The Habitatler – Summer 2017 – Issue 20

**Koala Corridor**

The tract of bushland that links Koala Street to Transit Hill is our ‘Koala Corridor’. It’s well used by our favourite marsupials.

Narrow and steep, this Reserve was so badly eroded by stormwater that the gullies could swallow an adult.

Rushing water threatened homes, and carried a load of weeds downstream to contaminate Landcare’s Environmental Trust project.

Now that the Koala Corridor has been rescued from its worn and weedy condition, thanks to a grant of $20,000 from the National Landcare Programme (NLP).

This success took two years and many contributors – patience and co-operation made it happen.

Landcare volunteers did the planning and got their hands dirty throughout the project, alongside Work for the Dole and Community Service workers (CSO’s). Local contractors removed weeds and planted seedlings.

Our Council partners helped us with everything from plant choices to communications. Most importantly, they did the major engineering works to manage runoff and control erosion.

Work commenced at the top of the Corridor, with Landcare volunteers and the CSOs knocking down the Lantana. Wild Things (bush regenerators) hit the Madiera, Syngonium, Trad and vine weeds. Candelnut trees were deleted by Port Tree Fella.

Additional weeding and planting to counter erosion was conducted by volunteers.

Some changes were made to the original plans after consultation with the residents and Council, and there was an interim period while Council conducted the engineering works, after which the major plantings could get underway.

We faced the prospect of refunding some unspent grant money as the project end date approached, however the NLP very kindly gave us an extension of time until the end of October 2016.

Suddenly, it was all happening: Council workers reshaped and concreted the big gullies, adding rocks to absorb stormwater energy and slow down the flow. Below the footbridge they reshaped the drain, lined it with geotextile, and planted grass to stabilise it.

This meant some of our funds could be redirected to buy extra plants, and employ contractors who could plant them immediately. They finished the work in the nick of time.

There are now 7 advanced koala browse trees, protected by robust tree guards, on centre stage. Supporting them is a cast of thousands of plants, from rainforest shrubs to reeds, all supplied by our Landcare Community Nursery.

The Corridor has improved access for the koalas as they can move through the site more easily now the weeds have gone. A new stile at the top gives them easy access to Rosendahl Dam. The advanced Swamp Mahoganies and Tallowwoods will soon be ready to feed them.

Koalas are also the subject of 3 new illustrated signs that were made especially to help people enjoy the corridor and understand its story.

All wildlife is benefiting from the food and shelter given by those new native plants, as they extend links to the Lily Pond, Yarranbee Creek, and Transit Hill.

This Project has been an investment in biodiversity and landscape repair.

It’s also built partnerships and brought grant money that stayed in our community.

Thank you to everyone who worked on it, and to all who continue maintaining it into the future.

Julie Ho

Gulley and drain, before and after
President’s Report

As the new President of Port Macquarie Landcare I can only comment on efforts made by our group since September. However, we cannot overlook the wonderful work conducted by previous President Estelle Gough prior to that period.

Since September we have seen a great effort in Macquarie Nature Reserve with Matt Atkins basal barking Ochna, drilling Camphor Laurels and the Coral trees. The Taros have been removed from Little Owens Street with the help of our enthusiastic Volunteers and Community Service people.

Working bees at Yarranabee Creek have significantly reduced the weed load. It is great to see just how much the trees have grown, despite the browsing from the Swamp Wallabies and feral deer, which seem to have taken a liking to them.

Cupalla Court and Rushcutter Reserve have seen the Farmers Friends removed and more trees, grasses and ground covers being planted. There is still some work to do at Wrights Creek to complete that project.

Joan Wilson, our secretary has started a monthly column in the Independent News and has targeted Lantana and Ochna as weeds of the month. Let’s hope we see less of these encroaching nasties in our suburban gardens.

Our efforts this year have been nothing short of amazing, Volunteers having worked tirelessly at all our responsible sites. I look forward to 2017 with great enthusiasm.

I wish all volunteers and their families a safe and prosperous New Year.

Port Macquarie Landcare will celebrate 20 years in 2017

On the 9th of December 1997, 19 volunteers attended the first meeting. They were the steering committee who set up our Landcare group.

