



# RIVER RESTORATION AND EXPLORATION

by Elisha Duxbury

The Phil's Forest Bushcare site on the banks of the Hawkesbury River and has a legacy of nearly 20 years of continuous care by dedicated locals. It started out as a secret restoration endeavour, cared for by locals Phil Knobbs and his family. Now the site is home to diverse bird species, endangered plant communities and aquatic ecosystems.

The recent floods have had a huge impact on the Hawkesbury, including our local environment. At Phil's Forest much of the understory vegetation was washed away, including weeds that were impacting the site such as, Trad (*Tradescantia fluminensis*). This opened up a perfect opportunity to plant flood-resistant native ground covers that will prevent environmental weeds from re-establishing.

As a result, Hawkesbury Bushcare in partnership with Greater Sydney Landcare Network's, Get Your Hands Dirty program hosted a day of groundcover planting to restore Phil's Forest. Get Your Hands Dirty is a series of on-ground volunteering opportunities and training workshops to empower young people (16-35 year old's) to take leadership in caring for the natural landscape. The event gave young people the opportunity to take action to restore bushland in North-West Sydney and connect with local volunteers and like-minded people who are passionate about habitat and biodiversity.

On Sunday 2nd May the next generation of Landcare's partnered up with Phil's Forest Bushcare volunteers and Hawkesbury City Council to help recover Phil's Forest. They planted 800 groundcover plants to help stabilise the riverbank and prevent the spread of environmental weeds.

In the afternoon Ecologist Adrian O'Hara from Cumberland Plain Regeneration came to give the group a walk-and-talk all about the local ecology of the site and how the planting will help restore the landscape long-term.

Huge thanks to all the volunteers who came along, Phil's Forest Bushcare, and Adrian O'Hara for his talk!

This event was supported by the Federal Government through a Communities Environment Program grant. For more information on the Get Your Hands Dirty program, go to [greaterlandcare.org/get-your-hands-dirty](https://greaterlandcare.org/get-your-hands-dirty)



*Phil's Forest Volunteers getting their hands dirty*

## EDITORIAL

Hello all you Bushcare supporters.

Crazy times call for a crazy Bushcare newsletter. I have managed to stay sane and focused during this time by doing a bit of everything. Some walks and push bike riding, trying to fix and service my kids' bikes, cooking outside on a fire, and the big winner for me and my kids, I think, is weeding our patch of bushland out the back together. What has surprised me the most are their great questions about ecosystems, good natives and bad natives, and good weeds and bad weeds.

Well, the newsletter is not that crazy; more so it's the crazy size of this edition! We have plenty for you to read during lockdown. Some lovely little articles again on plants, wildlife, grants, nursery, the Nocturnal Nature Safaris, plastic balloons and our beautiful Bushcare sites. The diversity of these amazing articles is reflective of the diversity of the many vegetation communities of the Hawkesbury and our diverse creative contributors to Weed All About It.

So thank you creative contributors, and thank you supportive subscribers, to this edition of Weed All About It; relish this read. Happy days!

**Marty Gauci | Community Bushcare Officer & HIMAG Facilitator | [mgauci@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mgauci@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au)**

# CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

by Chris Cheetham

Australia is one of the world centres of carnivorous plant diversity, with even small areas containing a myriad of unique species. The Hawkesbury is no exception to this containing no less than 10 such plant species. This class of plant uses a variety of bizarre ways of trapping the insects that would normally feed on them!

The genus *Drosera* (related to the introduced Venus fly trap) uses one of the more passive means of trapping its prey. This group of plants produce a sweet, nectar-like dew on their leaves (hence the name sundew) which lures in unsuspecting insects like flies and mosquitos looking for nectar. But this is a fatal mistake. As soon as they touch the sticky dew they are stuck and the plant moves the hairs that produce the dew towards the insect until it is completely stuck. The plant then dissolves what it has caught and absorbs it, so all that is left is an empty shell!

There is another genus of such plant in this district: *Utricularia*. These plants use a completely different means of consuming animalian prey. The leaves of *Utricularia* (arguably one of the most complex in the plant Kingdom) are modified to form the characteristic 'bladder' which give these plants their common name 'bladder wort'. These 'bladders' are very complex traps. These leaves form a sealed vessel from which the plant pumps out water to create an intense vacuum. On the outside of this structure is a 'door' like structure surrounded by sensory 'hairs'. When triggered by a passing animal (such as a mosquito larvae), the door swings inward and the water near the hairs, and everything in it, is sucked into the trap faster than the eye can see. The plant then digests its prey at its leisure.

These fascinating plants play an important role in the ecosystems in which they live. The first is as an indicator of environmental health. Which they reflect due to their very strict requirements. This is particularly noteworthy in the aquatic species *Utricularia gibba* which, as with most carnivorous plants, is extremely sensitive to changed nutrient levels and most forms of pollution. Meaning an environment where it is present is reasonably clean and healthy, but if they are not to be found it can indicate there is something amiss. These plants also reflect the food chain of their chosen environment where there must be a large and diverse range of insect species for them to survive. Insects are one of the most important parts of any ecosystem, and evidence of species which require their presence is a very positive sign for the condition of the environment.

