

Gecko Newsletter



Spring 2021 No 86

Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program

Acknowledgement of Country

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Blue Mountains City Council pays respect to Elders past and present while recognising the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains region.

The 'Rights of Nature' – an Australian first

Blue Mountains City Council has become the first government entity in Australia to integrate the Rights of Nature (RON) principles into its operations and practices in April, boosting our commitment to becoming a sustainable city, and cementing our role as a leader in environmental and sustainable management.

RON is a rapidly growing international movement that aims to ensure a safe and healthy future for our planet by encouraging humanity to reorient its relationship with nature, from an essentially exploitative one to one that recognises the importance of all life on earth.

"I'm incredibly proud that we are the first Council, and government entity, in Australia to embrace this exciting movement," Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill, said. "Integrating Rights of Nature into our operations is a highly significant step on our path to becoming a Sustainable City.

Read Council's media release: [bmcc.nsw.gov.au/media-centre/blue-mountains-city-council-first-australia-to-adopt-rights-of-nature](https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/media-centre/blue-mountains-city-council-first-australia-to-adopt-rights-of-nature)

Bushcare and COVID-19 update

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Blue Mountains City Council will continue to follow the advice of NSW Health, and will continue monitor the situation.

For more information about the Public Health Order and rules, go to: nsw.gov.au/covid-19/rules.

You can stay up to date with Council closures and service changes at [bmcc.nsw.gov.au/COVID19-updates](https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/COVID19-updates)

Your Bushcare Officers will stay in touch during this period so we can share useful information and links.



IN THIS ISSUE... • Bushcare and COVID-19 update • The 'Rights of Nature' – an Australian first • Creating Habitat around The Gully Lake • Blue Mountains Aboriginal Advisory Council's 'Statement of Recognition and Commitment' endorsed by Blue Mountains City Council • The Butterfly Effect • Farewell Malcom • Project Plant It • Popes Glen Big Day Out – post-fire Gorse treatment • Repairing the Australian bush in the 1890s • Book review: Twenty-Five Years of Bushcare

Creating Habitat around The Gully Lake

Creating Habitat around The Gully Lake

By Jane Anderson

Last year Garguree Swampcare group from The Gully focused on creating a habitat around The Gully Lake and restoring the riparian zone along the Kedumba Creek-line.

Two group members, and our local bird experts, Fiona and John, monitored the area over the past 12 months and recorded over 50 species of birds – some temporarily and others permanently calling this lake and surrounding water systems home. It's also home to a couple of long neck turtles, crayfish, native fish (Galaxia), and frogs.

Rather than the mown grass area surrounding the lake, The Gully Traditional Owners' vision was to create a more natural habitat wonderland.

So far, we have planted and mulched over 500 trees, shrubs and ground layer plants. Logs of varying sizes and rock piles have created habitat and reptile shelters, protecting wildlife from predators such as off leash dogs, foxes and cats.

As our monthly work sessions have progressed, the pathway through the habitat area has taken the form of 'Gurangatch' (the eel fish) in the Gundungurra creation story, moving towards an area (shaped like a safe deep waterhole).

Now there's a meeting, yarning, healing area for The Gully Traditional Owners to meet directly on the lake. Beyond



IMAGE: the start of the project mulching and creating a pathway

this area, mowing will cease to allow the swamp system to naturally restore itself.

The Garguree Swampcare group meets once a month, and we're a large enthusiastic group, supported by The Gully Traditional Owners, an Environmental Trust Protecting our Places Grant and BMCC Environmental Branch to maintain these areas we have created.

We will have this area finished by December 2021, and we will gather to celebrate The Gully water story, and the people, wildlife and systems that depend on it. The water and its surrounds are an integral part of The Gully's history and future.

This work is healing Country and connects us to Country.



IMAGE: adding habitat and plants to the area

ABC Australia on Instagram

"The Blue Mountains, just west of Sydney took a hit during the summer bushfires of 2020. Local elder Sharon Halls explains the ongoing healing of country and the people connected to country in this video on Instagram produced by the ABC for Naidoc Week.

[instagram.com/tv/CRCyrNSJjFh](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CRCyrNSJjFh)

Farewell Malcolm

Several Leura Bushcare Groups, the Leura Falls and Gordon Creeks Catchment Group and Council's Bushcare Team were sad to farewell Malcolm McPherson in April. He recently made the difficult decision to move back to Sydney to be closer to family.

