

Gecko Newsletter



Summer 2019 No. 79

Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program

Join Blue Mountains Bushcare

Bushcare is a great way to meet like-minded people, make new friends and have fun. Activities are tailored to suit your ability - it's not all about hard work.

Bushcare is family friendly so bring your kids, friends or even a neighbour along. If you want to spend time in the bush, make a difference to the environment or learn bush regeneration skills you can use in your own backyard, then Bushcare is for you!

There are 60 Bushcare groups across the Blue Mountains, ranging from Lapstone in the lower mountains to Mount Victoria in the upper mountains and across to the basalt-topped Mount Wilson. There are a wide range of meeting times and days to suit everyone.

The Bushcare Officer provides training for all skill levels. No previous experience is necessary, just enthusiasm. Bring a hat, water and wear suitable clothing and sturdy shoes.

More information:

bushcarebluemountains.org.au/join-bushcare

Bushcare Update

By Sandy Benson (Bushcare Team Leader)

Blue Mountains Bushcare has had a remarkable year, it's hard not to admire Bushcare volunteers' ability to make real life impacts in the environment, particularly their commitment to the long term.

Summer seems to have come early this year with dry conditions and high temperatures. With this in mind we need to ensure we are looking after ourselves while working on our Bushcare sites, particularly keeping hydrated and cool, so take plenty of breaks and bring plenty of water.

Additionally, with **Very High to Catastrophic fire ratings** expected over summer **Bushcare Group workdays may be cancelled or alternative plans made pending the fire rating** and whether the Bushcare Officer determines that weather conditions are unsafe. During bushfire danger periods, Bushcare Officers will undertake RFS fire warning checks before each work session. During Catastrophic Fire Danger and when Council reserves are closed all Bushcare activities will be cancelled.

Bushcare wishes each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Christmas Bells - *Blandfordia nobilis*

In this issue:

- Neighbourly gathering
- Decades of healing: 'The Full Story'
- Rare find
- Environmental locals
- Environmental awards
- Moving tributes
- Bushcare city helpers
- Catchment news
- What weed is that?
- What's on



Else-Mitchell Park tree planting morning

By Karen Hising

More than a year ago, a friendly neighbour to the Else-Mitchell Park Bushcare site kindly offered the Bushcare Group some *Eucalyptus deanei* seedlings to raise and plant into the reserve. The seedlings appeared in a large pot from a very large and beautiful *Eucalyptus deanei* tree in the neighbour's front garden – a remnant from the original forest of the area. Mike Purtell, coordinator and founding member of the Else-Mitchell Park Bushcare Group, agreed to raise the seedlings for future planting.

When I met the neighbour some time later, I suggested he join us in planting the juvenile trees back into the reserve, which he thought was a great idea. His enthusiasm sparked an idea - as we had a number of plants available, why not invite all the surrounding neighbours?

So, the Bushcare Group and six neighbouring families enjoyed a lovely morning planting trees in various parts of the site. Each family got to plant a tree each and we shared a special morning tea and chat.

Mike is now working with another neighbour to organise an interview with the original neighbour who provided the seedlings, to record the memories of living in the local area for historic reference, with particular regard to ongoing changes at Else-Mitchell Park.



Else-Mitchell Park tree planting morning
Credit: John Papanidis

We want to hear from you!

Bushcare volunteers are encouraged to submit stories for publication in the Gecko.

For more information contact your local Bushcare Officer or email bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Decades of Healing: The Full Story

By Alan Lane and Paul Vale, Popes Glen Bushcare

You might have heard about the work of Popes Glen Bushcare Group to rehabilitate the extensive willow forest and silt plug at the headwaters of Popes Glen Creek, Blackheath.

Alan and Paul are pleased to let you know they have updated 2015 photo history, 'Decades of Healing', to now cover the entire project from 2002 up until 2019 in a booklet called 'The Full Story'.

This illustrated history contains over 100 photographs describing the work in full – failures as well as successes, and highlights the application of adaptive management in the successful outcome. Included are fifteen appendices providing scientific data of all the various monitoring and survey programs they conducted (native and weed vegetation cover; quality of surface and subsurface water; soil accumulation rate; abundance and diversity of birds, frogs, stygofauna and macroinvertebrates).

Member Alan Lane noted "This book is for bushcare volunteers and professionals, restoration ecologists, local councils and environmental groups, including schools interested in Citizen Science. It is both a motivational and how-to guide for groups tackling a large and complex rehabilitation project that perhaps seems over-ambitious."