So next time you are out in bushland; look around. These remarkable and colourful plants are out there, often in plain sight but unnoticed. Look in your pond, dam or lagoon for the extraordinary bladder worts and in moist ground nearby or by a creek or soak, even in seemingly barren or dry grassland for those colourful sundews. For if you find them you know you are in a very unique place.

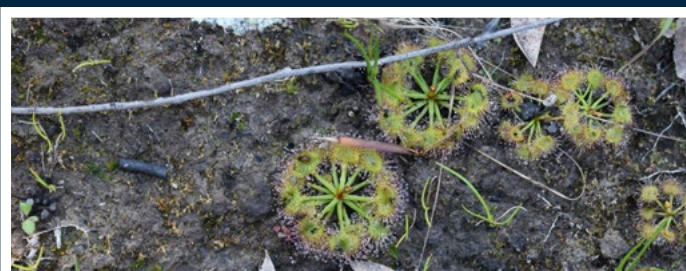
## COOLING THE HAWKESBURY PROJECT

by Adriana Genova

Hawkesbury City Council has won a \$382,000 Greening Our City grant which is proudly funded by the NSW Government in association with Local Government NSW. The project includes the planting of 301 trees and the installation of new irrigation pipework to supply Church Street Reserve, South Windsor with recycled water from Council's South Windsor Sewage Treatment Plant.

The trees will be planted across the suburbs of Bligh Park, Hobartville, South Windsor and Windsor, along with a 12 month maintenance and watering program to establish the trees.

The Cooling the Hawkesbury project will add more trees to our suburbs, increasing shade for our residents and new habitat for our wildlife. The trees also assist our City to lessen the impacts of urban heat. Increasing tree canopy will provide our community with green areas for an active, healthy and cooler environment.



Top Image: *Drosera peltata* green form  
Middle Image: *Drosera spathulata* (Bilpin area)  
Bottom Image: *Drosera spathulata* (centre of image), surrounded by *D. peltata* red form, *D. pygmaea* & *D. spathulata*  
**Photos - Chris Cheetham**



## FORGET THE MAGIC PUDDING... THESE GREENS SEEM TO NEVER RUN OUT!

By Wez Champion

Growing bush foods is somewhat of a "hit 'n' miss" kind of thing. Some bush foods will only do well on their home turf, whilst others are pretty much bombproof! And this is where the subject matter of this article falls... right into the "do what you want to me, I'm not going anywhere" category. I am, of course talking about our very own native spinach commonly known as Warrigal Greens *Tetragonia tetragonioides*!

These succulent, giant leaved spreaders are by far one of the most magical, natural wonders of all our bush foods! They grow right around the coast lines and can be found in sandy soils along just about any beach. I actually make a point of searching them out every time I'm out on the salty waters. The rambling nature of Warrigals can be daunting and frightening to many gardeners, often asking, "why would I ever want that plant in my garden?" To me the answer is simple; to eat! You see the leaves on Warrigals are large and juicy and although some say you can snack on them raw, it is always best to blanch them before eating.

What I love most about Warrigals is the way they simply grow right back! Take enough for a meal and in a few days' time there is almost no sign of anything being taken at all! What is really strange is I now make it an annual turnover where I remove the entire plant in my designated arrival section; turn and mulch the soil; then leave it. You guessed it; in just a few weeks the self-seeding has begun! And then it's just a matter of waiting for the plant to produce leaves... and the whole nutritious cycle begins again. I use the leaves as a complete spinach replacement; dumplings, stir-fries, pesto's and salads; just go out, pick a bunch of leaves, boil them for a few minutes, squeeze and chop... iron filled goodness is ready to be served!

It has been documented that many escaping convicts lived on Warrigals, and that the early settlers used them to prevent scurvy. As my wife says, "Warrigal greens; the post-apocalyptic bush food!"



My full grown warrigals. Enjoy!  
Photo - Wez Champion

## CAMERA TIME! WHO USED WHAT?



Lyrebird in the forest  
Koala at night

In March 2020, the last of the devastating 2019/20 bushfires were put out but Science for Wildlife was still on emergency response for wildlife, putting out water stations and food for any remaining wildlife in burnt areas. After the huge effort to place the food and water stations in the bush, Science for Wildlife wanted to evaluate if their efforts were worthwhile, so a team of staff and volunteers put out camera traps to monitor the water and food stations, hoping to capture images showing a range of wildlife benefiting from these stations.

Then COVID-19 hit, and the team were unable to bring the cameras back in to analyse the images and had to leave them out for a few months. For the remainder of 2020, Science for Wildlife focused on broadscale surveys to map surviving koalas to inform population recovery.

The team at Science for Wildlife would love your help to look through the camera trap images to see what we can discover! Fortunately, this summer has been kinder, but more hot summers and droughts will come, and the findings will help to guide welfare efforts for koalas and other species during the next extreme weather event. Water stations were placed up in trees and on the ground, so you will be looking for a range of arboreal and ground animals as well as birds. We cannot wait to see what animals you find! All you will need is a computer and internet connection.

Here are the questions Science for Wildlife are looking to answer:

- Which water stations designs were used, were some used more than others?
- Were the water stations still used after the heavy rains arrived?
- Which species used the water and the food drops?
- Which sites had more wildlife using the resources we put out, and how does that relate to fire intensity in that area?
- Where were feral animals present, and how many were there compared to native wildlife?

