

Gecko Newsletter

March Edition 2019

Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program

Senior Week Recognition Awards

Four of our Bushcare volunteers were honoured at the annual Senior Week Recognition Awards at Springwood recently.

It was the first time I had attended the awards ceremony and I was blown away by the commitment of volunteers throughout the Blue Mountains, in particular the remarkable contributions our Bushcare volunteers have made.

I'd like to acknowledge all volunteers and their continued commitment over the past year and specifically award recipients Chris Watson, Pamela Gardiner, Bill Webster and David Coleby. *Chris and Pamela are featured below and Bill and David are featured on Page 4.*

Chris Watson

Chris is a long-term and integral member of the Jackson Park bushcare Group. For many years, he has been involved with a number of projects with the Parish of St Thomas Aquinas and St Thomas Aquinas/St Columbas School including work in natural areas. A friendly, helpful and hard-working person, Chris is always willing to assist anyone with advice or work.



Pamela Gardiner

Pamela is a founding and dedicated member of the Benoit Park Bushcare Group (Valley Heights), with 13 years of service.

She has been involved with the local Valley Heights Church, including Sunday School and Parish Council. Pamela has also been a member of the Blaxland Gem and Mineral Club for over 40 years and held a number of roles. Until recently, she regularly displayed four show cases for the Annual Show.

Pamela has been a member of the Valley Heights Progress Association for over 30 years and currently holds the role of Secretary, which also includes co-ordinating the annual raffle to raise funds for the association.

For over 30 years, Pamela has been committed to rescuing and caring for our local wildlife with WIRES - most recently caring for micro and macro bats. Pamela is often asked to speak for Probus, Rotary and other Groups regarding the work of WIRES and she also often assists new members. Pamela believes: "If you don't use it, you lose it!"



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Welcome and farewell

Blue Mountains Bushcare welcomes new Bushcare Officers Ed Bayliss Hack and Steve Fleischmann

We are delighted to introduce our new Bushcare Officers: Ed Bayliss Hack and Steve Fleischmann.

Ed will be working with Bushcare groups and running the Swampcare program, while Steve will be running the remote program with his mix of groups.

You may well have seen or worked with Ed on creekline restoration or bush regen projects throughout the Blue Mountains, with the Bush Doctor.



Edward Bayliss Hack

Steve has worked in bushland management projects over the last 12 years across the Blue Mountains and western and south western Sydney, including environmental sustainability education programs with the Green Army and running an organic farm with refugees.



Steve Fleischmann



Lyndal Sullivan

Bushcare farewells two legends

Lyndal Sullivan - our dedicated, long-time loved Bushcare Officer and Eric Mahony our fearless leader.

Lyndal has retired to “explore a life of rest and relaxation”. For those of you who know Lyndal, you will know that isn’t exactly true, as she has lots of plans. We are sure that whatever she is involved in, they will be happy to have such a wise and knowledgeable woman on hand. Lyndal had been working in Bushcare and the Council for 10 years (since March 2008). She has achieved an enormous amount in this time. A few of her major achievements are the implementation of the Swampcare Program and Great Grose Weed Walk, the remote program and completion of numerous grant projects.

Lyndal began as a dedicated and passionate Bushcare volunteer who was awarded legendary status in 2003. She is passionate about environmental management and conservation and has been extremely dedicated and hardworking team member who will be missed by the Bushcare Team.

We all wish her well in the next chapter of her life.

Eric Mahony - Bushland Operations Coordinator, long-time supporter and previous Bushcare Team Leader has left Council to take up work with Central Tablelands Local Land Services in Lithgow. He will be working on biodiversity conservation projects.

Eric worked for BMCC in the 1990s with community volunteers undertaking Bushcare programs in conserving and restoring our Blue Mountains bushland. This has been a point of great pride and satisfaction for him. The program has shown what can happen when the community and Council work together and the significant and lasting environmental outcomes, that are able to be achieved.