View the book for free:

<https://dl.bookfunnel.com/ebgais2pxn>

View the video: Wasteland to Wetland

<https://youtu.be/610sas330EQ>



Blue Mountains City Council Christmas/New Year closures 2019/2020

Council offices will close from
12pm Tuesday 24 December
and reopen on
Thursday 2 January 2020

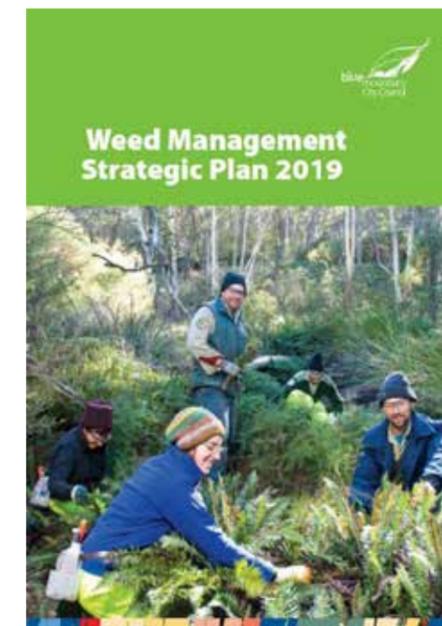
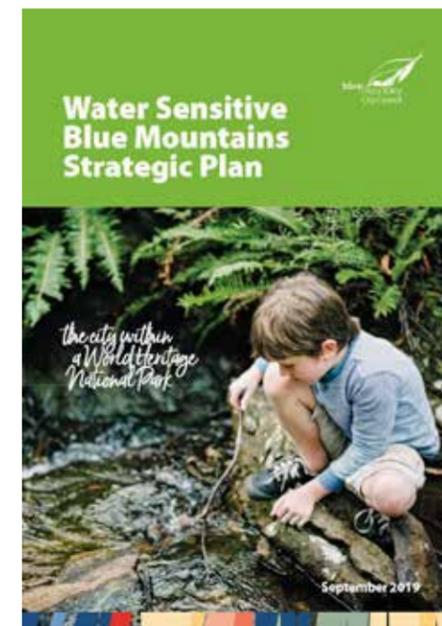
Water and weed strategic plans

Council endorsed the Water Sensitive Blue Mountains Strategic Plan and the Weed Management Strategic Plan 2019 at the 24 September meeting.

The Water Sensitive Blue Mountains Strategic Plan was drafted in collaboration with WaterNSW and the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities, and updated in response to community feedback. It sets out the best practice approaches and design principles Council will follow to manage our City's waterways and water resources, focusing on water efficiency, water harvesting and re-use, stormwater management and community education.

The Weed Management Strategic Plan 2019 replaces our 2010 Plan, taking into account policy and legislative changes in relation to weed control including changes to the role of Councils and landowners under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.

For more information, download the [Water Sensitive Blue Mountains Strategic Plan](#) and [Weed Management Strategic Plan](#) from Council's website.



Third edition - weed booklet

The third edition of Weeds of Blue Mountains Bushland has recently been updated. The new booklet provides information on the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and what the changes mean in relation to how weeds are now classified.

The new weeds booklet features some new weeds that are listed as local priority weeds, as well as the usual suspects and how to treat them.

The booklet is currently in production and will be available in early 2020. Look for it at Council offices and libraries.



Third Edition of 'Weeds of the Blue Mountains Bushland'
Credit: Council

Rare find

By Liz Kabanoff and Tracy Abbas

A lichen insect was recently found in Fairy Dell, Springwood in a *Tristaniopsis laurina* or what is commonly known as a Water Gum.

Seed collecting volunteers were collecting seed for rehabilitation when they came across what they initially thought was a leaf, but turned out to be a rare find in the mountains.

The tiny leaf insect or *Extatosoma tiaratum* caused quite a bit of excitement on the Amateur Entomology Facebook page.

"From what I can gather, this one is a young female," said Lisa Kabanoff. "The nymphs hold their 'tail' in this curled up position. They are often plain coloured, but if they develop from a young age near lichen, some of the females will exhibit this lichen camouflage. The females have small wings but can't fly. Males are a bit smaller, don't develop the lichen camouflage, and can fly. Older females are more green, the 'whiter' colour is only seen in young females.

"Altogether quite a rare find. I did find an older female a few years ago in Birdwood Gully, unfortunately dead, but full of eggs," Lisa said.



Extatosoma tiaratum or spiny leaf insect
Credit: Tracy Abbas

New book: Native Fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

By Judy Smith, Peter Smith and Kate Smith

It's almost 20 years since the Greater Blue Mountains was World Heritage listed in recognition of the area's outstanding flora and fauna values. A new book, 'Native Fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area', provides the first comprehensive account of the area's diverse native vertebrate fauna.

