

Gecko Newsletter



Summer 2021 No 83

Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program

Blue Mountains Bushcare volunteer activities recommence

Due to COVID-19, Bushcare activities have changed. There are restrictions on the number of volunteers who can gather for our activities and social distancing is observed.

There are 60 Bushcare groups across the Blue Mountains, ranging from Lapstone in the Lower Blue Mountains to Mount Victoria in the Upper Blue Mountains and across to the basalt-topped Mount Wilson.

There are a wide range of meeting times and days to suit everyone.

No previous experience is necessary, just enthusiasm! Our Bushcare Officers provide training for all skill levels.

If you're interested in joining - bring a hat, drinking water and wear suitable clothing and sturdy shoes.

For further information go to: www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/join-bushcare/

2020: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..

By Sandy Benson

Bush regeneration can be difficult at the best of times, however, with the addition of the fire recovery and the constant changes required to adjust to the COVID-19 restrictions, volunteering in 2020 has been particularly challenging.

With this in mind, I would personally like to thank every volunteer for continuing to be part of Bushcare, often under difficult and personally frustrating circumstances. It has been your commitment and concern for the Blue Mountains bushland that has kept us on track to deliver the Bushcare Program with a little help from contractors.

Despite the challenges of this year, three new groups formed in the communities of Blackheath and Katoomba. The Narrow Neck Bushcare group, and the Blackheath Community Farm and Allandale Landcare groups are welcome additions to the program.

The Bushcare Awards 2020 ceremony, which was held via Zoom this year, was a tribute to the work carried out during such a strange time. The awards honoured not only the individuals that bring so much to the program, but the groups who are celebrating 30 years of service to Bushcare - Fairy Dell at Springwood and Popes Glen at Blackheath. Inside this edition, there is a tribute to one of the founding members of the Popes Glen Group, Thelma Murphy, and an article that highlights some of the key achievements of the group.

From the Bushcare office we hope the bags of goodies have been enjoyed by all and we thank you for another year of vital bush-caring and land-caring.



IN THIS ISSUE...

- Bushcare/Landcare Picnic – COVID-19 style
- Vale Lachlan Garland
- Swamped by Threats project reaches halfway mark
- RSPCA Landcare supports RSPCA site

- Vale Liz Kabanoff
- Popes Glen Bushcare Group – Local Heroes
- Vale Thelma Murphy
- Remote Bushcare
- Redgum Park – Timing is everything

Bushcare / Landcare Picnic

Bushcare / Landcare Picnic – COVID-19 Style

This year, the Bushcare Picnic is a bit different! Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Bushcare Officers are hosting 60 small picnics at your Bushcare and Landcare groups in the months of November and December.

Our Award Ceremony at Council Chambers was streamed on your home computers via Zoom (with a slight audio problem). Highlights will be shown on the Bushcare website and all the exciting nominations and speeches can be viewed on <https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/>

Jane Anderson (Bushcare Officer) and the “Inkers” from North Katoomba carved over twelve different images into lino and then printed them onto each of these bags. These are worthy of framing and adding to your walls.



Image: Onsite picnic in a bag
Credit: Sandy Benson



Image: Pip at the new Narrow Neck Bushcare Group
Credit: Andrew Cox



Image: Volunteers from Gordon Falls Bushcare group with their picnic goodies
Credit: BMCC Monica Nugent

Group awards

Celebrating years of service to Bushcare:

30 years

Fairy Dell	Springwood
Popes Glen	Blackheath

25 years

South Lawson Park	Lawson
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20 years

Central Park	Wentworth Falls
Water Nymphs Dell	Wentworth Falls

15 years

Zora's Creek	Glenbrook
Govett Street	Leura
Birdwood Gully	Springwood
Medlow Bath Park	Medlow Bath

10 years

Mount Victoria Bushcare	Mount Victoria
Franki Creek	Wentworth Falls
Banksia Park	Katoomba
Jamieson Street	Wentworth Falls

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Bushcare Legend - Ross Day

Masters Award - Ian Glover

Hard Yakka Award - Neil McGlashan

Landcare Legend - Dan Marshall

Environmental Warrior - Beth Winsor

The Junior Bushcare Memorial Shield - Farley, Iris and Jim Moen



Image: Members of Banksia Park Bushcare group accepting their ten year award
Credit: Monica Nugent BMCC



Image: Ross Day receiving his Golden Trowel Award for Bushcare Legend
Credit: BMCC Sandy Benson

VALE LACHLAN GARLAND

By Karen Hising



Image: Lachlan Garland
Credit: Emma Garland

Lachlan Garland was a passionate, committed and hardworking volunteer and a strong environmental advocate for many years. He was dedicated and determined to defend, conserve and improve natural areas locally and also more broadly.