Eric Mahony

“For me, there remains significant environmental challenges found west of the Blue Mountains in my home landscape of Lithgow. I look forward to the opportunity to be involved in projects with the central west communities to address these,” he said.

Bushcare staff and volunteers are sad to see Eric leave as he is a well known figure in the environmental field across the Blue Mountains. Eric will be dearly missed, not just for his environmental knowledge and abilities, but also for his friendship, generosity with his time and commitment to public service.



Young filmmakers

Young film makers saving our critically endangered species in the Megalong

The students at Megalong Valley Public School have produced a short film creating real change in their community, by shining a light on the critically endangered species *Callistemon megalongensis* in the Megalong Valley.

The students of Megalong Public School are keen Guulong Landcarers and want to spread the message about protecting both threatened species and caring for their local native environment. With support from local legend David King - a Gundungurra man, plus Landcare, Bushcare and the Greater Sydney Landcare Network they have recently been presented an exceptional achievement award by Paul Vale, Blue Mountains Bushcare Network and committee member of GSLN.



Paul Vale presenting Miriam Trenton Megalong Valley Public School Principal with a Bushcare Network achievement award and a copy of Survey Techniques for Citizen Scientists
Photo credit Bella Smith

This seven student school is a tribute to leadership and sustainability and have shot, edited and developed their own film (with professional assistance) to create an engaging and entertaining work that highlights conservation values of the Callistemon megalongensis in the Megalong Valley.

The Megalong Valley bottlebrush is a critically endangered species, restricted to a small range of just 10kms around the Megalong Public School, with only 200 plants identified.

According to the Office of Environment and Heritage, the small total population size makes this species highly vulnerable to the following threatening processes including:

- High frequency fire, as well as intense hot fires that burn the peat layers of the swamp habitat. Also lack of fire may result in excessive weedy scrub development.
- Road upgrades and maintenance of road verges, powerlines and water mains where this species occurs can cause direct damage to plants as well as erosion, sedimentation, weed invasion and other forms of degradation to the habitat of this species.
- Weed invasion, particularly Japanese Honeysuckle and Blackberry.
- Altered swamp hydrology.
- Grazing by cattle and horses.
- Horse riding and recreational vehicular use (recreational 4WDs and trail bikes) along informal tracks intersecting swamps containing this species.
- Erosion caused by pig diggings and wallows damages habitat.

The "Save the Callistemon Megalongensis" film can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT1Z3eUaO30>

For more information on the Callistemon megalongensis click:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10517



Seniors Week awards continued....

Bill Webster

Until recently, Bill Webster was a dedicated volunteer with the Popes Glen Bushcare Group with 24 years of service.

He was a SES volunteer for 45 years, including as a trainer and assessor, and an expert on search co-ordination and a trainer for observation techniques and chainsaw operation. He was also qualified for high-level rope rescue and swift-water rescue and assisted with the Thredbo landslide disaster in 1997.

For many years, Bill was active in Probus and held several Committee positions including President and Bushwalk Co-ordinator and Leader. He served on the Rhododendron Society Committee in a variety of positions, including Membership Secretary, and was also a long-term and regular volunteer gardener at the Rhododendron Gardens with a particular emphasis on safety.



He was involved with the HUFF Programme – Heads Up For Fire community awareness and readiness. He has also participated in long-distance bicycle rides to raise money for charities and has been a mainstay of the Blackheath community.

David Colby

David has greatly contributed to the conservation of the Blue Mountains for many years. He's been a dedicated Bushcare volunteer with Wentworth Falls Lake Bushcare Group for 21 years and the Co-ordinator of the Sublime Point Bushcare Group for 23 years.

He managed the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Nursery as a volunteer for 11 years and is an active member of the Glenbrook Australian Plants Society Nursery. He's an ongoing volunteer of the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, since its inception in 2012 and volunteered at Lithgow Zig-Zag Railway for five years until the fire in 2013.