A total of 432 fauna species (68 mammals, 254 birds, 74 reptiles and 36 frogs) have been reliably recorded in the World Heritage Area since European settlement. The book describes the area's environment and fauna habitats and details the status, local distribution and ecology of each fauna species. A checklist indicates in which of the World Heritage Area's eight constituent reserves (Blue Mountains, Gardens of Stone, Kanangra-Boyd, Nattai, Thirlmere Lakes, Wollemi and Yengo National Parks and Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve) each species has been recorded, together with dates of the last records.

Species that are declining or increasing are also identified. Currently, 28 mammals, 34 birds, 4 reptiles and 7 frogs are considered threatened at state or national level and 12 bird species are protected under international migratory bird agreements. An extraordinarily high number of the fauna species are at or near the edge of their range in the World Heritage Area and hence are likely to contribute substantially to genetic variability within species: one fifth (20 species) of the mammals, a tenth (29 species not including vagrant species) of the birds, half (37 species) of the reptiles and almost three-quarters (25 species) of the frogs.

As the 20th anniversary of the World Heritage Area listing approaches next year, it is timely that we take stock of both our fauna and flora and celebrate their diversity, scientific value and conservation importance.

Megalong Public School wins NSW Grand Champion Junior Landcare Team Award

Congratulations to Megalong Public School for winning the Grand Champion Woolworths Junior Landcare Team Award at the recent 2019 NSW Landcare Awards held at Broken Hill this year. This Award recognised the amazing video researched and produced by Megalong Public School that included David King from Gulong Landcare, Gundungurra man, showing the threatened species *Callistemon megalongensis* found only in their local area.

These awards acknowledge Landcare Champions from across NSW and celebrate their impressive achievements in the Landcare community — helping to protect NSW land, water and biodiversity.

Grand Champions of the NSW National Award categories will go on to represent the whole NSW Landcare Community at the 2020 National Landcare Awards in Sydney.

View their video, 'Save the *Callistemon megalongensis*': [youtube.com/watch?v=pT1Z3eUaO30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT1Z3eUaO30)

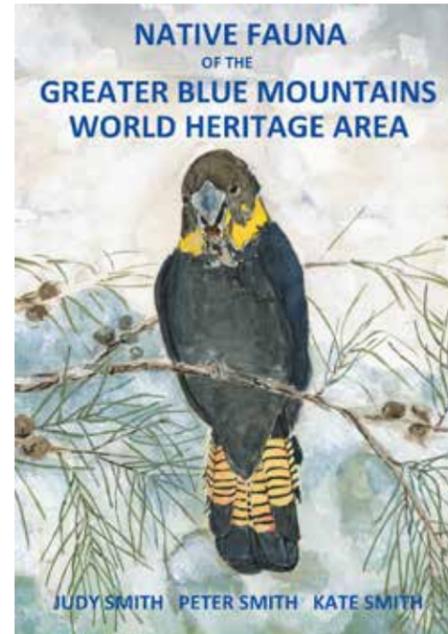
Good luck Megalong Public School!



Grand Champion Woolworths Junior Landcare Team, Megalong Public School
Credit: Stephanie Scott

Community Wildlife Survey

The NSW Government's Community Wildlife Survey NSW Environment, Energy and Science for 2019 is now open and ready for you to share your sightings. If you have seen Platypus, Koalas, Quolls, Echnidas or Possums log on to the following website and share your sightings: <https://bit.ly/34QIZPb>



Judy, Peter and Kate Smith. 172 pages, soft cover, 2 locality maps, over 200 colour photos (Peter), 20 illustrations (Kate).

Where can I find a copy?

The book is available direct from the authors (email: smitheco@ozemail.com.au), from local Blue Mountains bookshops and Visitor Information Centres, and online: bluemountainsfauna.com.au

Congratulations to Jenny Hill

Jenny Hill, one of Council's Environmental Education and Engagement Officers as well as a Bushcare volunteer and past Bushcare legend, was recognised by the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) — the peak professional body for environmental educators. Jenny won both the NSW Environmental Educator of the Year Award, as well as the AAEE NSW Government Education Award for outstanding contribution to Environmental Education in the state in October this year.

Jenny is a member of Council's Healthy Waterways Team, which runs Connecting with Nature; a hands-on environmental learning program, developed by Council and run in partnership with local schools and Early Years Learning Centres. Jenny said the win was a great surprise, having only discovered she had been nominated two days before winning the award. In her acceptance speech she acknowledged that this work was only made possible through fantastic team work. She thanked "the strong connections we have made and continue to grow within our Connecting with Nature Team, across Council, with community and of course our schools, pre-schools, teachers, parents and most importantly the children and young people who teach us just as much, or even more, than we teach them".

