

GECKO Autumn 2007

The Newsletter of the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Pro-



Hello and welcome to another issue of the Gecko. It has been a busy time in Bushcare land as we embark on our new program of Biodiversity Workshops and continue to support 57 groups across the mountains. Luckily we have just put on a couple of great new staff – Trish Kidd and Karen Hising, who will introduce themselves later in this newsletter.

I also wish to acknowledge the sad passing of one of our great volunteers – Elizabeth Mason. I first met Elizabeth when we began working in Mt Wilson. She and her husband John were always great participants at workdays, full of enthusiasm and fun. When they later moved to Leura she continued her work with Sublime Point Bushcare Group. She will be greatly missed by many.



Elizabeth enjoying a cuppa at Mt Wilson.

Chris Dewhurst

Bushcare Team Leader



DATES TO NOTE

Autumn Biodiversity Workshops

April 28 Saturday – Bird watching with Carol Proberts – 7.00am – 10.00am - Jamison Creek, Wentworth Falls (limit 12 people) *Intermediate Experience Level*

May 13 Sunday -Sun Valley Biodiversity Workshop. Learn all about the Sun Valley Cabbage Gum Endangered Ecological Community and current efforts to preserve it - Eric Mahony (BMCC Bushland Management Officer) and Faunal signs and traces and the Fauna of Sun Valley - Matt Chambers (BMCC Terrestrial Scientist) *Open to All*

May 26 Saturday – Bird watching with Carol Proberts – 7.00am – 10.00am – Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook (limit 12 people) *Intermediate Experience Level*

June 9 Saturday -South Lawson Biodiversity Workshop—Learn about the interesting ecology of the Lawson area. Sessions will include focus on swamps, plants and fauna. *Open to All*

To book email cdewhurst@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or phone 4780 5528 (leaving a message will be ok). Booking is essential as workshop participant numbers are limited. Further information on the logistics of the workshop eg. where to meet and the itinerary of the day will be provided to participants who have booked prior to the workshop.

19-20 May Sat /Sun —Sedge Workshop with Van Klaphake— More details inside. *Advanced Experience Level*

7 July Saturday—Stream and Swamp Rehabilitation Workshop with Roger Good. More details inside. *Open to All*

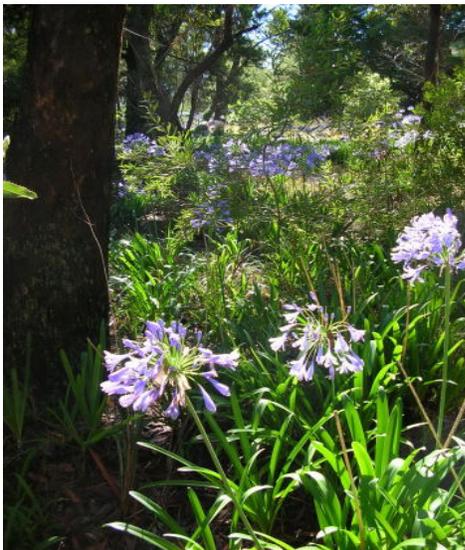


**Waste & Resources
Reference Group**

Do you have an opinion on the waste and recycling options in the Blue Mountains? Be a part of the new Waste & Resources Reference Group that is being set up to ensure community views are canvassed and conveyed to Council. There is a position for one resident from each Ward, two positions for business representation and a position to represent environmental groups (among others).

An information package about how to get involved can be downloaded from council's website www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au, under 'Waste Management', or you can phone 4780 5000 to have one posted to you. Submissions close on Friday 27 April 2007. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to future service changes and other initiatives.

AGGIE ATTACK



Valley Of The Waters Bushcare Group will be holding an "Aggie Attack" on Saturday, 14 April 2007. Agapanthus has become firmly established in an area behind some houses and they have been creeping 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 with a variety of techniques, including mattocking large plants and clumps, cutting and painting with glyphosate the medium-sized plants and prising out the smaller juvenile plants.

The 2006 Aggie event was a great success in reducing this large Agapanthus patch. However, we need to continue with the work and hope you can help us.

