



\$20k funding

WE don’t regenerate our bushland just to see native plants reestablished – we do it so our native creatures will benefit too. This year we have been granted \$20,000 in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Landcare Australia. This money will rehabilitate a small but vitally important piece of land.

The area in question sits higher on the catchment than our significant Environmental Trust-funded project. It is weed infested but home to koalas and valuable native plant communities. These are just two factors that make the regeneration of this land, which is bounded by Rosendhal Reserve and the Koala Street end of Yarranabee Creek, important.

Weeds on the site include Madeira vine, wandering Jew, potato vine, bridal creeper, lantana and tobacco bush. During heavy rain these are washed downstream thus compromising much of the hard work that has been done on the \$250,000 Environmental Trust project. Not only do these weeds comprise an infestation risk but they impede koala movement through this important wildlife corridor. Return of indigenous habitat will also improve the drainage of the area and minimise erosion.

Project manager Julie Ho said it was extraordinary how much wildlife activity went on in the area. “Plants grow in association with animals and birds. Given half a chance these creatures will put it all



back together again.”

A long-time resident of Port Macquarie, Mrs Ho said green areas had been reduced through development over time. This made this steep, wet, narrow tract of land “very precious”. Vegetation includes remnant wet sclerophyll forest which is considered an endangered ecological community.

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council will give in-kind help to our Landcare volunteers. The organisation will assist with weed control, bushfire management and ecological advice.

Nikala Sim



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President's Report

The last few months saw a major change for us when Bill Peel retired from his role as Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (PMHC) Ecologist.

Bill is still a committed Port Macquarie Landcare Group member. He runs our Nobbys Beach group and Sea Change projects, as well as performing a number of tasks that are of great assistance.

We welcome Council's new ecologist Rebecca Montague-Drake and look forward to our liaison relationship with her and Council. Rebecca has already been of help at the same calibre as Bill Peel provided in the past.



Several committee members are collating information to report to our funding body - The Environmental Trust. This will be submitted in March and this year they decide if the project will be funded for the remaining three years.

We are a year ahead of schedule with this Yarranabee/Wrights creek regeneration project. The sites are looking fantastic, and relations with neighbours have improved over the last three years. We hope these factors will result in a positive outcome.

PMHC Bush Regeneration Team Coordinator Peter Michael and his team began

implementing the protocol on Camphor Laurels late last year. This protocol was developed as a direct result of The Environmental Trust project. We can all be justly proud of this involvement in the start of the systematic control of these huge weed trees.

Our new affiliated group, Mrs York's Garden, is gathering momentum, and it won't be long before we see progress on this site. The summer months are such a busy time for us and the hot weather and increased insect activity does not make for pleasant working conditions. My thanks to all of you for your perseverance at this critical time in the growing cycle of our sites.

Estelle Gough

What the fungi?



Leucocoprinus birnbaumii is a species of the Agaricaceae family found throughout the East coast of Australia, Europe and North America. A similar species is found in the Caribbean but the gills bruise bright blue-green when cut. They are commonly found in hothouses and pot plants giving them the common name of Yellow flowerpot parasol.

All features are brilliant sulphur-yellow that fade with age. The young caps are taller than broad, gradually becoming convex (parasol shape) up to 5cm wide. Scales are present on the cap when young but are detached easily, sometimes leaving shallow, radial grooves near the margin. The stem height is up to 8cm, slightly bulbous at the base, smooth with a prominent annulus (ring) that is lost by maturity.

Leucocoprinus birnbaumii is a saprotroph, living on very decayed plant matter, which is why we see it popping up in sites where mulch or compost is used. They are usually seen growing in small troops but it's not uncommon to see them solitary.

Angela Millett

“1, 2, 3 Smile!”

“1, 2, 3 Smile!”

After hearing this famous phrase two important events happen almost simultaneously: the ones having their picture taken, will try to look as good as they possibly can (and let me clarify that depends on what is the actual activity that is trying to be recorded) ; and the person holding the camera transforms into the “Da Vinci” of the moment, and gets ready to create what could possibly be a masterpiece...or maybe not...!

Our Publicity Officer, Nikala Sim, gave a few of us an excellent gift, - she shared her knowledge. Her purpose was to help us to apply some easy techniques to improve our photographic skills. The workshop took place at Sea Acres, and we all learned a lot about how to use our cameras.