To register, go to - [zooniverse.org/projects/drkellie/s4w-bushfires-water-and-food-stations](https://zooniverse.org/projects/drkellie/s4w-bushfires-water-and-food-stations)

# BUSHFIRE RECOVERY WITH HAWKESBURY COMMUNITY NURSERY

by Beth Dalglish

Last October, Hawkesbury Community Nursery was awarded one of the very first grants as part of the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife's Bushfire Recovery Nurseries program. Supported by global reforestation charity, One Tree Planted, and French beauty brand, L'Occitane, the program will see 1 million native trees grown and planted in bushfire-affected areas across Australia over the next five years.

Thanks to this grant, the Hawkesbury Community Nursery has been able to expand its capacity by 15,000 trees each year. Trees grown will include Forest Red Gum, Grey Gum, Black She-Oak and Mountain Blue Gum, which provide food and habitat for threatened species like the koala, yellow-bellied glider, and glossy black cockatoo. The trees will then be planted out in national parks and on private land that was impacted by bushfires in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and Wollemi region.

If you know a site that could benefit from some of these trees, FNPW now has a grant open for revegetation projects:

[fnpw.org.au/grant/bushfire-restoration-grants](https://fnpw.org.au/grant/bushfire-restoration-grants)

The nursery has also started hosting corporate volunteer events as part of the program, bringing Sydney-based companies to the Hawkesbury to learn about the amazing array of flora and fauna that call our area home. Groups of employees come along for a one-day event getting their hands dirty and learning about all the fun stuff the nursery volunteers do on a regular basis – seed collection, propagation, planting, and of course, weeding!



*Beth Dalglish from One Tree Planted & Ian Darbyshire from the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife excited to be part of some vital future habitat.*

**Photo – Andrew Gregory**

L'OCCITANE  
EN PROVENCE



## SAVING OUR SPECIES ON THE CUMBERLAND

by Xuela Sledge



*Above: On site grant planning at George Street Reserve  
Below: Mother-of-millions (Bryophyllum species) reproduces rapidly.  
Photo – Melissa Medo*

Recently I have learnt through Indigenous fire practitioner Uncle Victor Steffensen that country with leaves on the ground is in need of a burn, as there should be grass for fire to trickle through.

A Saving our Species project called the Cumberland Plain Restoration Program is well underway, with one of our special Bushcare sites included. Flora and Fauna baseline surveys have been carried out at George Street Reserve, in preparation for an ecological burn later in 2022. Dominated by Cumberland Plain Woodland and Shale Gravel Transition Forest, the burn will aim to control the Mother-of-millions, adding preparation and post burn bush regeneration to the duties on site. George Street volunteers have been pushing for a burn of the site for some years now, but nobody really knows the efficacy of burning Mother of Millions – the results will be something to look out for, for other sites across the Hawkesbury. For more information about the Cumberland Plain Restoration Program or the burn at George Street Reserve, please contact

[xuela.sledge@greatersydneylandcare.org](mailto:xuela.sledge@greatersydneylandcare.org)



## WIRES LAUNCH NEW RESCUE COURSE FOR TIME POOR VOLUNTEERS

Since last year's Black Summer bushfires and the recent floods WIRES has continued to receive an ever-increasing number of wildlife assistance calls which has led to the launch of the new WIRES Rescue 101 course to help recruit much needed volunteers.

Designed for members of the public who can't commit to the time needed to rehabilitate injured or orphaned native wildlife, but would still like to help, WIRES Rescue 101 offers maximum flexibility – you can rescue according to your availability.

The course provides the knowledge and skills to safely rescue an injured, sick or orphaned native animal and transport it to the nearest vet for initial assessment. The quicker afflicted animals are seen by a vet, the better their chance of survival and return to the wild.

The course costs \$25 and includes access to online training and a WIRES Hi-vis safety vest on completion. Participants must be 18 and over with their own rescue transport vehicle. For more information please email [wires.org.au/training/rescue-101](mailto:wires.org.au/training/rescue-101) or call WIRES training on **8977 3392** and leave your contact details.



## EVERY BIT COUNTS FOR RURAL LIFESTYLE LANDHOLDERS

Need help looking after  
your piece of the  
landscape puzzle?



Small farms and lifestyle blocks play an important role in managing the patchwork of natural environment across the landscape. Despite their small size, many of these properties have native vegetation, creeks and dams and other features which provide valuable habitat for native animals, provide important services to the natural environment and contribute to productive farming.