As a very experienced and highly-skilled bush regenerator, Lachlan's involvement in Bushcare

was his great passion. He loved on-the-ground work in natural areas with other wonderful volunteers.

He was the Co-ordinator of the Summerhayes Park and Braeside Bushcare Groups and he was also a member of the Valley of the Waters, Everglades, Central Park, Charles Darwin Walk, Coates Park and Marmion Swamp Bushcare/Landcare Groups.

Lachlan was a founding member and the Co-ordinator of the Jamison Creek Catchment Group, where he worked closely with Council to remediate and improve natural areas in the Catchment.

Lachlan was a long-term member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and he held various roles on the Management Committee, including President. He represented the National Parks Association on the National Parks Blue Mountains Regional Advisory Committee for several years. Lachlan was also a member of the Blue Mountains Bird Observers and was its first ever Conservation Officer.

He was a tireless environmental campaigner locally and beyond. Opposing the raising of the Warragamba Dam Wall was one issue which he worked on from the very beginning, decades ago. He spent many hours writing submissions and contributing feedback to various proposals.

Lachlan was a member of a number of environmental groups and he would often attend workshops and presentations on a range of topics to learn and keep up-to-date. Likewise, Lachlan was an avid reader, particularly of various environmental publications and newsletters.

He was also an active firefighter with the Valley Heights RFS Brigade for ten years, where he participated in ongoing training, maintenance of equipment and fundraising. He made many friends there and he very much valued the experience and training.

Lachlan received Council's Bushcare Legend Award in 2019, and he was awarded the Seniors Week Recognition Award in 2020 in honour of his environmental and community work.

Lachlan was highly organised and meticulous. He could be blunt and forthright, but you always knew where he stood. He was reliable and he would attend environmental meetings and rallies, again and again. He was willing to stand up for nature and not just enjoy its beauty. Lachlan was a friend to many people in the community. He provided wise leadership and he was a mentor.

Lachlan leaves an environmental legacy that will long be remembered and endure. He was highly respected by many for his commitment to the environment, and for this, he will be greatly missed.

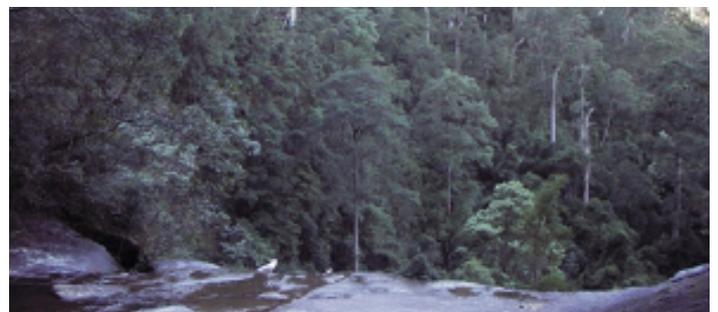
Remote Bushcare

By Steve Fleischmann

A Bushcare volunteer once said to me that weed removal is similar to infection control in hospitals. If you do not do anything about it, the problem will worsen and cause significant problems that become more difficult to resolve.

In the case of weeds, it means simplification of ecosystems. If the weeds persist in ecosystems the native plants will not thrive but if you get them when they are a small problem it is easy to resolve. The Remote Program aims to do just that.

The Remote Bushcare Program focuses on the more remote, less-visited sections of the Local Government Area where there may be "sleeper" patches of priority weeds across the numerous conservation landscapes of the Blue Mountains, which may threaten downstream ecosystems, such as the World Heritage Area or water catchment.



Remote Bushcare days are characterised by being longer than a regular work session and as having significant and challenging access. Additionally, we usually work with our backpacks on, as the work tends to occur along creek lines.

To join and go remote:

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/join-bushcare/>

More about the program can be found here:

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/remote/>

Cicadas

Cicadas

By Erin Hall



IMAGE: All of the *Cyclochila australasiae* sharing a tree at Wentworth Falls Lake October 2020 CREDIT: Zorana Mc Davitt

It's been quite the season for Cicadas this year and due to having very curious little people I have found out all sorts of interesting facts about these species.

It turns out it's the males of the species making the loud calls to entice the females and it can also deter predators as the call is the loudest of all insects. The noise is made from little pouches called drums that are behind the male's rear legs.

There is no actual evidence that details exactly how long a cicada spends underground. Anecdotal evidence suggests it to be somewhere between 6-10 years, depending on the species. Karen Hising from Bushcare wrote an in-depth article in January 2014 for the Gecko so that would be consistent with the seven year cycle. It can be found here:

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/2014/03/>

Every species call is different and Australia has the most diversity of species.