Nursery Natterings

One of the perks of being a Landcare member and volunteer is that the plants from the nursery are available at no charge for your home gardens.

There are a number of volunteers who have changed over their whole gardens to utilise this generous offer. The nursery benefits as well as seed can be collected from accessible places.

We would like to see more volunteers taking advantage of this offer, come to the nursery any Monday morning between 9:00am and 12noon bring a cake and stay for morning tea with the team.

The current dry period is playing havoc at the nursery, with the soil in the soil bin drying out so much it has become water repellent, leading to more work as we have to dunk the trays to overcome the issue.

The large customer orders for Eucalypts are coming along nicely. Although this has reduced the range of Eucalypts that can be held at the nursery for general customers, 2000 Tallowwood Eucalyptus microcorys will be planted in the coming months, thereby freeing up some space again.

These are a welcome addition to the environment, but the numbers really pale into insignificance when compared to the number of trees removed in our region on a daily basis. Every little bit helps though, and our work continues to alleviate the imbalance.

Our nursery was recommended to the contractor engaged to plant the trees for the highway upgrade between Port Macquarie and Kempsey. As a result, some of our beautiful trees will be added to the indigenous mix.

We hope you enjoyed the Christmas Party. This event was made possible by the hard work of our team.

The Nursery Team

Where are they now?

What an achievement 20 years later – pulling weeds, moving mulch, planting tube stock and then watering.

If you have any stories and photos from our sites from years gone by let us know: the latest working bee, or the last ten years. Tell us why you like to volunteer for Landcare.

We want to hear from you. Email me at: president@landcareportmac.com

Let’s gather our history of Port Macquarie Landcare.

Bronwyn Newton
Port Macquarie Landcare’s investment in community work is being recognised with appreciation awards for long serving members who have completed 5 or more years with us.

The awards were implemented by new president Bronwyn Newton, and presented to the recipients at Working Bees.

This recognition of service was brought in to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our many volunteers. The work that Landcare volunteers undertake has results that are both significant and dramatic to the local environment of the Port Macquarie area.

5 years is a long time to work hard at planting tube stock and potting up seedlings, but these five volunteers have done just that: Peter Duckett, Lorraine Moore, Carol Jungblut, Roz Anderson and Lorraine Beveridge work hard at our nursery every Monday.

In addition to working at the nursery, some of them also work on site trying to control the Garden Escapees like Ochna and Lantana.

Then we have Bruno Ryan, Nikala Sim and Brian Grant who all work behind the scenes.

Bruno is our Vice President and works at Widderson Street Reserve, Nikala works on our Facebook page, and Brian does a great job keeping our shed tidy.

Pieter and Lenie Schouten conduct water testing at the creeks that run through our sites, and perhaps more importantly, they help with our BBQ’s.

Peter Crundwell helps with our Internet and has also been a great help on the technical side of running the nursery.

Steve Ho drives the van to our sites and helps look after our tools.

Bronwyn Newton has worked on many sites and now is our President, as well as being on our Social Committee.

Melinda Losh has worked on Stevens Street Site for many years. This site has four different ecosystems, from Mangroves to Littoral Rainforest. It is an integral part of our coastline. Melinda is also on our Social Committee, helping to organise our BBQs and Christmas Parties.

Bronwyn Newton
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**Koala Preservation Society**

**Maria River Plantation**

The Koala Preservation Society (KPS) was supported by Port Macquarie Landcare and Port Macquarie Council’s Bushland Management Team in the planting of Koala food trees at a plantation site on the North Shore of Port Macquarie. The aim of the mass plantings is to provide the Koalas in care at the Koala Hospital with a reliable and long term leaf supply.

The Landcare Community Nursery has provided the seedlings for the Koala Hospital project. Twenty trays of seedlings were provided, including Swamp Mahogany Eucalyptus robusta, Forest Red Gum microporys, and the only non-indigenous species to be planted, the Narrow-leaved Black Peppermint Eucalyptus nicholii. The Swamp Mahogany have already reached a height of 1.5 metres.

The power of community partnerships for the Koala Preservation Society are a key feature of the continuing progress of the plantation on the Maria River Road.