Local Land Services has developed the Every Bit Counts website for rural lifestyle landholders. Resources and topics include weed management, habitat protection, pest animal control and opportunities to develop skills in sustainable land management. Go to [lls.nsw.gov.au/ebc](http://lls.nsw.gov.au/ebc)

Register for the "Blockies' Bootcamp" and kickstart your land management know-how at [tinyurl.com/blockiesbootcamp](http://tinyurl.com/blockiesbootcamp)

You can also sign up to the following newsletters to keep up-to-date with news and upcoming events in Greater Sydney:

- Greater Sydney Landcare and Community news [tinyurl.com/gs-landcarecommunitynews](http://tinyurl.com/gs-landcarecommunitynews)
- Greater Sydney Small Farms Network [tinyurl.com/gs-smallfarms](http://tinyurl.com/gs-smallfarms)

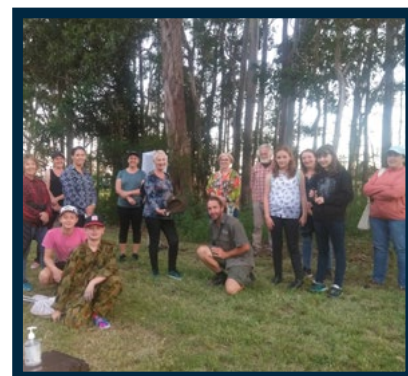
*(This project has been assisted by the NSW State Government through its Environmental Trust)*

## NOCTURNAL NATURE SAFARI

Hawkesbury Bushcare Nocturnal Nature Safari, with guide Tom Covell from Hooked on Nature provided three amazing Nocturnal Nature Safaris last summer. These events are gaining popularity with all three events fully booked with waiting lists on all.

The bushland reserves are teeming with a myriad of wildlife after dark. Participants of all ages had the chance to experience Koala calls, emerging Cicadas, the rare Cumberland Land Snail, a camouflaged Leaf Tail Gecko, Green Tree Frogs, energetic Sugar Gliders, the ever so still Tawny Frogmouth, the fearsome Powerful Owl, countless insects of all shapes and sizes, Brushtail and Ringtail Possums and the elusive Owlet Nightjar. All these amazing creatures would not have been possible to see and discover if it was not for the most important ingredient to native fauna; and that is habitat. Habitat the key to a home for our wildlife. From a water source to tree hollows both on the ground and canopy, through to the diversity of native plants including groundcovers, shrubs, trees and vines.

The three reserves visited for the Nocturnal Nature Safaris were in the North Richmond, Kurrajong and Ebenezer areas. This event was a collaboration between Hawkesbury Bushcare and the Greater Sydney Local Land Services.



*Some of the lucky participants of the 2020/21 Nocturnal Summer Safari Series*

# A WEED WACKER UPDATE

by Viki Winton

How good it is to be writing a small blurb for the exceptional periodical 'Weed All About It' once more!

Our Northern Hawkesbury transect in St Albans Park, on the banks of the Macdonald River suffered so many indignities through 2020 and has somehow not only survived, it has thrived. November, December 2019 and January 2020 had our plants choked with toxic smoke from the Gospers Mountain fire and the back burning of our entire valley. This disaster was rapidly followed in February by a flood which swamped the site. However, this flood did have the obvious benefit of breaking the drought and gave both weeds and plants a much needed boost.

Then came Covid which disallowed even the tending of plants for some months! The shutting down of all activities including looking after our precious bushland in 2020 seemed way over the top especially as our groups are extremely small and social distancing was a no brainer when you're working outdoors. Only at the mandatory morning tea did the need arise perhaps for some forethought and care.

So the year stumbled by with some restrictions lifted and weeding madly recommencing. And on into 2021 with the now interesting element of rain or unable to meet because of rain, which was such an odd thing after all the time of no rain and carting water constantly. How resilient are our native plants?? - the Michaeliana eucs have doubled in size as too the Shiressii and Tea trees. Naturally we suffered casualties too, especially the grasses.

Despite knowing I am writing for a Bush mag read by keen bush people, there's always a chance a person or two, reading this beautiful publication may become interested and step up. Having lost one of our great Wackers to QLD we have been more than lucky to have 2 new local people join us. It still amazes me how much work can be achieved in a few hours with several people.

As I do Tai Chi every week by our transect, I appreciate the huge variety of birdlife abounding and can only trust that next summer will see many reptiles also returning.



*Native vegetation on the Macdonald River doing its job & holding the riverbank together in St Albans Park. Thank you Weed Wackers.  
Photos - Cathy Watson*



# HAWKESBURY COMMUNITY NURSERY UPDATE

by Jutta Hamilton

Earlier this year, most Nursery Volunteers were back and volunteering their time and skill to growing locally native plants. For those who have not come back after our longish COVID 19 break, you are not forgotten, and we thank you for your dedicated work and nice company in years past. We've also managed to find some new talents; actually, they found us, and the new Volunteers 'have hit the ground running'.

With the help of young Chris (see page 2 & article below) we have been introducing new local native species and subspecies to the list of plants grown.

The interest in the Nursery by the public has been constantly growing and we see lots of new and repeat customers. We had a group of St Albans and Wisemans Ferry residents visit, and we also have hosted a few corporate bonding working bees. These events turned out to be very popular. The working bee help is most welcome, as the demand for fire and flood restoration projects and canopy tree planting for cooling our cities is increasing.

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife (FNPW) has supported the upgrade of four bushfire recovery nurseries, including the Hawkesbury Community Nursery to assist in restoration activities. We now have more room available to grow an extra 15,000 plants annually, to make plants available to the FNPW bushfire restoration grants (see page 4).

For plant sales we are open every Wednesday 9am-1 pm and we are also open on the first Saturday of the month from 9am-midday, excluding December and January.

Unfortunately, once again we are restricted by COVID and nursery volunteers at present are not permitted to attend the nursery. The nursery now is very quiet, but plants are still being produced and looked after. I look forward to when the volunteers will come back!