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 4780 5623 or khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au



The Water Page - Autumn 2007



Welcome to the water page! Rather than compiling a separate Streamwatch newsletter, Council's Streamwatch and Bushcare coordinators have decided to try incorporating a regular 'Water Page' in the Gecko newsletter. This will

mean that Bushcare volunteers get to hear more about what's going on in the City's wet spots, and Streamwatch volunteers can stay up to date on Bushcare matters. We are trying to enhance links between the programs, most significantly through the development of "Streamcare" - read more about this below....

INTRODUCING STREAMCARE: DO YOU KNOW A STREAM THAT NEEDS HELP?

Living Streams Streamwatch is an existing program in the Blue Mountains, facilitated by Blue Mountains City Council, Sydney Water and the Sydney Catchment Authority. Streamwatch currently supports around 40 volunteers in the regular monitoring of over 20 waterways across the mountains.

"Streamcare" will complement the activities of Streamwatch volunteers, by providing the materials, training and support needed to allow community involvement in on-ground works that address water quality and waterway health issues. It is envisaged that Streamcare will involve collaboration between Streamwatch, Bushcare and Swampcare volunteers (and other interested residents), along with BMCC Natural Systems and Bushcare staff. Streamcare (like Swampcare) will be run under the Bushcare banner and will be event-based, with around 4 workdays per year plus a number of skill/knowledge building talks and workshops.

Issues that will be able to be addressed by Streamcare include:

- Sediment source/erosion control (using soft engineering)

and the removal of sediment from suitable creek pools

- Riparian/creekline restoration works
- Reinstatement of aquatic habitat (e.g. woody debris) at appropriate sites

Council invites Streamwatch and Bushcare volunteers to nominate sites that may benefit from the attention of these types of Streamcare activities. We are also interested in feedback about this proposal - please call Amy on 4780 5553. A Streamcare 'launch' is tentatively planned for spring 2007 - more information will be available soon.

RECENT STREAMWATCH ACTIVITIES

Bullaburra/Hazelbrook bug survey and faecal coliform training

Five members of the Bullaburra/Hazelbrook Streamwatch group got together at Bedford Pool with Streamwatch coordinators on 19 March for a waterbug survey and faecal coliform test training. The bug survey turned up all sorts of interesting creatures including several different Families of mayfly nymphs, stonefly nymphs, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, aquatic beetle larvae and adults, caddis fly larvae, mites and crayfish. The survey showed an excellent result for Bedford Creek.



South Lawson Streamwatch training

Four volunteers gathered with Streamwatch coordinators on the South Lawson Bushcare site for a spot of Streamwatch training on 18 February. The group was handed a new colorimeter kit, which allows them to test for available phosphorus in addition to their existing repertoire of dissolved oxygen, turbidity, pH, electrical conductivity and temperature. The group is planning to conduct a waterbug survey as part of their Bushcare Open Day on Sunday 15 April.

data a survey provides, wouldn't you love to know what is living in your creek? Autumn is a great time to conduct waterbug surveys - for assistance contact Amy on 4780 5553.

The Whirligig is an aquatic beetle that is often seen darting around the surface of pools in Blue Mountains creeks.

AUTUMN WATERBUG SURVEYS - IT'S A GREAT TIME OF YEAR TO GET TO KNOW YOUR BUGS!

Waterbugs (otherwise known as aquatic macroinvertebrates) are often used as biological indicators of waterway health because they live through the full range of physical and chemical conditions at a site. Our physical and chemical sampling (for indicators like pH, temperature, turbidity and nutrients) may miss pollution incidents, but the bugs certainly won't! Different bugs have different tolerances to pollution and disturbance, so the types and number of bugs found at a site will give an indication of the level of pollution or disturbance in the waterway. Aside from the useful



Swampcare off to a flying start!

On Thursday the 16th of March thirteen swampcarers christened the new Swampcare program by decimating a Tutsan (*Hypericum* spp) advance column which was invading into a near intact Blue Mountains Swamp system behind Yanko Avenue in Wentworth Falls.

The Swampcare day was part of the Great Grose Weed Walk and had two main goals: to help rehabilitate the Blue Mountains swamp habitat of a known site of both the endangered Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Giant Dragonfly and to prevent the Tutsan invading further into the Grose catchment of the Blue Mountains National Park.