Malcolm was one of our most active Bushcare volunteers and made significant contributions to the catchment as well as many other Blue Mountains Bushcare sites. His always great company, positive and cooperative nature, and astute observations will be sorely missed. Sydney's Bushcare program will gain a valuable member, but Malcolm is welcome back with Blue Mountains Bushcare anytime!



IMAGE: A celebration by the Leura Bushcare Groups to say farewell to Malcolm

The Butterfly Effect

There has been a flurry of activity to improve the Butterfly Hilltopping site at Bellevue Park, following Erin Hall's article in our Autumn edition.

Local amateur butterfly enthusiast, Peter Pop Staton, lobbied Council to address the issues at the Lawson Butterfly Hilltopping site. Peter administers the Blue Mountains Butterflies, Bugs and Insects Facebook page – facebook.com/groups/297116890692029.

In recent months, several groups from a local school and the community have worked at the site to improve the area. The Green Team from Lawson Public School learnt about a few different species of butterflies that use the area and planted out the area with Lomandra, Dianella, and grasses in the mulched area around the rocks. They then worked on removing some of the seedheads from the Agapanthus plants in the surrounding park to reduce the weeds growing in the area.

A group of Blue Mountains Home-schoolers also came together to plant species favoured by local butterflies for feeding and egg-laying in the slope below the site. They weeded around the site and created butterfly sculptures from weed waste material. The group learnt a lot from the information provided by Peter Pop Staton, which they used to guide their work.

The South Lawson Park Bushcare Group finalised the local volunteer efforts by weeding various areas of the embankment below the site, primarily removing a range of woody weeds and more Agapanthus seedheads. The embankment area has some excellent potential for regeneration and the group has agreed to return to the site into the future to continue the weeding work and increase the planting density.

Council would like to acknowledge assistance from local bird expert and keen butterfly observer, Carol Proberts, and thank Martin Purvis for his generosity in providing high quality butterfly photos at no cost which can be found on the signage onsite.

The Bellevue Park Butterfly Hilltopping Rehabilitation Project was made possible with funding from the Greater Sydney Local Land Services.



IMAGE: Home schoolers planting at the Hilltoppers site.

If you're interested in butterfly citizen science, you might also enjoy the Butterflies Australia website – butterflies.org.au.

Blue Mountains Aboriginal Advisory Council's 'Statement of Recognition and Commitment' endorsed by Blue Mountains City Council



IMAGE: The Mayor presented Blue Mountains Aboriginal Advisory Council (AAC) member Dharug Elder Aunty Bev with a talking stick during the ceremony. Aunty Bev accepted the gift on behalf of long-term AAC chairperson Gundungurra Elder Aunty Merle, who was unable to attend the event.

On the eve of National Sorry Day, Blue Mountains City Council unanimously adopted a 'Statement of Recognition and Commitment' and acknowledged the Council's strong partnership with Gundungurra and Dharug Traditional Owners.

Blue Mountains Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill said: "The Statement is a vision for Council to walk with Traditional Owners, and the broader aboriginal community, to build a more positive future based on truth, respect and recognition of Traditional Ownership.

"The journey to historic and transformational moments such as this Statement takes time, and significant discussion. The Aboriginal Advisory Council began work on the Statement in 2017. Extensive discussions and consultation has ensured that Traditional Owner and local First Nation perspectives, and local conversations and aspirations, have been reflected and captured.

"We acknowledge and thank the Aboriginal Advisory Council for their pivotal role in developing the 'Statement of Recognition and Commitment', which aims to honour the past and respond to the future in an honest and meaningful way."

Read Council's media release: bmcc.nsw.gov.au/media-centre/blue-mountains-aboriginal-advisory-council/s-statement-of-recognition-and-commitment/

Project Plant It

Project Plant It – 80 trees planted for koalas at deanei forest

By Emma Kennedy

In May, Blue Mountains Youth Councillors and students from Winmalee Primary School planted 80 new koala habitat and food trees in the Deanei Forest Reserve in Springwood, as part of 'Project Plant It'.

Project Plant It was started by Blue Mountains Youth Council in 2019 with support from Council's Healthy Waterways and Community Development Teams. The project supports students to take action on climate change.