The Hawkesbury Community Nursery is located at 10 Mulgrave Road, Mulgrave (next to the Animal Shelter). For more information visit [hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](http://hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au) or contact us on (02) 4560 4651 or [nursery@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nursery@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au). Open Wednesdays from 9am to 1pm or by appointment, and on the 1st Saturday of the month 9am to midday (excluding December and January). For Hawkesbury Community Nursery COVID updates, see [hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/for-residents/community/nursery](http://hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/for-residents/community/nursery)



Volunteers helping produce plants for fire affected communities; great job!

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE

### NAME:

Chris Cheetham

### GROUP:

Nursery Volunteer Group

### GROUP LOCATION:

Hawkesbury Community Nursery

### TIME WITH GROUP:

5 years

### POSITION IN GROUP:

Volunteer, plant collector and propagator

### REASON FOR VOLUNTEERING:

I like Australia's native flora & volunteering with the nursery is a great way to see them

### BEST ACHIEVEMENT:

Discovering *Grevillea arenaria* "type form" in the Hawkesbury. It is the 1st time since 2004 that it has been seen

### FAVOURITE NATIVE SPECIES:

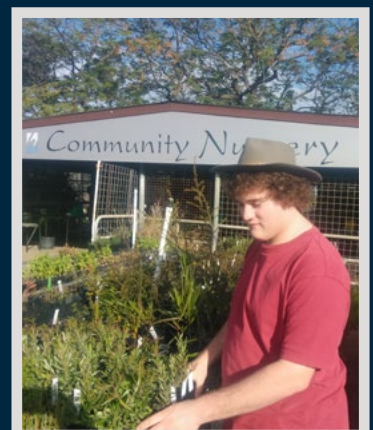
Deane's Melaleuca (*Melaleuca deanei*)

### MOST HATED WEED:

Blue heliotrope (*Heliotropium amplexicaule*)

### 6 PEOPLE YOU WOULD LIKE TO INVITE TO DINNER:

Ludwig Leichardt, John Hunter, Robert Brown, Allan Cunningham, George Caley & Francis Barallier



# PHEEN UPDATE

by Andrew Hewson

PHEEN, the Penrith & Hawkesbury Environmental Educators Network, aims to facilitate links and learning opportunities between educators, youth workers and people interested in or working in the sustainability/environmental field.

Congratulations and thank you to all the schools and environmental groups in the area showing some great environmental initiatives. Some of these have been highlighted at our PHEEN Zoom meeting held earlier this year for term 2, hosted by Justin Murphy and chaired by Marty Gauci both from Hawkesbury City Council and minutes taken by myself. Some of these exciting initiatives and events were –

- Justin Murphy, Waste Education Officer, Hawkesbury City Council showcasing the environmental sustainability strategy at the Hawkesbury Show.
- Andrew Hewson, Sustainability Education Officer, Penrith City Council developing a Green Grid Strategy, which is due to go on public exhibition soon.
- Jo Evans & Kris Beazley, Centre of Agricultural Excellence are working with feeder primary schools in the Hawkesbury on the Kreative Koala program.
- Cass Jeremijczyk and Leanne Kirkman, Penrith South Public School received grant funding to set up for chickens and are still having a great relationship with their local magpies.
- Vicky Whitehead, Longneck Lagoon Environmental Education Centre have developed an incursion program for primary schools with funding from biodiversity grants last year, this is now available for schools.
- Julz Strykowski, Education Officer, NPWS implementing a program with hands on field work around science and geography around the built environment, vegetation and urban heat [sites.google.com/view/westernsydneyproject/western-sydney-project](https://sites.google.com/view/westernsydneyproject/western-sydney-project); & have finalised a resource called 'Who Cares About NPWS' [nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/education/teacher-resource/who-cares-about-national-parks-stage-2-geography](https://nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/education/teacher-resource/who-cares-about-national-parks-stage-2-geography)
- Grose View Public School, CONGRATULATIONS! For receiving 1st place in the Junior Landcare Greater Sydney Landcare Network Awards.
- Martin Gauci, Community Bushcare Officer, Hawkesbury City Council promoting a native plant giveaway with plants from their Community Nursery at the Hawkesbury Show.
- Jayne Alba, Oxley Park Public School, recently received their Green Flag certification from Eco Schools. "Staff now take me seriously" she joked. [eco-schools.org.au/news/oxley-park-public-school-receives-award-going-green](https://eco-schools.org.au/news/oxley-park-public-school-receives-award-going-green) another CONGRATULATIONS!!!

This was just a snippet of what some groups and schools have been doing. If you are an environmental educator in the Penrith and Hawkesbury area, we invite you to join PHEEN on Facebook [facebook.com/groups/367351370101225](https://facebook.com/groups/367351370101225) and future Zoom meetings as per below. Different days have been purposely chosen to work around teachers with different recurring staff meetings on set days.