Graham Hargreaves, Landcare/Maria River Plantation Manager, KPS

Left: Graham Hargreaves and Estelle Gough

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**Rosendahl Reservoir: Hidden Habitat in the Heart of Port Macquarie**

Within the heart of busy Port Macquarie lies Rosendahl Reservoir. Port Macquarie’s water supply is fringed by around 60 ha of native bushland, grassland and native plantings. While the principal purpose of this land is ensuring the integrity of the town’s water supply, the area is also valuable habitat for a number of species.

The site is surrounded by security fencing, which presents an impenetrable barrier to species such as the Koala.

A recent project by Port Macquarie Landcare, Work for the Dole participants and Port Macquarie-Hastings Council’s Bushland Management Team saw the installation of 10 koala stiles around the dam perimeter. These ‘stiles’ are wooden bridges which enable the koalas to safely climb over the fence and access the habitat abundant in existing and planted Tallowoods. The area also represents a ‘safe haven’ for koalas – being away from dogs and motor vehicles – two of the leading causes of koala mortality.

Excitingly, koalas have already found their way into the reservoir precinct and locals report seeing the koalas using their new stiles.

The stiles are also likely to be used by other species such as Common Brush-tail Possums, Common Ringtail Possums, Sugar Gliders and native rodents. This has been a wonderful project which again demonstrates what great ‘on-the-ground’ works can be achieved through the cooperation of Council and Landcare.

Port Macquarie–Hastings Council also undertakes other environmental works in the Rosendahl Reservoir precinct, including weed control and control of exotic deer. Rosendahl Reservoir is not open to the public for security reasons.

Rebecca Montague-Drake

Erecting the koala stiles, a great team effort all round
Weed: Lantana camara

It's for sale online, described as a spectacular shrub with aromatic flower clusters of red, orange, yellow and white, which are ‘hummingbird magnets’.

Maybe that’s why European plant fanciers took it home from South America hundreds of years ago and bred it, before introducing it to Australia in the form we call Lantana camara.

No hummingbirds here yet. But Lantana has spread through eastern and northern Australia.

It is a Weed of National Significance that seriously threatens biodiversity in some World Heritage areas including the Wet Tropics and the Greater Blue Mountains.

Characterised by its arching stems, prickly yet powdery to touch, it can form impenetrable thickets in bushland, and on farms. It is in the Verbenaceae family, indicated by the square shape of young stems.

The leaves are opposite with serrated edges but a distinctive smell, so it can’t be mistaken for our native Trema aspera.

Fallen Lantana leaves produce allelopathic substances that prevent other plants germinating and growing, and this can result in thickets of Lantana with almost nothing below.

The flowers grow in umbels and produce lots of black juicy fruits. These fruits can poison children although birds, foxes and rats eat them and spread the seeds. The foliage poisons cattle, causing photosensitisation, loss of appetite, organ damage, and even death.

It is a difficult weed to defeat too. A range of methods including herbicides, mechanical removal, fire, biological control and revegetation should be used.

Best results are obtained by working from areas of light infestation towards heavier infestation, and longterm follow-up control is required'. (http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/l-camara.pdf)

Lantana camara is nominated as one of the 100 World’s Worst invasive species. A major problem in Australia, Africa, Europe, India and the Pacific, it has no economic benefit, but costs millions of dollars in lost production on farms and in forests.

Estelle Gough

Native Plant: Callicarpa pedunculata

Callicarpa pedunculata is a deciduous or semi-deciduous shrub found in Australia and parts of Asia and is a member of the Verbenaceae family. It grows in and around rainforests in Port Macquarie but is rarely found in the wild. This led the Community Nursery to propagate it, and commence planting it back into suitable sites that Landcare works on.

Our nursery volunteer Roz Anderson planted one in her garden, providing a source that the nursery has collected seeds from, to continue the restoration of this beautiful native to our bushland.

This 1-3m shrub has an attractive display of white, pink and mauve flowers throughout summer, followed by small purple bird attracting fruits. Fast growing, it requires regular pruning to keep its bushy shape.

A spectacular screening plant it is reasonably hardy but dislikes extreme cold or exposure. It requires a sunny position or light dappled shade and prefers a highly fertile well-drained loam.