His strong botanical interest has led to several voluntary studies on Blue Mountains plants - with three papers published in the Royal Botanical Gardens journal "Cunninghamia". Currently undertaking further study on a review of the distribution of the *Eucalyptus cunninghamii*, with plans for future publication. Other articles have been published locally regarding Blue Mountains botany and history.

Burnt Bush

By Morag Ryder

In life it showered us
with insects, berries, flowers and dry leaves
stuck inquiring twigs into our faces
held our sleeves and blocked the way

Now we push between
without hinderence or effort,
only the pitiful dead fingers
stroke us sadly as we pass,
registering final protest at their fate
by smearing us with funereal black.

Somewhere below the rubble
roots await the rain,
when ashes from the dead above
are washed down to them
they will drink deep, and stab
the earth with green spears of life.

Then the bush will rise again
Phoenix-like, from its own ashes
to shower us once more
with berries, insects, flowers and dry leaves.



David Colby receiving his award from Cr Chris Van der Kley and Cr Mick Fell

Handy person needed

Are you interested in maintaining or repairing handtools, such loppers, handsaws, secateurs and knives?

We are keen to hear from anyone who would like to offer their time and expertise in helping us to keep our tools sharp and in good order. We can drop off and pick up the tools.

If you are interested, please contact Sandy Benson on sbenson@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4780 5528.

Rehabilitation post fire

By Sandy Benson

Rehabilitation following prescribed fire suppression activities in Mount Riverview

After a recent prescribed burn on a Mount Riverview Bushcare site, rehabilitation of several constructed fire containment lines has been completed. These containment lines or fire breaks are used to protect surrounding bushland that are not registered to be burnt. Unfortunately, fire breaks have the potential to create erosion unless rehabilitated by stabilising the exposed soil.

The aim of this rehabilitation project is to prevent soil erosion and reduce the likelihood of the fire breaks becoming new walking or bike tracks. The fire breaks were covered with a base of jute mesh, then native on-site mulch including branches, leaf litter and rocks were spread over the top to blend in with the natural landscape. The Mount Riverview site will be monitored to ensure that the fire break is not visible or subject to erosion due to extreme weather conditions.

Post fire can offer favourable opportunities for weed control and management or can have a negative effect on a site, dependant on the intensity of the burn. In this case, as the fire was a controlled burn and not a wildfire, the intensity was low or considered a cool burn. Post cool burns, most plants can re-shoot from their stems due to thick bark that protects the buds from damaging heat, so they can recover rapidly after a fire. Native plants hold their seeds in thick woody fruits or capsules, where they are protected from fire, the fire assists in opening the capsules. When the seeds fall to the ground they land in the ash bed, which is high in the nutrients needed for strong seedling growth. This aids the natural regeneration of the bushland.

Post-fire risks and opportunities

- Improved access: provides opportunities to control weeds that were difficult to access.
- Mature plants are killed or reduced in number.
- Exhausting weed seeds in situ if consistently followed up with weed removal: manual removal or spraying of seedlings before maturity and seed setting can exhaust or reduce the weed seed bank.
- Mass establishment: fire can be particularly favourable for weed species and a substantial increase of the initial infestation may occur post fire.
- Cause erosion and subsequent sedimentation of creeks and wetlands.

Post fire weed treatment can be particularly effective and presents an opportunity for a local reduction of weeds. The Mount Riverview Bushcare group has been involved in post fire weeding and monitoring of the site. Access to areas infested with weeds post fire has been greatly increased and has allowed Bushcarers to reduce the number of weeds in the burnt areas.



One of the containment lines post fire and before the treatment



The containment line after rehabilitation



Volunteers in action

Gully combined day 2018

By Jane Anderson

Upper Kedumba Bushcare group hosted 35 volunteers from Garguree swampcare and Friends of Katoomba Falls groups and the broader community in our annual Kedumba Catchment Gully get-together.