They eat sap from the roots of trees when they are in larval form and then sap from trees when they emerge. They live between a week and four weeks and their main focus is trying to find a mate.

There has been an increase in gathering data on species so we can work out these mysteries. The inaturalist page is impressive with so much data from so many locations.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-great-cicada-blitz-nsw-australia>



Image: Male cicada with the membrane below its last set of legs which is responsible for the noise
Credit: BMCC Erin Hall

RSPCA Landcare Supports RSPCA Site

By Lyndal Sullivan on behalf of the RSPCA Landcare Group

RSPCA Landcare Group has been working for over 11 years to restore woodland and the EPBC listed swamp on the 4.4 ha RSPCA site in Mort Street, North Katoomba. This bushland site is part of a continuous bushland corridor along Katoomba Creek into the Grose Valley.

The Landcare site is now in very good condition as the group has removed a large weed plume and is working on the remaining weeds (see photos below). The swamp and woodland are now healthy functioning communities used by local native wildlife, including swamp wallabies.



Image: Treating the large area of Holly in 2009
Credit: BMCC



Image: Treating remaining Holly in 2020
Credit: BMCC

New members are welcome to join us and enjoy this lovely bushland. The site contains diverse bushland showcasing the spectacular colour of native wildflowers in spring.

For more information on the group follow this link:

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/groups/rspca-bushcare/>

Vale Liz Kabanoff

by Gemma Williams



Image: Liz with David on a Fungi foray at Birdwood Gully
Credit: Gemma Williams

A quiet, unassuming, self-depreciating, easy-going, generous friend, who was talented in so many different fields - a true modern polymath.

I know Liz would regard her greatest achievement to be bringing up her two boys Mark and Glenn, and her joy of watching them grow into lovely, independent young men. Her son, Mark, told me that Liz was her

best self when she was surrounded by nature. She had a great ability to observe and find beauty in small, easily overlooked things in the bush or the garden - tiny insects, butterflies, wildflowers, orchids and fungi. She was well regarded in her career as a Biological Microscopist before her recent retirement, and she brought an academic rigour to all her observations as a Naturalist. Some of her shared talents can be found here: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fungi-in-the-blue-mountains-nsw>

We travelled together on many road trips in NSW, Tasmania and New Zealand to various mycology workshops and private fungi forays, spending hours pottering around in dark forests, delighting in finding and identifying a diverse array of amazing new fungi. Mycologists from all over the world held Liz in high regard. People met her and instantly liked her.

Liz was a dedicated gardener and bushcarer, with an extensive knowledge of native plants. She was very involved as a volunteer at the Else-Mitchell Bushcare site in Springwood. She delighted in seed collecting and was one of the founding members of the Seed Collection Group. She also loved sharing her passion for the wonderful world of fungi and delivered some fantastic forays for Bushcare volunteers when she set up this webpage to share her knowledge: <https://fungi.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/>

Liz was a talented photographer and illustrator. Her sketch books contained an array of beautifully rendered delicate natural objects, like seed pods, leaves, flowers and mushrooms. She had so much more to contribute and will be dearly missed by all her friends.

We laid her memory to rest at a lovely outdoor ceremony at Else-Mitchell Park. Her two older brothers, Andy and Pete, and her two sons each planted a *Eucalyptus deanei* seedling in the reserve. I hope to watch her trees grow beautiful, tall and strong, just like my friend Liz.

Popes Glen Bushcare Group - Local Heroes

By James Bevan

The Popes Glen Bushcare Group continues to show exceptional commitment to the ecological restoration of the Popes Glen Bushcare Site at Blackheath. After the 2019-20 summer bushfires, the restored Blue Mountains Swamp is ameliorating impacts from urban run-off to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Ecological restoration facilitates an improvement in ecological function, which in turn provides ecosystem services for all life on earth. The conservation and restoration of wildlife habitat is as important now as ever, to reduce the likelihood of species extinctions as the planet faces ongoing climate change.

The following publications detail the group's track record of excellence.