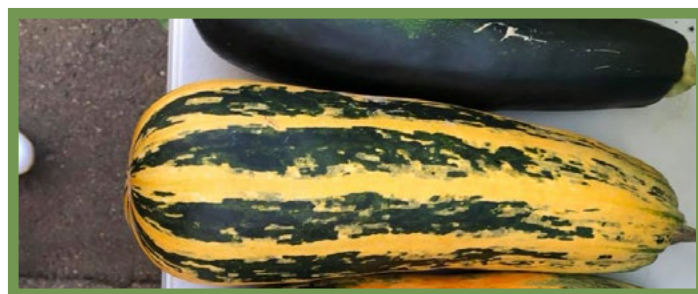
**Term 3 – Thursday Week 7 – August 26th**

**Term 4 – Monday Week 5 – November 8th**

## 2021 NATIONAL LANDCARE CONFERENCE

I recently attended the online National Landcare Conference & Awards which was hosted by Gardening Australia's Costa Georgiadis. Our very own Richie Benson was in the running for the 2021 Austcover Young Landcare Leadership Award. Richie did not win, but man, what a great honour to be up with these incredible young people across all of Australia doing amazing things for our country and the environment. Congratulations to Dhani Gilbert from the ACT for taking out this award. Dhani is a proud Wiradjuri woman who has a solid cultural education and has grown up involved in Caring for Country practices inclusive of seed harvesting, cultural burning, weed eradication and native vegetation restoration.

If you missed this forum, all is not lost, it is available to view online from [landcareaustralia.org.au](https://landcareaustralia.org.au). I plan to watch a few of the ones I missed for some environmental education and that elusive inspiration. Some of the talks and presentations that left a real positive impression on me included the 2020 Bob Hawke Landcare Award Winner Andrew Stewart, David Alan King with his presentation on The Gully in Katoomba, and Indigenous Fire Practitioner Victor Steffenson, integrating Indigenous perspectives for better land management. Victor's presentation [youtube.com/watch?v=OBTZvGJXrom](https://youtube.com/watch?v=OBTZvGJXrom) is a must see for any land manager, bush regenerator or firefighter. Who knows, one day Victor may be running some Indigenous Fire Practitioner workshops for the NSW Rural Fire Service; now that would be exciting!



Find us on 



# WHAT GOES UP, MUST COME DOWN

by Karen Joynes

It's an old saying that is definitely applicable to plastic balloon releases.

Too often, people do things without thinking about the consequences, and this also applies to colourful but dangerous balloon releases.

With a growing population and easy access to helium, balloon releases became increasingly popular over the years as a way of remembering loved ones, fundraising or celebrating an event. Can you believe this is still happening? It was even seen at the Hawkesbury Show in 2021. Sadly, balloons always result in litter, possibly hundreds of kilometres away somewhere, and threaten wildlife and damage the environment.

Due to these impacts, all balloon releases are now illegal in Queensland and Victoria, whether they are either accidental or deliberate. There is strong pressure on other state and territory governments in Australia to also ban the release of balloons, to move to a national ban.

There is also pressure to ban or severely restrict access to helium. Even when bans are in place, balloon releases still occur as helium and balloons can be purchased easily and cheaply.

Research has shown that balloons are 32 times more likely to kill seabirds than hard plastic as the balloon blocks the digestive tract blockage and the birds starve to death. The balloons invariably have clips, which also cause choking and blockages, and streamers/ribbons/strings attached, which cause entanglement.

Turtles are also known to be killed by balloons, as well as platypuses and farm animals. Balloons cause a terrible death by choking, strangulation and entanglement. Butcher birds and kookaburras have also been observed trying to eat balloons.

Balloon litter is also a problem, with many balloons found as debris in marine clean-ups. There have been reports of balloons being regularly found in the Blue Mountains National Park, as noted below by former secretary of Friends of the Colo, Andy Macqueen.

"We hold around eight remote conservation activities each year on the Colo, Capertee and Wolgan Rivers, within the Wollemi National Park and Wilderness (and Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area). They vary in duration from two to seven days. On almost every trip, wherever it may be, we come across the remains of at least one used helium balloon. They're in the depths of the valleys and on the ridges and are scattered throughout the environment. Assuming most originate from the Sydney Basin, when you consider the prevailing winds, there must be vastly more going out to sea!" says Mr Macqueen.

There are alternative ways to celebrate. And tens of thousands of marine birds and mammals will thank us.

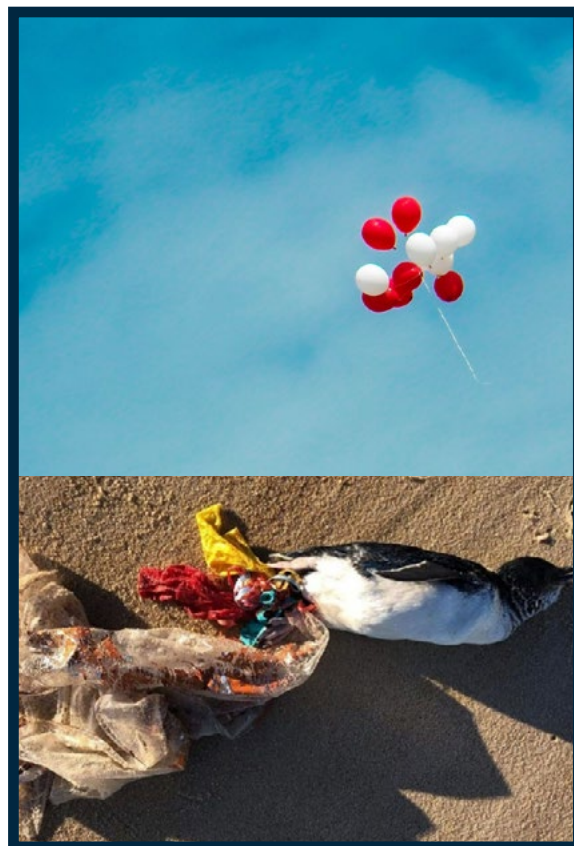
For further reading on balloon related waste and impacts see -