It was a great success, with a wonderful community feel and a great boost to The Upper Kedumba Bushcare site, with so many enthusiastic and committed helping hands. We also had 5 new volunteers join in.

We worked on 4 different site components, giving a variety of work options to the volunteers so they could join in with tasks to challenge them and also tasks where they would feel familiar and relaxed.

After a full work morning we indulged in a wonderful shared feast and heard from Eric Mahony about works in the catchment and how our workdays positively impact on it. Jane spoke about our Bushcare native bee metropolis and who we would likely see using the bee hotels.

Our work day consisted of:

1. Continuing to create a wetland soak in the low lying section of Upper Kedumba to change the environmental conditions currently present. We are trying to create a wetter area to diminish annual grasses and create more habitat for aquatic critters, whilst slowing the flow of the water in big rain events, capturing it on site, and stripping nutrients from it. In March we hope to plant this area out with *Juncus* and other sedges.
2. Continuing on with a creation of a mulch path through the site – the long-term vision is to create a site where local community will feel inclined to walk through it and stop and find out about local native bees, fauna and habitat creation and how important they are in our local environment.
3. Removal of Privets in bands across the slope, this work will be supported by a day of contracting works in the next 3 months and continued planting of endemic species.
4. Removal of *Montbretia* from a drainage line.

Thank you to all who came along and helped with our ongoing Bushcare works and combined days. The combined days are held annually in a rotation with other Bushcare groups, so please keep an eye out for upcoming events.



David King welcoming the group to Country



Creating the wetland soak at Upper Kedumba Bushcare site



The continuation of the path through the site



What's on March

Woody Weed Wander
Saturday, 30 March
Blackheath
9am – 3.30pm

Join us in removing/treating a range of woody weeds, but primarily Holly. We will be working up on the ridge above Popes Glen. Easy and short access from the road. Includes some easy and challenging terrain. Morning tea provided. BYO lunch. To book and for further information contact Karen Hising on 4780 5623 or khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Pitt Park Weed Workout
Saturday, 30 March
Pitt Park Wentworth Falls
9am – 2pm

Come and join local Bushcare groups working in the Jamison-Creek Catchment. Morning tea and lunch provided. Book by 20th March with Jane janderson@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4680 5623

Ruths Revenge
Saturday, 31 March
Minnihaha Reserve
9:30am – 12:30pm

Come along and join Ruth's friends to commemorate her birthday at Minnehaha Falls Reserve by attacking her nemesis – Montbretia! This annual event brings us closer towards fulfilling her goal of eradicating this weed from Yosemite Creek.

Morning tea will be provided, though you are welcome to bring along treats if you would like to contribute to morning tea.

Please RSVP to Steve Fleischmann at sfleischmann@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or 4780 5623 by Friday 22 March.

April

Fungi Foray
Saturday, 6 April 2019
Fairy Dell
9:45am – 12pm

Have you ever wanted to learn more about different fungi and where to look for them? Volunteer Liz Kabanoff has offered to lead us into this fascinating and colourful world and help identify down to the genus level. You don't need any previous knowledge, just a keen eye for spotting and an interest to learn more. To book and for further information contact Alison Steele on 47805623 or asteel@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Scoop a Poop
Saturday, 13 April 2019
Mid Mountains Community Centre
2pm – 4pm

Be part of 'citizens tackling antibiotic resistance in the wild'.

Scoop-a-Poop is a citizen science project coordinated by scientists from Macquarie University, in collaboration with Taronga Zoo and the University of Sydney. You will learn the ecology of urban brush-tail possum, antibiotic resistance in the environment and how antibiotic resistant bacteria are moving from humans to wildlife.

To book and for further information contact Alison Steele on 47805623 or asteel@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Swampcare at the headwaters of the Grose River
Wednesday, 24 April
9am – 4pm

Spend some time exploring the headwaters of the Grose River. We will continue on from previous work to stop the weed invasion further downstream and into the swamp. Be prepared for the possibility of wet feet. Morning tea and lunch will be provided.