Connecting with Nature is popular with both teachers and students. One teacher noted: "The Connecting Kids to Creeks program was absolute gold for me as a teacher, as well as my class and the whole school." A student who attended a session with Ms. Hill said, "The only thing I wanted to make it a better day was more time. More time walking, more time in the cave, more time looking at the water, more time with bugs... .. Could we camp there?"

Mayor Cr Mark Greenhill congratulated Jenny on her Awards and her commitment to excellence in environmental education and thanked all the Healthy Waterways Team for an exceptional program that provides children with meaningful engagement with our unique waterways.

He acknowledged Connecting with Nature fosters a love of the Blue Mountains environment within its future custodians and that helps secure its future.



Jenny Hill (centre) with Sue Martin, Chair of the Australian Association for Environmental Education (NSW), and Patron of AAEE (NSW) Costa Georgiadis.
Credit: AAEE

Tribute to Una King

By Nathan Summers

It is with sadness that we mark the loss of one of our long term members of the Bushcare community. Una King, one of the founding members of the Redgum Park Bushcare Group, at Bullaburra, passed away at the age of 93.

Her community involvement included starting the Blue Mountains Lapidary Club, which still runs today, reflecting her love of gemstones, fossicking and the outdoors, the Bullaburra Progress Association and Community Hall, and the Bushcare program. Una had also worked at the Katoomba Hospital and Blue Mountains City Council in the 1970s and 80s.

Una was also a key player in starting of the Redgum Park Bushcare Group, which initially focussed on weeding as well as track work and other development of Redgum Park's recreation facilities. The Bushcare Group continues today, with new generations of members.

Una was someone who kept active right up until the end, she was a great community lady and made a contribution to the Bushcare program that was subtle yet a significant part of its development.

Una's amazing full story can be found at: bushcarebluemountains.org.au



1994 Redgum Park Bushcare – the very beginning. Una sitting to the left.
Credit: Kathy Veal

Vale Morag Ryder

By Monica Nugent and Karen Hising

With the passing of Morag Ryder recently, who died aged 82 after a long battle with illness, the Blue Mountains has lost one of its most dedicated residents whose contributions to environmental restoration were both immeasurable and inspirational. She was so committed to the environment that she only agreed to undertake medical treatment if it could be scheduled to ensure that she didn't miss any Bushcare work sessions.

Morag was a unique spirit – stoic, independent, humble, fit, very hard working, practical, generous, helpful and kind. She was most often seen walking (as she didn't drive), wearing personally customised green clothes, and carrying her ever-present backpack, she was always a welcome and familiar figure in Hazelbrook, Wentworth Falls and Blackheath. In recent times, if she was not well she would pop her backpack on a small trolley to keep it with her. That backpack was like a TARDIS – it seemed to hold whatever item you could ever need – Bushcare tools, morning and afternoon tea, even lunch – any useful thing would be magically produced from its depths. Water Nymphs Dell Bushcare Group was once suddenly caught in a short, but heavy rain shower. Never fear – Morag pulled out a sheet of heavy duty plastic large enough to shelter the whole group – perfect!

She was unfailingly thoughtful and would sometimes give surprise gifts of things she thought would interest or help the people around her.

Morag was involved with many Bushcare Groups over the years and also attended as many Bushcare events as she could. She began Bushcare at Gibbergunyah (Horseshoe Falls) in Hazelbrook and worked there for many years. She was a stalwart member of Water Nymphs Dell Bushcare Group in Wentworth Falls, often arriving hours early to put in extra time.

An experienced and very keen bushwalker, Morag was involved with the Remote Bushcare Programme, the Great Grose Weed Walk and a founding member of the NPWS Braeside Bushcare Group. And for some years she was the sole volunteer working in the Govetts Leap Brook catchment. Aiming to control Gorse, her strategy was simple but effective. In the absence of other resources, she would walk the entire catchment meticulously de-heading any flowering Gorse she could find. She would sometimes camp at Braeside on her own so she could maximise her time there.

Morag literally sustained the existence of Coates Park Bushcare Group at Hazelbrook for a considerable period of time, often working many extra hours each month on her own. Coates Park is now at maintenance level, largely thanks to her efforts.

She also worked regularly in another part of Hazelbrook on her own to remove a large patch of weeds, because it needed to be done. When curious bystanders sometimes asked her what she was doing she would simply reply, "removing Privet – do you want to help?"

Just recently, Morag began working with the new Woody Weed Wander Bushcare Group, using all her experience and skills to make a real difference to the bushland of the Blackheath Memorial Park.