[phys.org/news/2019-03-balloons-marine-debris-mortality-seabirds.html?fbclid=IwAR31fjmdr-wA0stv7iLwdX93-pgzSzx5uV89HLO8uQpjfMOcTd86GYaGxms](https://phys.org/news/2019-03-balloons-marine-debris-mortality-seabirds.html?fbclid=IwAR31fjmdr-wA0stv7iLwdX93-pgzSzx5uV89HLO8uQpjfMOcTd86GYaGxms)

[tangaroablue.org/?s=fact+sheets](https://tangaroablue.org/?s=fact+sheets)

[balloonsblow.org/environmentally-friendly-alternatives](https://balloonsblow.org/environmentally-friendly-alternatives)

[boomerangalliance.org.au/](https://boomerangalliance.org.au/)



Picture source:

Bottom - [au.news.yahoo.com/st-kilda-beach-penguin-dead-entangled-in-balloons-023532091.html](https://au.news.yahoo.com/st-kilda-beach-penguin-dead-entangled-in-balloons-023532091.html)



Friends of the Colo volunteer Yant Kong finds a balloon in the Colo River gorge, miles within the World Heritage Area

# R THE GREY-HEADED FLYING-FOX BATS OK?

by Elizabeth Docking

For a Mum with 5 children, the summer holiday break must have seemed to go on and on. Sometimes on long, hot days spent keeping cool inside, Mum would say "You kids are driving me batty" and would pile us into the Valiant station wagon and drive us to the Royal National Park for some nature immersion and cooling under trees by the river. My thoughts went to Mum on RUOK Day, when I spent the day immersing in nature, planting for our native fruit bats that after the past summer were clearly not OK. I came away feeling uplifted and informed that I was doing a little bit to help our valuable native pollinators.

Aboriginal woman Sara Judge, PhD Geographer and bat specialist from the Australian Museum told some insightful and disturbing stories about the local Grey-headed Flying-fox bats. As a WIRES volunteer and passionate bat woman, last summer Sara witnessed the loss of way too many babies and adults from heat stress. Bats are temperature sensitive and days when my mum might have hosed us down to keep us cool, last summer the bats could not cope. Grey-headed Flying-fox are nomadic and may travel 50 km to feeding areas searching for food. They eat fruit from a range of native and introduced species, particularly figs, and for this reason it is sometimes called 'Fruit Bat'. They also feed on nectar and pollen from native trees, especially gum trees. These bats are important to healthy forest ecosystems because they pollinate and disperse the seeds of many important tree species.

We were planting to create a future microclimate and food source for the bats that hang about in a local camp. Maybe 10 years too late, but the fruit of the sandpaper fig and cheese tree will one day provide a food source and the other native species a cooling area for our grey-headed flying-fox bats. We will follow the growth of these trees and one day enjoy their cooling effects.

To my mum I say, I'm sorry we came close to sending you batty and I thank you for introducing us to the healing effects of nature that we now immerse ourselves in when we may not be feeling ok.

**Sara Judge says:**

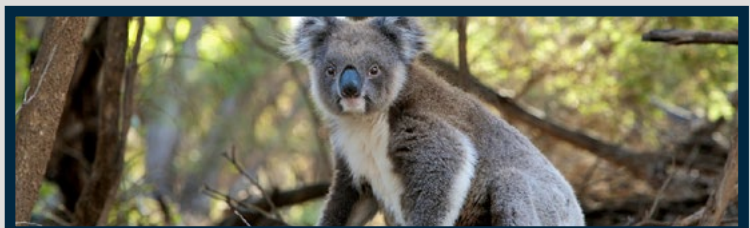
## DID YOU KNOW THAT KOALAS NEED FLYING-FOX BATS TO SURVIVE?

Some trees such as Australian eucalypts (koala favourites) only flower at night. This means koalas depend on the nocturnal activity of flying-foxes for survival. Flying foxes are major pollinators helping spread seeds over long distances.

### No Me, No Tree

Without flying-foxes, there would be:

- No food and shelter for our koalas
- No habitat for our native birds and animals
- And no forests to keep us cool



*The dedicated planters creating bat habitat, joined by Federal Macquarie MP Susan Templeman*



*Ask any wildlife carer & they'll tell you the Grey-headed Flying-foxes have amazing personalities*  
**Image source** - By Andrew Mercer - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, [commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=102558582](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=102558582)



# COCKSPUR CORAL

by Richie Benson

We have had yet another flood – The flood of March 2021. It was devastating for all areas impacted but there were some wins. Like 2020, we saw weeds drown out and some areas totally stripped of their weedy areas. We are again seeing native regeneration on the bare sand and mud left behind but the weeds are also coming back. This Spring, I expect to see huge regeneration of the dreaded Cockspur Coral Tree which I wrote about in the last edition of Weed All About It. If you own or manage land, keep a keen eye out in the flood affected areas and typically the toe of the riverbank where seed continues to land ashore. Control any plants you find.