Please book with Grant by 18 April by phone 4787 3112 or email grant.purcell@environment.nsw.gov.au

April/May

Fauna Workshop
Sat 27 and Sun 28 April 2019
The Gully

Get involved in a fauna workshop this autumn at The Gully. Participants are involved in a snapshot fauna survey including bird-watching, trapping and spotlighting. Learn about the equipment and techniques used to do a fauna survey at the Saturday afternoon talks or come along for spotlighting in the evening or birdwatching or trap checking on Sunday morning – or come along for the whole workshop!

Books only contact Alison Steele on 47805623 or asteel@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Braeside Blitz
Wednesday, 1 May – Kittyhawk Swamp (Wentworth Falls)

An opportunity to continue the long term efforts of volunteers to keep improving this large swamp system that needs help to reverse the impact of many varieties of weeds. A known site of 2 threatened species, Giant Dragon Fly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink. This is a joint NPWS and BMCC activity. Lunch and morning tea donated by Hominy Bakery. Book by 22nd April on bushcare@bmcc.nsw.

Vale Street Planting
Saturday, 25 May 2019
Vale Street, Katoomba
9am - 12 noon

Come along and help us to plant out the biofilters near the Vale Street Bushcare site. We will be working in dry areas and all the hardwork will be done – no digging, watering or plant guarding, just easy planting. A delicious morning tea provided. Brief talk on what work has been undertaken at this important area of the catchment.

Book with Karen on 4780 5623 or khising@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Seasonal Calendar

Source: A timeline for the Upper Blue Mountains
Compiled by Jim Smith for the Blue Mountains
Conservation Society

Autumn Weather

March is one of the wetter months. Equinox is 22 March. There are still cloudless days in April.

Mammals

Greater Gliders born in April.

Bush Rats, *Rattus fuscipes*, born (March-May), numbers peak in May, many juveniles present.

Reptiles and Frogs

Whistling Tree Frogs begin to call (March to September).

Insects

Blue Jewel Butterfly, *Hypocryops delica*

(March/April) - ants attend caterpillars on wattle.

Solender Brown Butterfly, *Heteronympha solandri*

Banks Brown Butterfly, *Heteronympha banksii*

'Easter Moth', *Chalepteryx felderi*, (family Anthelidae)

large brown moths bump on window panes at night.

'Ghost Moth', *Aenetus eximius* (May), Swift Moth

family pink and green.

Aquatic

Crayfish moult at Easter (related to the lunar cycle?)

Eels migrate to sea.

Birds

March: Highest bird species diversity.

Silvereye migration to north.

Birds March continued

Tree Martins, Satin Flycatchers leave for Queensland, New Guinea.

Rose Robins, Thrushes, Brown Gerygones go to open forest areas (and lawns, ovals, etc).

Red-browed Finches flock.

Fledgling birds sometimes get cold and wet.

Gang Gangs feed on Scribbly Gum and Peppermint Gum seeds.

Currawongs flock.

April: Yellow-faced Honeyeater and White-naped Honeyeater migration to north.

Spotted Pardalote migration through mountains to north.

First Lyrebirds call.

Crimson Rosellas often come down with virus, get sick, stagger, bump into trees, etc.

May: Honeyeater migration continues.

Currawongs and Bowerbirds flock to towns (fruit eaters).

Tasmanian Silvereyes pass through mountains on migration to north.

Plants

March/April/May: Red Bloodwoods flowering; Flying Foxes attracted.

March: Parson's Bands Orchids, *Eriochilus cucullatus* in flower, native bee pollinates it.

Banksia spinulosa and Acacia suaveolens flowers.

Fungi abundant after rain.

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. Please contact the Bushcare Team Leader at Bushcare, Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba NSW 2780; phone 47805528 or email bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

If undelivered please return to:

Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba NSW