Morag was awarded both the Bushcare Legend Award in 2010 and the Council Seniors' Week Recognition Award in 2016 to acknowledge and commemorate her ongoing commitment to the restoration of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Morag will be deeply missed by the Bushcare Team and many volunteers who had the privilege to work with her and enjoy her company.



Morag Ryder
Credit: Council

Crayfish survey reveals great results

Bushcare Officers joined the Healthy Waterways Team and Crayfish expert Rob McCormack to undertake a Crayfish survey at Birdwood Gully, as part of Council's ongoing biodiversity management.

Several *Euastacus spinifer* were found in the creek, hearteningly, most of the Crayfish caught were females with large numbers of eggs. The Crayfish were checked for microchips and GPS tagged. The tagging assists with data collection, such as mapping the movement of these long-lived species over multiple years.

These creatures are fundamental to the health and complexity of the Blue Mountains ecosystem in which they live. If you are lucky to come across a native Crayfish just remember to observe only.



Greening Upper Kedumba

By Jane Anderson, Upper Kedumba Bushcare

Upper Kedumba Bushcare Group (part of The Gully) was privileged to have 20 Veolia staff from Sydney participate in one of their Bushcare days. The group planted 400 native seedlings in an area previously cleared of Privet and Holly with the help of the Council's urban weeds program.

David King welcomed the group with a traditional smoking



Upper Kedumba planting day with Veolia staff, Bethany King
Credit: Jane Anderson

ceremony followed by an interesting walk and talk around The Gully. The team then got stuck into the day, 'greening up' Upper Kedumba. They planted ferns and shrub layer plants and then continued to rehabilitate a soak area.

Bethany King, a Gully Traditional Owner and the Human Resources Coordinator at Veolia had a wonderful opportunity to combine her deep connection with Country and her role with staff from Veolia.

Many thanks to the team and for Veolia for supplying the plants from Wildplant Rescue.

The Gully Traditional Owners Upper Kedumba Bushcare group and Bushcare are extremely grateful for the fantastic help. The day was also filmed as part of [Veolia - 2020 Reconciliation Action Plan Launch](#).

"Veolia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to elders both past and present."

The great possum rescue

A small baby Ringtail Possum fell from a tree in Lapstone Reserve during strong winds that hit the Blue Mountains on 21 August. An alert Council bush regenerator - Paul Kucera, heard a soft squeaking noise and discovered a Ringtail Possum joey, weighing about 65g, lying on the ground. He called his team mates over who noticed the mother hovering above in the nearby tree. After contacting WIRES they were told the mother's eyesight is generally poor in the daylight hours but with her good sense of smell and hearing she could still detect her offspring.

At lunch Paul checked on his patient and as he reached down the Possum quickly clung onto his arm, so he wrapped the joey in a shirt to keep it warm and secure.

WIRES volunteer rescuer and carer, Judith Carter, took the joey into care overnight. The next day, with assistance from volunteers from the Blue Mountains SES, who used their long ladder to put the joey back up the tree. Judith stayed until she saw the mother reunited with its baby and return to the drey. A very happy outcome for the little possum family. Many thanks to everyone involved, in particular Judith, a dedicated WIRES volunteer.

If you find a sick, injured or orphaned native animal in NSW please phone **WIRES Wildlife Rescue Line: 1300 094 737 (13000 WIRES)**.



Paul Kucera keeping the baby ringtail possum warm
Credit: Steve Fleischmann



Catchment days



Catchment day events provide great opportunities for all Bushcare Groups regularly working in the catchment to come together to support each other, socialise, learn about each other's work and find out about any future work planned for the area. Often it's also a way to supplement existing weed control or environmental restoration work.

Leura Falls and Gordon Creeks Catchment Care Day 2019

By Monica Nugent and Jenny Hill

Leura Falls and Gordon Creeks Catchment Care Day at Carrington Park went ahead on Sunday 6 October on a warm and sunny day, and was another highly successful event with great outcomes for the catchment. Thirteen volunteers participated, contributing a total of 60 hours. Supported by Monica Nugent (Council & National Parks and Wildlife Service), Karen Hising (Council) and Neil Coghill (National) the volunteers' efforts removed Broom, Tagasaste, Dogwood, Tutsan, Holly, Bird Cherry, Cotoneaster, lots of Aggies and more.

It was great to see representation from all eight Bushcare Groups working in the catchment including volunteers from Vale Street; Leura Cascades; Cumberland Walkway; Banksia Park; Govett Street; Gordon Falls Reserve; and Prince Henry Cliff Walk Bushcare Groups and the Everglades and Vihara Landcare Groups.

The bushland in Carrington Park, on Cliff Drive in Katoomba was chosen as it met a range of outcomes; a potential source of weeds that can be spread by birds and/or stormwater into the National Park below. The location is also highly visible from surrounding houses and tourist roads. It provided a perfect opportunity to promote Bushcare, inform locals about invasive plants and attract new volunteers.