If you would like to read more about Cockspur Coral Tree, click on the link below and head down to page 6.

[hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/150449/Bushcare-Newsletter-Vol20-Issue1-Autumn-2020-web.pdf](http://hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/150449/Bushcare-Newsletter-Vol20-Issue1-Autumn-2020-web.pdf)



Robert's Creek, West Portland Road, Sackville. **Photo – Richie Benson**



Cockspur coral tree flowers  
**Photo – NSW DPI**

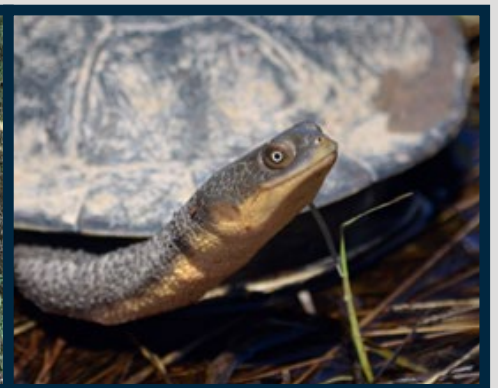
## HAVE YOU SEEN AN INTRODUCED RED-EARED SLIDER TURTLE OR AMERICAN CORN SNAKE IN THE WILD?

Australia is home to many introduced animal species that have become significant pests, such as wild rabbits, foxes and feral pigs. Each year, many other introduced species are also found in the wild throughout NSW, and these animals can have serious consequences for native plants and animals, human health, agriculture and the economy.

The Red-Eared Slider Turtle (which may be confused to the native Eastern Longneck Turtle) and American Corn Snake are two high-risk species that have recently been found in several new locations throughout Sydney and NSW. Local communities and biosecurity authorities are concerned because of the potential problems these species can cause in the wild.

Your help is needed to report possible sightings of these high-risk animals. If you see these animals in your local area, please take several clear photographs and report the sighting using the FeralScan community website – [feralscan.org.au](http://feralscan.org.au)

To report a sighting of these species, or if you would like more information, please visit [feralscan.org.au/newpests](http://feralscan.org.au/newpests) or email [feralscan@feralscan.org.au](mailto:feralscan@feralscan.org.au)



Red-Eared Slider Turtle (introduced pest)

American Corn Snake (introduced pest)

Eastern Longneck Turtle (native good guy)

# AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Council would like to encourage you to nominate people in your community for the 2022 Hawkesbury Australia Day Awards. The Hawkesbury Australia Day Awards acknowledge outstanding citizens of the Hawkesbury. Several of the awards categories recognise long term commitment and significant one-off contributions to the Hawkesbury.

Here are our categories:

- Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Local Hero Award
- Volunteer of the Year
- Community Organisation of the Year
- Community Arts Award
- Cultural Heritage Award
- Environmental Award
- Commemorative Plaque
- Sports Person of the Year
- Junior Sports Person of the Year
- All abilities sports person of the year (all ages)

Nominate a mate via councils' website and for more information about the awards, visit:

[www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/\\_resources/forms/australiadayawards2022](http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_resources/forms/australiadayawards2022)

Nominations close at 5pm Friday, 29 October 2021.



*Julie Wilson & Julie Roach representing WIRES Hawkesbury, Environmental Award Winners, Hawkesbury 2021 Australia Day Awards.*

If you are interested in being involved in any of the Hawkesbury Bushcare sites, or would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Council's Community Bushcare Officer on **4560 4525**, or email:

[mgauci@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mgauci@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au)

# SUSTAINABLE LIVING

## NSW GOVERNMENT'S EMPOWERING HOMES PROGRAM

Have you thought about going renewable? A home solar battery system can provide you with clean energy, reduce your energy bills and help you become more self-sufficient. The NSW Government is offering eligible homeowners in the Hawkesbury City Council area interest-free loans of up to \$14,000 to install solar battery systems.

Search Online: NSW Empowering Homes or visit: [energysaver.nsw.gov.au](http://energysaver.nsw.gov.au)

## WAR ON WASTE AND LIVING SUSTAINABLY COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Council is seeking your feedback to determine how it can best deliver future Hawkesbury War on Waste and Living Sustainably Community Workshops that meet your interests and needs.

Provide your feedback on Your Hawkesbury Your Say: [yourhawkesbury-yoursay.com.au/wow](http://yourhawkesbury-yoursay.com.au/wow)

Together we can make the Hawkesbury a more sustainable and resilient place to live and work.

## ENERGY AND WATER SAVING HELP – INFORMATION SESSION

Struggling with energy and water bills? Don't know where to go for help? Speakers from the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW and Sydney Water will provide you with information to help you save energy and water, and ultimately money.

Where: Hawkesbury Central Library, Windsor  
When: Thursday 23 September 2021, 10am–Midday.  
Cost: Free

Register: Call **02 4560 4566** or visit [eventbrite.com.au/o/hawkesbury-living-sustainably-33105194483](http://eventbrite.com.au/o/hawkesbury-living-sustainably-33105194483)