This year, the Youth Council teamed up with Science for Wildlife, The Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute and Blue Mountains Bushcare, to learn about koalas living in the Blue Mountains, including an important group of 'rule breaking' koalas living in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

"These koalas are some of the most genetically diverse koalas in the country and some populations are chlamydia free. Not only are they eating more tree species than previously thought, koalas in the Kanangra-Boyd area are even living above the typical koala climate envelope at 1000m elevation," said Dr Kellie Leigh, Executive Director at Science for Wildlife.

"We know there are also koalas in the Lower Blue Mountains and we need to ensure they have a future under climate change. By sharing our knowledge with school students, we hope to a positive impact on future conservation for koalas and other wildlife," continued, Dr Kellie.

Dindy Boutagy, from Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, also talked about the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute's Youth Citizen Science Project. This initiative uses the iNaturalist App to capture data in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Students are learning to use the app and collect vital data on local flora and fauna to help monitor ecosystems threatened by climate change.

"Citizen Science is an easy and fun way to learn about your local environment and contribute towards real science and conservation," said Dindy.

Staff from Council are equally as excited and positive about the project. "We are delighted to be helping our young people take meaningful action for their local environment," said Ryn Vlachou, BMCC Community Development. "We hope it is the beginning of a lifelong love of nature and conservation," added Emma Kennedy, BMCC Healthy Waterways.

"It is fantastic to learn more about how we can help, and share that knowledge with the students at Winmalee Primary School," said Chelsea Willingham, Youth Councillor.

BMCC Bushcare Officer Monica Nugent, long-term Bushcarer Mike Purtell and local Dharug woman, Leanne Tobin, also helped the students give the plants the best possible start on the day.

"We chose the Deanei Reserve because it's close to Winmalee Public School. Our Connect with Nature program aims to develop students' sense of ownership over the special places where they live," said Gillian Fitzgerald, BMCC Healthy Waterways.

Plants for the project came from a Forests for the Future project; a NSW Environment Trust and Save our Species project that aims to restore the endangered Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forests. The Deanei Reserve in Springwood is home to characteristic tree species such as the Mountain Blue Gum and Grey Gum amongst others which grow in the rich soils there.

Project Plant It – planting list for Deanei forest:

- *Eucalyptus deanei* – Mountain blue gum or Deane's Gum
- *Eucalyptus punctata* – Grey gum
- *Syncarpia glomulifera* – Turpentine
- 3x types of wattle – *Acacia longifolia*, *Acacia ulicifolia* and *Acacia parramattensis*



IMAGE: Students working towards planting the species in the Deanei

Popes Glen Big Day Out – post-fire Gorse treatment

By Steven Fleischmann

Following the 2019/2020 bushfires, enormous loads of soil-stored weed seed was stimulated in the Popes Glen creek riparian zone, creating dense thickets of mostly Gorse and some Broom which was stifling regrowth of ferns, Acacias, Eucalyptus and other native pioneers.

Recognising a potential to undo over 30 years of restoration work, BMCC and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) quickly responded to engage contractors, respective operational teams and volunteers to remove these seedlings before they could flower to set more seeds.

“Responding early to post-fire regrowth of mass germination of weeds like Gorse and Broom provides a great opportunity to exhaust seed stored in the soil and makes long term management of the area easier,” recognised James Bevan Bushcare Officer.

In response BMCC Bushcare (Steve Fleischmann and James Bevan) and NPWS Ranger (Grant Purcell) decided to hold a series of combined cross-organisational Swampcare and Remote Bushcare volunteer events to support the work being undertaken by their respective organisations.

The first of these events was held on Saturday 10 April with 30 enthusiastic volunteers from the Swampcare, Remote Bushcare, National Parks and Landcare networks initially meeting at Govetts Leap carpark.

Deliberately keeping groups small, to be mindful of environmental sensitivities post-fire (such as minimising trampling around native seedling germination and working near steep embankments), volunteer groups were assigned a BMCC/NPWS supervisor and work area depending on level of experience, inducted into safe working methods, and provided with morning tea and lunch before starting the day.

Many of the larger plumes of Gorse had been sprayed and were either dead or dying back, however, all groups reported finding large patches of small to knee height Gorse and Broom with some reporting plants up to a metre tall. Recent flooding had made work significantly more difficult with large volumes of sediment being deposited along the creek line and vegetation laid flat as a result.

The day was a success and by the days end our exhausted volunteers gratefully enjoyed the supplied cakes and tea.