Ian removing agapanthus on the edge of Carrington Park
Credit: Council



Want to delve deeper into the local bushland? Sign up to one of our Remote Bushcare days.

Upcoming events will be held in Sassafras and Katoomba Creek. For more information or to volunteer for a Remote Bushcare day please contact Steve Fleischmann on 4780 5623 or at sfleischmann@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Finally, doing the weed control for this area ticked off an action that was noted in the Leura Falls and Gordon Creeks Catchment Group's Strategy and Action Plan.

Exposing a historical amenities building below Solitary Restaurant on Cliff Drive

On a separate occasion, a very timely road closure of Cliff Drive for drainage works allowed Council to employ bush regeneration contractors to tackle the extremely dense woody weeds and vines below the Solitary Restaurant and in doing so unveiled the historic amenities building in the process. The before and after photos are very revealing.

A big thank you to all involved - we are now well on the way towards addressing two long-term hotspots within the catchment!



Before: Cliff Drive showing dense weeds and vines
Credit: Council



After: Cliff Drive 'unveiling' the historical amenities building
Credit: Council

Catchment days



Katoomba Creek and Govetts Creek Catchment Planting Day 2019

By Steve Fleischmann

Katoomba / Govetts Creek Catchment Group recently held a successful planting day in the unformed Twynam Street Road Reserve adjoining Upper Katoomba Creek/Harold Hodgson Reserve.

This Bushcare site has had a weedy edge full of African Lovegrass, White Poplars, Blackberry and other problematic weeds, which have been threatening all the good work that the Bushcare Group has achieved over many years.

Recently the road reserve was slashed and a perfect opportunity arose to restore this area back to a level of predominantly native vegetation. The large-scale planting will improve native resilience and diversity along this edge and reduce invasive weed movement into the good bush.

Katoomba / Govetts Creek Catchment Group hosted 25 people, contributing a total of 75 hours. Many thanks to the volunteers from Minne Ha Ha, Katoomba Creek, RSPCA and Prince Henry Cliff Walk Bushcare/Landcare Groups, three members of the Bushcare Team (Steve Fleischmann, Sandy Benson and Alison Steele) and 11 enthusiastic people from the Sydney Corporate Salesforce team, as well as several volunteers from local environment groups that wished to deepen their understanding and experience of ecological restoration. With 400 seedlings planted, it was a wonderful outcome!

Special mention to Meredith Brownhill and other members of the Upper Katoomba Creek Bushcare Group for collecting local provenance seeds of various Acacias, Leptospermums, Petrophiles and Banksias for propagation and planting on the day.

Amy St Lawrence (Aquatic Systems Officer) shared her knowledge and work regarding the importance of keeping our waterways and catchments healthy. Learning about aquatic invertebrates was very much appreciated by our city friends.

Organising this event was complex as consideration was required in identifying fireprone areas, asset protection zones and powerline buffers. As a result, draft planting guidelines were developed to address those issues.

Thank you to all those involved for achieving a great outcome.



Left: Over 400 plants planted by volunteers in the unformed road reserve to reduce weed numbers.
Credit: Council

Below: The audio monitor called the Audio Moth that will be used to record frog calls as part of the SoS Frog Project
Credit: Council



Citizen science - SoS frog conservation

A team from the University of Newcastle recently met with Council staff and other ecologists to introduce a new citizen science project and gave a presentation highlighting the threat and decline of amphibians both locally and worldwide. Although a common key threat is habitat degradation, declines are also occurring in pristine habitats such as the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (i.e. no recent recordings) and the proximate cause of decline is unknown.

The team will establish a research-based project that combines targeted scientific surveys with citizen science to survey known locations of several threatened frog species in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and identify the mechanisms that are reducing their abundance. Understanding the cause of any population decline is imperative for creating conservation measures that will effectively protect species – particularly in conserved habitats.

The target frog species for the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area are *Mixophyes balbus* (Stuttering Frog), *Litoria littlejohni* (Littlejohn's Tree Frog) and *Heleioporus australiacus* (Giant Burrowing Frog). Littlejohn's Tree Frog is known to live around heathland environments while the Giant Burrowing Frog lives near small streams with their breeding habitat in soaks or pools within first or second order streams.

This project offers excellent collaboration potential with research groups, several Council's groups (Bushcare, Natural Areas and the Healthy Waterways Teams), plus other organisations such as National Parks and Wildlife Service, and other interested individuals and groups.