Decades of Healing

<https://popesglen.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/publications/>

Twelve years of healing: Rehabilitating a willow-infested silt flat – Revegetation <https://site.emrprojectsummaries.org/2015/02/22/twelve-years-of-healing-rehabilitating-a-willow-infested-silt-flat-revegetation/>

Twelve years of healing: Rehabilitating a willow-infested silt flat – Stormwater Management

<https://site.emrprojectsummaries.org/2015/05/09/twelve-years-of-healing-rehabilitating-a-willow-infested-silt-flat-stormwater-management/>

A short summary on the role of swamps in drought <https://site.emrprojectsummaries.org/2020/10/04/the-role-of-swamps-in-drought-popes-glen-creek-blackheath/>



Image: Popes Glen Bushcare group enjoying a socially distanced morning tea Credit: Alan Lane

VALE Thelma Murphy – Bushcare Icon

By the Bushcare Team and Lyndal Sullivan



Image: Thelma Murphy and Nathan Summers (a long time Bushcare Officer) Credit: BMCC

It was very sad to hear of the loss of this formidable lady who inspired many. One part of her character that was noted by others, was her ability to draw the best out of people and to instil confidence in their abilities. This part of her character touched a number of people, and allowed them to make a greater impact in their lives.

There are countless stories of Thelma's involvement in

the community. Thelma was one of the driving forces that brought together the existing Bushcare Groups of Centenary Reserve, Friends of Katoomba Falls, Minne-ha-ha and Fairy Dell. In 1990, she lobbied Council to support these groups and develop a Bushcare program. This lobby group became the foundation of the Bushcare Network.

As an Alderman for 12 years, Thelma assisted in the development of the first vacation play centre in Springwood and preschools in Katoomba and Lapstone. She also assisted in raising funds for a filtered Olympic pool for Katoomba, for building an indoor Recreation Centre and Band Hall, for saving the Katoomba and Springwood Arts sites, for a Seniors Centre in Katoomba and fought hard for many years to see the City get its first library in Katoomba. As a Councillor, Thelma was also involved in seeing Katoomba and Springwood Neighbourhood Centres open in Council buildings, as well as the launch of the Springwood branch of the Association of Civilian Widows, and in turn, the Ivy Markets and their promotion.

Thelma has been honoured for her work and devotion to her community by being awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1978 and she was made a Freeman of the City in 1992.

Thelma was also a key player in SWAG (Springwood Winmalee Action Group) through which she was actively involved in a range of planning issues. Most notably was the significant six year effort as part of an alliance of six community environment groups (under the banner of the Blue Mountains Residents Network- BMRN). BMRN was successful in influencing the new Local Environment Plan (LEP 2005) to see it include significantly improved protections for creeks, steep slopes and sensitive vegetation.

Swamped by Threats project reaches halfway mark

By Michael Hensen

The Swamped by Threats Project, a partnership between BMCC, CTLLS, NPWS and Forest NSW, has reached the halfway mark. The project aims to conserve the ecological integrity and habitat quality of priority swamps for the endangered and swamp dependant Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Giant Dragonfly of the Blue Mountains and Newnes Plateau. The innovative ten year project is funded through a \$750,000 Save Our Species (SOS) Partnership Environmental Trust grant.

A key focus of the project in the Blue Mountains has been the restoration of the natural hydrology of swamp systems which have been disrupted by stormwater flows from urbanised catchments, resulting in erosion, channelisation, de-watering, sedimentation, and weed invasion. Works have included stormwater outlet stabilisation, gross pollutant traps, raingardens, stormwater infiltration and integration structures and soft engineering swamp rehydration structures, as well as weed control. The sixteen priority swamp systems being targeted include Connaught, Yosemite, Marmion Road, North Street, the Gully, McCrae's Paddock, Leura Falls, East Leura, Jamison Creek, Central Park, Wentworth Falls Lake, Franks Creek, Kittyhawk, Duperry/Clarendon Swamp, Red Gum Park, Lawson Pool and North Lawson Swamps.

A big thank you goes out to all the Bushcare and Swampcare volunteers whose ongoing, on-ground efforts are making such a valuable contribution of in-kind hours in support of the grant-funded work.

This project has been supported by the Hominy Bakery in Katoomba who have provided catering for these events. "You know the food is good when everyone's silent" said Katy O'Neill at the Valley View Swampcare event.

More information is available via this link:

<https://youtu.be/DmGZbkgjrQM>.



Image: Eric Mahony and Geoffrey Smith at Central Park Credit: BMCC

REDGUM PARK – Timing is everything

By Tracy Abbas

The Redgum Park Bushcare Group in Bullaburra has been working for years to regenerate four sites contained within that Reserve. The sites are: Genevieve Road, Cottle Road and Boronia Road. In 2018, the Group was battling a huge infestation of *Watsonia*, *Agapanthus*, *Freesia*, *Montbretia* and Western Australian Bluebells (*Billardiera heterophylla*) - all of which were compounded by a canopy of twenty-three Pine trees. By taking advantage of a controlled burn that was undertaken by BMCC and RFS, we were able to get on top of the weeds, a task that initially appeared insurmountable.