A follow up event has been planned for Spring to search for plants coming into sexual maturity. Knowing that Gorse and Broom seeds can survive over many decades

Steve said, “we don’t want to lose the opportunity of exhausting the historic volume of these seeds stored in the soil”.

Steve also noted, “these events would not have been possible without the partnership between BMCC, NPWS and volunteers, several of whom travelled up from Sydney for the day. It demonstrates how mutual collaboration on a specific target can achieve great environmental outcomes”.

You’re invited to join us for the Spring event scheduled for Saturday 9 October 2021. You can register to attend online: bushcarebluemountains.org.au/event/popos-glen-swampcare-remote-ggww

BMCC Healthy Waterways.



IMAGE: One of the weeding groups from the event



IMAGE: This picture, to the trained eye, shows the density of the Gorse seedlings the volunteers worked on.



IMAGE: The Gorse all hung up in the tree fork to dry out. There are thousands of gorse seedlings there.

Repairing the Australian bush

Repairing the Australian bush in the 1890s

By Peter Ardill, Member of South Lawson Park and Banksia Park Bushcare Groups

Ambrose Crawford (1935) and Albert Morris (1936) are considered to be the earliest proponents of environmental repair in settler Australia. However, new research reveals that innovative environmental repair projects were being undertaken in colonial Melbourne in 1896.

The Traditional Owners and Custodians of Nairn (now known as Port Phillip Bay) were clans of the Eastern Kulin nation. Following the 1835 British invasion of Nairn, the clans were aggressively dispossessed of their lands, and many hardships followed. Eastern Kulin people continue today to maintain connections with their traditional lands.

Melbourne expanded rapidly, and by the 1890s many of the indigenous vegetation communities of the Bay's foreshore reserves had become severely degraded. The foreshore indigenous species Coast Teatree, *Leptospermum laevigatum*, was in serious decline.

Concerned about this environmental crisis, Brighton Council initiated Coast Teatree replanting projects in degraded areas in 1896. Regarded as an experiment at the time, the seedlings thrived. Other Bay councils undertook similar projects, with good results.

Local community groups first became involved in 1903, and replanted thousands of Coast Teatrees in degraded foreshore reserves. A particularly interesting community replanting project took place at Beaumaris, between 1924 and 1927. Residents and the local progress association joined forces with the shire council and conducted Coast Teatree replanting sessions on the weekends of the winter months. Groups of residents took responsibility for specific sections of the foreshore, and the council supplied the plants and equipment. This project certainly shared many similarities with contemporary bushcare practice.

It is also interesting to note that the environmental repair concept, natural regeneration, was well understood at the time of these historic projects. At Mornington, natural regeneration of the Coast Teatree was actively fostered in the 1920s.

Prominent Melbourne journalist, nature writer and conservationist, Donald Macdonald, vigorously campaigned for the repair of the degraded foreshore reserves. He was interested in reinstating a range of the indigenous plant species that grew in the foreshores, as well as the Coast Teatree. Having observed how a wild fire germinated the seed of many of these plant species, from 1910 Macdonald continuously advocated for the use of managed fire in degraded reserves. He also pushed for the scattering of the seed of indigenous plant species in reserves, and warned about the dangers of introducing exotic plants. Unfortunately, Macdonald's ideas were not adopted.

The Port Phillip Bay environmental repair projects reveal that interest in the actual repair of degraded natural areas has permeated Australian settler conservation management practice since at least the 1890s. Bushcare and other contemporary practitioners of environmental repair are bequeathed innovative conservation management legacies to be proud of.

Reference: Peter J Ardill (2021) 'Innovative Federation and Inter-war Period repair of degraded natural areas and their ecosystems: local government and community restoration of Coast Teatree *Leptospermum laevigatum* at Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, Australia'. The Repair Press Sydney (February). View at: ecologicalrestorationhistory.org/articles

Spring has sprung

Send us your photos when out in the bushland to bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au.

That's what Brian did from Jackson Park Bushcare. "I took my children for a walk through Jackson Park and the *Persoonias* spp are fruiting and also the *Grevillias* spp are flowering as well."

When you send them to us, we'll share them with the Bushcare family in the bulletin. You can also share them with each other on social media, using #bushcarebluemountains. Then you can search this hashtag to see all of the pictures.



Vale Jeanell Buckley



IMAGE: Jeanell out for dinner
Credit: Graeme Coss

The local Leura Bushcare community was saddened to hear of the death of one of our treasured volunteers, Jeanell Buckley.