In the future there will be calls for citizen scientists to help monitor audio monitors, change the batteries every 2-3 months and the potential to learn how to identify the frog calls. If you are interested in this project or willing to monitor the sites please advise the Bushcare Team on bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

What weed is that?



TUTSAN

Hypericum androsaemum and *H. kouytchense* (syn. *Hypericum x moserianum*)

You know its summer when you see this spreading, soft-wooded shrub displaying their large yellow flowers.



Hypericum androsaemum
Credit: Jen Hill



Hypericum kouytchense
Credit: Jen Hill



Tutsan foliage and fruit capsules
Credit: Council

Description: A semi-evergreen shrub to 1.5m tall with reddish stems, soft wooded and sometimes arching. The leaves are stalk-less, green on the upper surface, paler greyish-green below and can turn red during autumn. Juvenile plants have been confused with native *Melaleuca hypericifolia* or they can look like juvenile eucalypts.

Flowering occurs over summer (from October to March) with distinctive yellow flowers forming clusters on branch tips. Most fruit ripens from late summer to autumn and the plant can produce very large numbers of oval shaped brown seeds. *Hypericum androsaemum* has a fleshy, berry-like fruit that turns red in autumn. The fruit of *Hypericum kouytchense* is a dry capsule.

Distribution: in NSW Tutsan is recorded from the Central Tablelands, Southern Tablelands, ACT and Central Coast. It is especially common in the mountains west of Sydney including the Jenolan Caves, Katoomba and Leura areas.

Dispersal: in the late 1800s Tutsan was brought in as an ornamental garden plant. Tutsan seeds are produced in large numbers and are spread by birds, foxes and water, and as a contaminant of soil, vehicles, machinery and agricultural produce.

Receiving landscape: Tutsan prefers cooler areas and areas with high rainfall (more than 750mm per year). Establishment can occur wherever sufficient moisture is available and can invade both disturbed and undisturbed sites - particularly in cool, moist forests, along roadsides and beside watercourses. Often more shade tolerant than other plants, Tutsan can be found more frequently on southern slopes than northern slopes.

Impact on bushland: Tutsan has become a serious environmental and agricultural weed in the south-east of Australia. It occurs on forest edges and is rated a very serious threat to native vegetation in damp and wet sclerophyll forest, swamps, riparian vegetation, warm temperate rainforest and cool temperate rainforest. It forms dense thickets that smother and shade out native vegetation, including those forming the ground layer and smaller shrubs, and prevents the regeneration of native plant species.

Other Impacts: Tutsan is related to St John's Wort which contains the toxin hypericin which causes photosensitisation in sheep, cattle, horses and goats.

Control: *Tutsan is a local priority weed – the plant should be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed.*

As Tutsan is largely dormant over winter, control is best when plants are actively growing in spring and summer, and before fruiting. Small plants can be hand removed using a trowel/knife to loosen to soil, larger plants can be treated using the cut-paint method, or where layering occurs apply the scrape-paint method. Tutsan can also be sprayed (by a qualified sprayer) with selective or non-selective herbicides - selective herbicides generally provide better results (prepare around the natives first, of course!!). Bag and remove seeds.

More information is available online: weedsbluemountains.org.au/weeds/tutsan/

What's on!



December

Council Christmas/New Year closures 2019/2020:

The Council Offices will close from 12pm Tuesday 24 December and reopen on Thursday 2 January 2020

January

Jamison Creek Catchment Community Group:

When: Monday 13 January 3 - 5pm
Where: Jamison Room Council HQ (2-6 Civic Place, Katoomba)

Meet in the foyer at 2.50pm. Our newest catchment group meets to explore the environmental issues impacting on the Jamison Creek ecosystems and to implement strategies to improve the overall catchment health. For more information please contact Lachlan Garland on 0415 317 078 or lachlan.a.garland@bigpond.com

February

Bushcare Network Meeting:

When: Wednesday 5 February 6 - 8.30pm
Where: MCRN Meeting Room, Lawson Library (San Jose Avenue, Lawson)
Light supper is provided. To find out more contact Sandy Benson on 4780 5288 or at sbenson@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Interesting App: FrogID Be a Citizen Scientist!

Croaks, whistles, bleats and barks - every frog species makes a different sound! By recording a frog call with our new app, FrogID, you can discover which frogs live around you and help us count Australia's frogs!

