbara Harley is the current holder of the Golden Trowel and she will be passing it on to the new recipient this year.

The Bushcare Olympics – We introduced this last year and it proved a hit. So prepare yourself for weed bag racing, privet tossing and more!

"Bake Off" – If you would like to participate bring some cakes or biscuits and enter them as part of your Bushcare Group afternoon tea. These will then be shared amongst everyone on the day. The winner will receive the coveted "Best Afternoon Tea" award for 2005.

Free Gifts – This year we will be giving away special Blue Mountains Bushcare hats and drink bottles to all registered volunteers. Be there on the day to get yours.

Lower Mountains Shuttle Bus – We will organise a free shuttle bus to pick up and drop home people from Lawson and below. We may also organise a pick-up from Blackheath train station. Numbers are strictly limited so please book early. To book, ring Nathan Summers on 4780 5623 (Fridays or leave message) or email nsummers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.

What to Bring – plate, cutlery, cup, hat and sunscreen. Cake or biscuits if entering the "Bake Off". Musical instrument to join in with the Gang Gangs if you wish.

RSVP – Please reply to Chris Dewhurst on 4780 5528 (leave message) or email cdewhurst@bmcc.nsw.gov.au by Feb 22 2006.

Great! We will see you there!



Weed Bag racing at last years picnic

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 5, Katoomba NSW 2780. Phone 4780 5528 or 0414 195 623; e-mail cdewhurst@bmcc.nsw.gov.au; Fax 4780 5555.