The Swampcarers, under the able supervision of bush regenerator and swamp enthusiast Lyndal Sullivan and Bushcare Team Leader Chris Dewhurst, were given a workshop on the appropriate bush regeneration techniques for working in Blue Mountains Swamps and then they were off and there was no stopping them! Work breaks were only taken grudgingly and they put in a thoroughly impressive performance to get Swampcare off



to a flying start! The volunteers were rewarded for their efforts when several curious Blue Mountains Water Skinks came out to celebrate the bush regeneration and basked in the sun as the work continued around them.

Many thanks to everyone who came along to make the first Swampcare event such a successful day.

By Michael Hensen (Threatened Species Officer)

Lyndal Sullivan instructs new Swampcare recruits on the appropriate bush regeneration techniques to use in a Blue Mountains Swamp environment



Want to know more about Swampcare

Swampcare is a new initiative of the Bushcare program. Swampcare is an education and event based program for people interested in preserving Blue Mountains Swamps. Swampcare will organise educational workshops and on-ground field days with the aim of rehabilitating Blue Mountains Swamp systems and raising awareness of swamps and the threatened species that inhabit them in the Blue Mountains community.

Get involved in Swampcare activities- Swamp care activities will be event based and will not involve the regular commitment of a standard Bushcare group. Part of the idea is for Bushcare members to gain skills in working in swamp environments which they can then take home and utilize within their own Bushcare group.

Upcoming Swampcare events

Advanced sedge workshop with Van Klaphake Sat/Sun 19-20 May- a free sedge workshop to help you key out and identify those tricky Blue Mountains Sedges (not suitable for beginners)

To book email mhensen@bmcc.nsw.gov.au Please state your experience level in plant identification to help ascertain whether the workshop is suitable for you and your Bushcare group.

Soft engineering solutions to rehabilitate degraded Blue Mountains Swamps and streams with Roger Good- Sat 7 July- a free full day workshop designed to give participants hands on experience in applying innovative soft engineering solutions to rehabilitating Blue Mountains swamps and streams and to tackle small scale sediment and stormwater issues. Learn the skills and then come along and use them on a Swampcare swamp rehabilitation day.

To book email acarey@bmcc.nsw.gov.au





Upland Swamp Restoration Update

Council's Upland Swamp Restoration Projects are now underway, with initial contracts issued for soft engineering and targeted weeding at Wentworth Falls Lake and at the Kitty Hawk swamp complex in north Wentworth Falls. The Wentworth Falls Lake works represent the first stage in the overall work plan for the site, and will use soft engineering techniques to spread water and rehabilitate channelisation through the swamp near Bass St. The initial Wentworth Falls Lake contract will also include targeted weeding and assisted regeneration on a large sediment plume within the swamp. The Kitty Hawk swamp complex (the site for the first Swampcare workday held in March) will be treated for tutsan and Himalayan honeysuckle. The contractor will target the weed infestation around the stormwater outlet, to complement the works being undertaken by volunteers within the swamp. **A community workshop on swamp rehabilitation techniques will be held in early July 2007** – more details to come. For further information about the swamps projects please contact Anne Carey on 4780 5457.



Anne Carey in action at the swamp rehabilitation workshop held for Council staff and contractors in December

Hester Creek Landcare Group

Our Landcare group is made up principally of private land owners whose properties encroach into a hanging swamp vegetation community zoned bushland conservation. The hanging swamp community is permanently nourished by a natural spring-fed creek flowing through the valley. It is located between Craigend /Hester Street/Hester Place and Kurrawang /Morven Streets on the eastern side of Leura. Whilst Kevin was removing blackberry on his property in 2002 the Blue Mountains Water Skink threatened species was discovered and then confirmed by NPWS and registered as a site. To generate interest towards forming a Landcare group the site was used as the Blue Mountains site for National Tree planting day on 28th July 2002. Seventeen people turned up on the day and subsequently our first Hester Creek Landcare group start day was on 19th September 2002 with four members plus NPWS and BMCC representatives.

Linda Thomas evolved the first overall weed control plan of the area for our group to follow through with. The principal weeds found in the creek are Blackberry, Himalayan honeysuckle and Buddleia with a large stand of Pussy willows upstream. The dominating native vegetation is button grass, coral fern, tea tree, hairpin banksia and Grevillea acanthifolia. Sydney Water upgraded their sewerage pumping station in 2004 at the eastern end of the creek, which resulted in some destruction of native vegetation. Our group

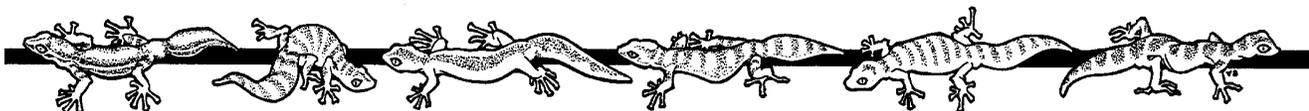
successfully lobbied Sydney Water to provide seedlings and mulch for our group to do rectification works.