Jeanell had only recently moved to the mountains with her husband, Graeme, and was beginning to settle into a life of retirement from paid work, but she had definitely not retired from volunteering!

She quickly sought out Bushcare, continuing a passion she started while living in Sydney where she volunteered with the Cremorne Point Reserve Bushcare Group.

Jeanell wasted no time, joining Gordon Falls Reserve, Prince Henry Cliff Walk and Marmion Swamp Bushcare Groups, and also began volunteering at Everglades House.

Her eagerness to learn, passion about caring for wildlife habitat, and gentle, positive and cooperative nature made her a very welcome member of all those groups.

Jeanell's Bushcare companions miss her good company, and our thoughts are with her loving husband, Graeme.

We look forward to planting many local species in Jeanell's memory, thanks to her very generous bequest.

Vale Fred Lyford



IMAGE: Fred working on a large patch of Portuguese Heath

It is with sadness that we have news of the passing of Fred Lyford, one of the long term members to the Minnehaha Falls Bushcare Group at North Katoomba.

Fred was one of the original members of the Minnehaha Falls Bushcare Group, which has been going since 1991. He had always been a consistent part of the group

until it became a little too difficult to be there physically all the time. His steady, constant interest and his solid subtle personality was always appreciated.

For many years he had worked as a carpet layer, and these skills were utilised in Bushcare, providing us with good quality carpet scissors to cut jute mat, making it easier to undertake grant projects.

He was always a quietly consistent participant for Minnehaha Bushcare, and looked after the tools for the group for many years in his cottage opposite the Minnehaha Reserve.

Fred was a friendly personality who was loved by his family members including nieces and nephews, and also by those who knew him, including the Bushcare group. He will be missed, and his steady contribution has been greatly appreciated.

Bushcare Gecko Newsletter is now online

Bushcare is always looking for opportunities to improve our practices and one of our goals is to become more sustainable. So what does that mean for the Gecko? Earlier this year, in the April edition, we let you know that the Gecko Newsletter can be viewed online, and the mail out has now discontinued.

Never fear, it's still easy to read all the latest Gecko news:

- Read the Gecko online at bmcc.nsw.gov.au/bushcare
- Have the Gecko sent directly to your email. Subscribe at bushcarebluemountains.org.au
- Need a paper copy? Just ask your Bushcare Officer and they can arrange to get you one. Copies are also available at Blue Mountains Library branches, in the foyer of Council's Headquarters at Civic Place in Katoomba, and at the Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub in Springwood.
- If there is accessibility issues with reading online please contact the Bushcare Office bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or on 4780 5528.



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"I'm incredibly proud that we are the first Council, and government entity, in Australia to embrace this exciting movement," Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill, said. "Integrating Rights of Nature into our operations is a highly significant step on our path to becoming a Sustainable City."
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Book review

Book review: Twenty-Five Years of Bushcare

By Alan Lane, Popes Glen Bushcare Group

In his new book, *Twenty-five Years of Bushcare at Sublime Point Reserve, Leura*, David Coleby shows what a volunteer group can achieve with clear vision, longevity and strong leadership. The book presents their expert, careful and patient work from 1996 – 2021, with the outcome of transforming this formerly highly degraded site into 4.5 hectares of glorious bushland.

This richly illustrated volume recounts the long and painstaking process involved in closing off vehicle access, removing dumped rubbish, extensive landscaping, planting thousands of native plants and endless hours of maintenance and weed removal. In his Foreword, the Mayor of Blue Mountains City Council, Mark Greenhill acknowledges this as an achievement second to none.

Divided into 20 sections beginning with Topography, Land Use, Climate and Rainfall, the structure is very readable and, with colour photos throughout, the information is interesting, readily accessible and relevant to bushcare groups everywhere. A detailed compendium of plants, as well as lists and photos of orchids, lichens and fungi provide vivid insight into the richness of the location and are indicative of the care and attention that has gone into its restoration.

An enjoyable and informative read. More information on the book can be found online: sublimepointbushcare25.com.au



IMAGE: David Coleby (L), of Sublime Point Bushcare Group, winner of the 2006 Bushcare Legend Award (the Golden Trowel), receiving his trophy from the 2005 winner, Alan Lane (R) of Pope's Glen Bushcare Group. Photographed at the Bushcare Picnic, Megalong Valley, Saturday 17 February 2007.

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



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