GENEVIEVE ROAD

Over the coming months we continued to hand remove *Watsonia* and *Agapanthus*. When the burn occurred in October 2018, we remained off the site for six months and concentrated on Boronia Road and Cottle Road entrances. During that time, in December 2018, the group monitored the site and realised only the *Watsonia* and *Agapanthus* were sprouting after the fire. The emerging shoots were sprayed as there was very minimal other regrowth or seedlings present. Large pine removal is ongoing.



Image: *Watsonia* infestation in Genevieve Road covering approx 80sqm
Credit: BMCC

18 months later, with minimal follow-up of the *Watsonia*, *Montbretia* and *Agapanthus*, the native groundcovers sprang up and other coloniser species are establishing. We are presently enjoying fields of Donkey Orchid, Bearded Orchid, Leek Orchid and various *Thelymitra* species.



Image: December 2018 – *Watsonia* emerging post fire
Credit: Tracy Abbas

COTTLE ROAD

Meanwhile, another area of Redgum Park was being strangled by vines and creepers. Primary work was undertaken on the Cottle Road entrance, at the same time limiting the impact of weeds on the population of *Pultanea glabra*, listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act 1999.



Image: December 2018 – *Watsonia* emerging post fire
Credit: Tracy Abbas

BORONIA ROAD

During the summer months, contractors were engaged to work on the Boronia Road Reserve entrance, which included widening the entrance track, removing a large pine tree, as well as a large number of *Agapanthus*, *Pittosporum* and *Cotoneaster*, along with the Japanese Honeysuckle that entwined them. The entrance was then mulched using the chipped material from the pine tree that was removed. Plantings of *Banksias*, *Acacias* and *Hakeas* were added to act as vegetation screening for adjacent neighbours. These local natives will also give the entrance some connectivity to the Reserve and make it more appealing to residents and visitors.



Image: The new improved entrance to Boronia Road
Credit: Tracy Abbas

What's On!

Check Bushcare Events website
bushcarebluemountains.org.au/events

These events will follow COVID-19 protocols - bring your own drink and snack (unless otherwise specified). Numbers will be limited and safe social distancing will be maintained.

DECEMBER

Kodala Lane - Glenbrook

**Sunday 6 December, 2020
1.30pm – 4.30pm**

You are invited to join the Kodala Lane Bushcare Group at Glenbrook Lagoon for their quarterly Bushcare session.

Local community members are working with Council to transform this area into healthy bushland.

If you would like to learn more about the local bushland, restore the local area and meet your neighbours, come join us! Bookings essential.

Register via the website by following this link: <https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/event/kodala-lane-bushcare-at-glenbrook-lagoon-6/>

Book by 2 December with contact Nathan on nsummers@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or on 4780 5623

Katoomba Creek Remote - Katoomba

**Friday 11 December, 2020
8.30am – 5pm**

Continue the great work done by volunteers along a unique and little visited section of the Katoomba Creek.

Bushwalking and regeneration experience is essential for this trip as it involves off track walking, wading in the river and working with a backpack.

Book by 4 December with Steve on 4780 5623 or sfleischmann@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Make a difference and come along to join our Catchment Groups.

Catchment Groups comprise of interested Bushcare volunteers who wish to improve the water quality and health of the natural bushland in their Catchment area. These groups meet quarterly or biannually to plan and discuss works happening in their catchment, and to liaise with Council and NPWS staff to develop plans for improved environmental outcomes.

Catchment Groups

There are four Catchment Groups across the LGA that are coordinated by Bushcare Volunteers.

Fitzgerald Creek Catchment Group (bounded by Winmalee, Yellow Rock and Blaxland)

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/groups/fitzgerald-creek-catchment-group/>

Jamison Creek Catchment Group (Wentworth Falls)

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/groups/jamison-creek-catchment-group/>

Leura Falls Creek and Gordon Creek catchments working group (Leura)

<https://www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au/groups/south-leura-catchment-group/>

Katoomba and Govetts Creeks Catchment Group (North Katoomba)

If interested in joining any of these groups, contact the Bushcare Office at bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

We would love to hear from you and encourage Bushcare volunteers to submit stories for publication in the Gecko. *Blue Mountains City Council has the right of final approval of this publication and reserves the right to make editorial changes including but not limited to, style and substance. Although care has been taken in compiling and checking information contained in this publication, Blue Mountains City Council shall not be held responsible or in any way liable for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies.*

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

Or to join Bushcare head to bushcarebluemountains.org.au/join-bushcare



Bushcare Contact Details:

Phone: 4780 5623

Email: bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au



If undelivered please return to:
Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare
Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba NSW 2780