Last year the monthly group was often down to only two members. After Michael Henson came on board as BMCC Threatened Species officer we carried out a letterbox drop and personally contacted adjacent landowners to inform them about our unique site. Thanks to Michael's input and enthusiasm our numbers are now up to six regulars with other landowners committing to carry out bushland regeneration works on their own properties. In several areas the creek has cut deeply into the swamp layer due to velocity of water flow in downpours. In the future our site may be used to test out some water velocity reduction barriers to see how these can reduce erosion and improve the hanging swamp vegetation recovery. As well, we receive great support and training assistance from our regular BMCC Bushcare officer Jill Rattray. Our group work day is normally the third Friday of each month from 9am to 12noon with a regular morning tea and legendary ginger snaps.

Kevin Stapleton, Hester Creek Landcare Group Coordinator
T/No 4784 2871, email:- kevinsta@aapt.net.au



I can testify to the legendary status of those ginger snaps he makes – they pack a punch and are as big as plates. Kevin has been involved with bushcare for many years, worked with the Leura Park group before committing himself totally to the Hester Creek project, and earned the 2007 Landcare award. He can be seen pushing a barrow-load of equipment down Hester Place on the third Friday of the month. – Jill Rattray BMCC Bushcare Officer





Jamison Creek Bushcare Group

Jamison Creek Bushcare Group had a very fine turn out in March (see photo) with 7 adults and 5 Bushcare Apprentices (including a set of triplets). There has been a great turn around in our numbers since about a year ago when we were down to 2 or 3 each month.

Jamison Creek is a large reserve with large areas of hanging swamp known to support Blue Mountains Water Skinks and the extremely rare *Eucalyptus copulans* and of course the reserve has great historical, cultural and recreational significance hosting the popular Charles Darwin Walk to the falls.

The Bushcare Group has been here for over 11 years. Originally the group covered the entire length of the creek from Wilson Park to Weeping Rock. Their presence led to the large scale Urban Run-off Control Program bush regeneration works from 1998 to 2003 in the upper half of the creek (now maintained by Council's Bush Regeneration team). In recent years there have been a number of further initiatives including two large



The Jamison Creek Bushcare Group get together for morning tea at a recent

Green Corps projects and a creek-bank restoration project in the Kitchener Creek tributary. It seems like there are projects everywhere as some of the neighbouring landowners have been taking up Council assistance to remove their noxious weeds on land which runs right down to the creek.

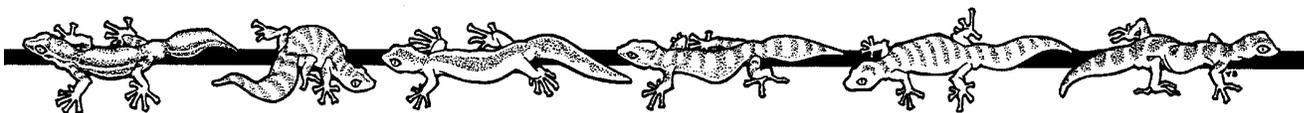
The more menacing weeds such as Blackberry, Scotch Broom, Honeysuckle, Spanish Heath and Small-leaved Privet are now under control, the group has been able to give attention to problems such as Montbretia over the summer months and also to erosion and weed problems along the tributaries.

Introducing the New Bushcare Staff!

Karen Hising

Hello everyone! My name is Karen Hising and I am one of the new Bushcare Officers. I will be working with some of Chris Dewhurst's weekend Groups and also with a few of Brit's Groups. I have been a Bushcare volunteer since 2000 with a few different Groups and I have also been involved in several voluntary bush regeneration events, as well as assisting at Wildplant Rescue. After being made redundant from my office job in the city in 2001, I decided to turn the Bushcare volunteer experience into a profession.