This plant is in the same family as Lantana and it is sometimes cited as a ‘Lantana replacement’ or Native Lantana. This is something to keep in mind for all the neighbours who have said to us as we worked over their back fence: ‘But we loved the pretty pink flowers on the Lantana...’

The Silvereye utilises the Callicarpa pedunculata. Silvereyes occur in pairs when breeding, otherwise in small to large flocks. It has a soft call when feeding and a chip-chip when the flock flies. They move rapidly, and due to their soft calls they are often overlooked. Invite them to your garden with this beautiful plant.

The nursery has a supply of Callicarpa pedunculata at the huge cost of $1.50 and would love to see it being used in backyards around Port Macquarie.

Estelle Gough

Left: The fruit is a feature leading to its common name Beautyberry
Below: Fruit with a Silvereye Zosterops lateralis enjoying the bounty
The flowers are quite beautiful miniatures, revealing their full beauty only with the help of macro photography

The flowers are quite beautiful miniatures, revealing their full beauty only with the help of macro photography

Estelle Gough
Our Christmas Party was a great way to catch up with friends and we did just that! It was nice to see Roy Sach, our patron, and his wife Gail attend to thank us for the hard work that had been achieved in the past year. He also enlightened us on the role of the Patron.

The lucky seat prize was won by Don Selway from Queens Lake. It was sure to have gone a long way to broadening the table selection at Don’s house on Christmas Day.

The food was delicious and there was plenty of it. After the feast, the lucky door prizes were drawn. It was fun to watch the numbers being drawn, with yells of delight emanating from the lucky winners when their ticket numbers were called out.

There was lots of laughter with the quiz this year as our volunteers tried to work out ‘The Price is Right’. It became clear we need to do more shopping to get the prices right, but I think we all knew the price of a can of baked beans.

It was a great night, with good food and even better company.

Bronwyn Newton
The Christmas party was a special night for John and Jenny Reeve, who were rewarded with Life Membership. Prior to coming to Port Macquarie they worked on sites at Corowa on the beautiful Murray River. They also worked in the Chiltern Box-ironbark National Park in Victoria.

John and Jenny arrived in Port Macquarie in 1997, first joining Friends of Kooloonbung Creek, and later Landcare. They have been with Port Macquarie Landcare for 10 years and have worked on Blair Reserve clearing the Lantana and Morning Glory, which is now completely removed.
Volunteers Recognised for 10 Years’ Service

Ian and Glenda Little (left), and Chris and Linda Day (right) have been Landcare members since our neighbourhood project was adopted by PML in 2007.

Around 10 years prior to that these guys were instrumental in bringing the bushland reserve at the bottom of their backyards back to the pristine condition; by removing weeds such as lantana, bitou bush and tobacco trees that were taking over the native vegetation.

All are still very active on the site with weeding, mowing, mulching and tree planting. They have a true appreciation of the natural habitat that brings birds and wildlife into their yards. All were very vocal during council discussions about APZ and fire management practices as they are passionate about the aesthetics of their local landscape.
Site Profile – Stevens Street Project Update

This site became a Landcare project in 2015. It was identified as having a high potential for resilience, and the weed loads on the site were having a negative impact on the adjoining nature reserve and adjacent Council managed reserves.

The site itself includes four ecological communities: Mangroves, Salt Marsh, Swamp Oak Forest and Littoral Rainforest.

It is always a varied site to work on, with a variety of weeds trying to colonise the different habitats.

As you are reading this in the Habitater, it is a pleasure to say that this project is almost to the maintenance stage. The site is now bursting with new regeneration, as a result of a combination of the hard knockdown undertaken by the team of Community Service people, and the comparative joy of morning glory removal from tidal sandy soil (it pulls out easily).

The Stevens Street site is amazing for spotting birds and other wildlife, including a family of four wallabies, occasionally a koala, and blue tongue lizards.

In conclusion, I would like to invite Landcare volunteers to join a working bee at this site. Working bees will continue to be held every fourth Sunday of the month in 2017.

Melinda Losh


Upcoming Events

General Meeting
Port City Bowling Club,
Owen Street, Port Macquarie.
Tuesday 14 March 6.45 pm
for a 7.00pm start.
Contact: joniwilo541@yahoo.com.au

www.landcareportmac.com.au
Find us on Facebook