Available on Google Play or App Store: frogid.net.au/

Leura Falls and Gordon Creeks Catchment Group:

When: Wednesday 12 February 2 - 4pm
Where: Council HQ (2-6 Civic Place, Katoomba)

Meet in the foyer at 1.50pm. Get updates on progress and help make plans for work in the catchment. For more information and to RSVP please email Jenny Hill jhill9228@gmail.com

Floating Turtle Island Launch:

When: To be advised
Where: Glenbrook Lagoon Beach

Come along to launch the floating turtle habitat. For more information and RSVP please contact Nathan Summers on 4780 5623 or at atsummers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

**Remote Events:
(due to fire) to be advised**

To be kept updated contact Steve Fleischmann on 4780 5623 or at sfleischmann@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Weed Walk and Talk:

When: Sunday 24 March
Where: Hazelbrook - Gloria Park 1:30pm - 4:30pm

To find out more contact Nathan Summers on 4780 5623 or at nsummers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

March

Katoomba Creek and Govetts Creek Catchment Group:

When: Monday 16th March, 2 - 4pm
Where: National Parks and Wildlife Office (Whitton Street, Katoomba)

Ground Floor Meeting Room. Help make plans for the catchment and find out what's happening. For more information and to book email Tim Gow at timsgow@gmail.com

Fitzgerald Creek Catchment Group:

When: Friday 20 March 5 - 7pm
Venue: Warrimoo RFS Brigade

Fitzgerald Creek Catchment Group meets to discuss what's happening and make plans for the future of the catchment. To find out more contact Steve Barratt on 4753 6339 or Sandy Benson on 4780 5623 and at sbenson@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

For updates, visit the Bushcare events website:

bushcarebluemountains.org.au/events/



Contributions to the Gecko from volunteers are always welcome!

Your Newsletter is compiled by Bushcare Staff from Blue Mountains City Council with contributions from volunteers and Council's Environment Branch Staff. Contributions and suggestions are always welcome, as are requests for alterations to the mailing list.

Summer (December, January, February)

Weather

- December/January: hottest months, hot north-westerly winds can fan bushfires
- December: hailstorms
- February: wettest month, violent storms; high rainfall helps to disperse seeds (in Sydney March is the wettest month)

Mammals

- Young mammals disperse - road kills
- Baby Ringtail Possums on mother's backs

Reptiles and Frogs

- Lots of baby lizards, e.g. Mountain Dragons and Blue-tongue Lizards. (Jan/Feb)
- Broad-headed Snakes move from rock shelters to tree hollows, e.g. in Peppermint Gums, vulnerable to fire (Jan/Feb)
- Many snakes born. (Feb)
- Perons Tree Frogs and many other species call and breed.
- Broad-headed Snakes shelter under rocks (will bask in sun)

Insects

- *December:*
 - Painted Skipper (*Hesperilla picta*) - small brown butterfly - feeds on *Gahnia*
 - Klugs Xenica (*Geitoneura klugi klugi*) - brown butterfly. (late Dec/Jan)
 - Buprestids (Jewel Beetles) on *Leptospermum* sp
 - Mud Wasps nesting, Crickets call, Sawfly larvae feeding
 - European Wasps
 - Male Funnel-web Spiders wander, looking for females
- *January/February:*
 - Brown butterflies - bright-eyed Brown (*Heteronympha cordace cordace*) - larvae feed on Button Grass Sedge (*Carex appressa*)
 - Rock Ringlet (*Hypocysta euphemia*) near caves and cliffs
 - Skipper (*Trapezites symmopus*) appears after thunderstorms
 - Larvae feeds on Lomandra sp
 - Bush flies

Birds

- *December:*
 - White-throated Needleetails arrive from Asia
 - Cuckoos call louder and more frequently
 - Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos break up into smaller groups
- *January:*
 - Many young birds. Baby cuckoos fed by hosts (e.g. Channel-billed Cuckoos by Currawongs)
 - Red Wattlebirds and Noisy Friarbirds feeding on Banksia serrata flowers
 - Immature Bowerbirds form mixed sex flocks
- *February:*
 - Mixed species feeding flocks begin to form through Spring

Plants

- Sundew flowers (early summer)
- *Persoonia levis* and *Persoonia chaemaepitys* flower
- Gums flower: Sydney Peppermint (Jan), Scribbly Gum (late Jan)
- Miscellaneous flowers: Callistemon, Banksia serrata, Trigger Plants, Flannel Flowers, Cymbidium suave orchid
- Mistletoe fruits
- Gums shed bark - *Angophora costata*; new bark orange, darkens later. (late summer), Scribbly Gum; new year's pattern of moth larvae trails. (late summer), Grey Gum; new bark orange. (late summer)
- Rainforest canopy changes - *Acacia elata* flowers carpet ground at Christmas; Coachwood sepals exposed (after Christmas)
- February rains - Christmas Bush/Coachwood sepals drop, seed dispersal, wattle flowers destroyed.

Contact Bushcare

Phone: 4780 5623

Email: bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Web: bushcarebluemountains.org.au

If undelivered please return to:

Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare
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