After finishing my bush regen studies, I worked for two local bush regeneration contractors for five years in various areas of the Mountains, as well as a few areas just west of the Mountains. I am now back at a few of those sites where I am assisting with Bushcare, which is wonderful. It has always amazed me at how the bush is able to recover over time with a bit of effort. Working with volunteers has always been a positive experience, so I am very much enjoying this new role. I look forward to meeting and working with you in the near future.





Trish Kidd

Hello to all Blue Mountains volunteers and Gecko readers. I have already had the pleasure of meeting and working with some of you as one of Council's newest Bushcare/Landcare Support Officers. I started this new journey at the annual "2007 Thank-you Picnic" in the Megalong Valley, and am looking forward to meeting more of you as the year unfolds.

I initially moved to the Blue Mountains in 1990 to escape (like a lot of people) from the city. Sydney offered many choices and challenges in the arena of environmental and social issues that at the time seemed too overwhelming for a young art graduate, so westward bound I came.

After working for a National environmental organisation for a few years, I commenced Bush Regeneration studies for 3½ years in order to get my hands dirty and effect change on a more localised scale. Within this time I began working in the contract field for a number of operators for 8 years, and was subsequently fortunate enough to have worked an awful lot throughout the Blue Mountains, as well as a bit on either side of it. Whilst still working in the field, I side-stepped as a Landcare Project Officer in the Coxs River catchment for four years, as well as undertaking Conservation and Land Management teaching at both Wentworth Falls and Lithgow colleges, where I am still employed. For the last two years I have until recently, also been

working as a Catchment Officer for the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority.

Like many others, I am constantly impressed at the resilience of the Australian landscape and its capacity to regenerate and be restored following damage and impacts predominantly caused by us people in one way or another. I am looking forward to becoming part of the "bigger team" of what is both community and local agency that is helping to resolve some of these issues on-the-ground in a very real and meaningful way.



The "Thank You" BBQ 2007



Another wonderful day was enjoyed by volunteers and their families and friends on Saturday, February 17, in the Megalong Valley. Blue Mountains City Council put on the day in recognition of the efforts of over 60 groups of Bushcare, Landcare and Streamwatch volunteers which work across the mountains.

The day was attended by over 150 people who enjoyed a staff-cooked BBQ, Bushcare Olympics, free horse rides and plant and water bug identification competitions.

Deputy Mayor – Terri Hamilton - commented: "It is wonderful to see so many people maintain their commitment to the local bushland reserves." Cllr Pippa McInnes who was also present urged more people to become involved: "The satisfaction that you achieve from being part of a Bushcare Group is amazing, a great way to meet your fellow neighbours and do something positive for the environment."

The day was also an opportunity to launch a new Swampcare program and donate \$2000 worth of Biodiversity books to the Blue Mountains Libraries, courtesy of a grant received from the Sydney Catchment Authority.



Thank You BBQ continued.....

The Bushcare annual awards were presented to the following groups and individuals:

Group Awards – Presented by Clr Terri Hamilton Individual Awards – Presented by Clr Pippa McInnes

5 Year Awards

Blackheath Glen Bushcare Group
Kedumba Creek Bushcare Group
Frogs Hollow Bushcare Group
Cross St Bushcare Group
Grover St Bushcare Group

10 Year Awards

Pippas Pass Bushcare Group
Sublime Point Bushcare Group
Katoomba Creek Bushcare Group
Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group
Bellata Court Bushcare Group

15 Year Awards

Popes Glen Bushcare Group
Minnihaha Falls Bushcare Group



Junior Bushcarer Awards: Richard Samson,
Ewen Samson

Hard Yakka Awards: Ruth Ley, John Hill

Landcare Award: Kevin Stapleton

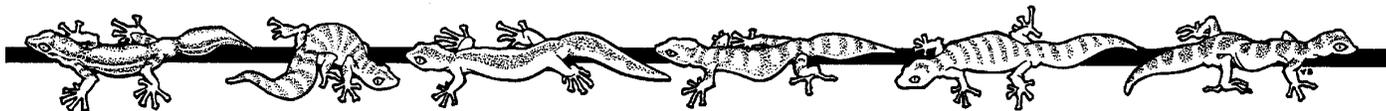
Masters Awards: Shirley Brown, Joyce Brister

Bushcare Legend: David Coleby

David Coleby receiving his "Bushcare Legend" Award from Clr Pippa McInnes and Chris Dewhurst, Bushcare Team Leader



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.



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