It is a fact that our eyes see some things that the camera lens can't capture. It is then when it is important to learn a few things to to

overcome this difference. We talked about different models and types of devices. A great camera could take a good picture but a picture well taken can tell a great story, and it does not necessarily have to be taken with a fancy camera. It is the sense of creativity to capture a particular moment and share it that makes a great shot - and that task can be easily done if you know your own device.

Cameras have a whole variety of functions and “playing” with them is a great way to learn. In the workshop Nikala took us to take a practice photo that helped us to understand the “fill –in flash” function. She had us take a picture with and without flash on a clear day with nice blue sky behind the subject. We then observed the results. “Go ahead you try it out”. You could hear us going “ooohhh, ahhh, wow”. We were awed by the huge difference seen on our small camera screens; towards the end of the activity were she made us move, change positions, show our faces, move forward and

backwards looking for the best to highlight the moment.

We observed a whole bunch of pictures and discussed about why were they good or not. At the end of the day, it takes some thought for us to choose the best background, the best lighting and the best position to allow our photos to tell the story we wish to relate.

It doesn't matter if the story behind the picture is related to our work, family or our Landcare activities (thank you bbqs, Xmas dinner, a picture that reflects the work done on a site on a particular day or time - Photo-point documentation). Taking some time to discover the functions of the camera, as well as helping our colleagues or loved ones to group up to get memory out of that moment is always worth it.

Don't be shy - just make us all give you our best smile to get the best moment - captured by the magic of a camera.

Sigrid Martinez



Happy snappers: Roz Anderson, Bronwyn Newton, Estelle Gough, Bruno Ryan, Sigrid Martinez and her niece Maria, Lorraine Moore, Steve Ho and Brian Grant .

Summer barbecue at Blair Reserve

Wow - what a beautiful day, and a fantastic turnout to the end of season barbecue at Blair Reserve! This was a great opportunity to catch up and see some old faces, and meet some of our new team members. After hearty greetings were done with hugs and laughter all round, we gathered to go on the traditional 'Bill and Estelle Show' walk through the site.

Blair Reserve is located at Lighthouse Beach and bounded on all sides by suburbia. It measures over 3ha and is the home of at least five ecological communities - and endangered species *Melaleuca biconvexa*.

Work began in 2002 with local twitcher Tony Bischoff, and was officially made a Landcare site in 2004. The original crew of committee members slowly grew with the Landcare nursery team coming on board to see where their 'babies' (the plant stock) were being used. Sometime later they were joined by new volunteers from the local surrounds keen to join in the weedy muddy fun. Local school kids have also been busy and their numbers and help have added to the great results achieved.

We started in the area directly behind the playing fields which has been transformed into a koala food-tree paradise. This area had been subject to a long term mowing regime by Council and was a weedy headache spot on the edge of the reserve. After some convincing, the mowers were removed, the area mulched, and something wonderful happened - the native seed bank in the soil began to grow. At the same time, some koala food-trees were planted along with understorey plants. Now the trees have grown and provide food for the koalas and a resting place for many bird species. The birds in turn have left their deposits full of seed. They have helped to restore a full ecology of shrubs, vines and ground covers. As we walked along admiring the tree growth we disturbed a snoozing koala who looked at us a bit before going back to sleep - how great is that!

The stagnant swampy smell has gone. This has been achieved by weeding the drain lines and replanting to stabilise the bank. This allows better water flow, wetland filtration and a healthier environ for water-borne



species which help oxygenate the water.

The aroma of cooking onions hung in the air and made tummy's rumble, but we still had a way to go on our walk-and-talk. We looked at our signs and discussed the positive impact of teaching people about ecology. Human impact has been greatly reduced thanks to the addition, by Council, of a board-walk, bike jumps and play area for children.

Tony Bischoff gave a talk about the return of bird species that he had seen due to the work by Landcare. The reserve now provides birds with food, habitat, and nesting sites.

The delicious barbecue aroma called us back to the gazebo for lunch! On return we were greeted by Barbecue Bruno - so with bun in hand we lined up for our Aussie favourite sausages. There was a dazzling display of sweet treats and fresh fruit for afters.

These gatherings reinforce to the huge scale of work that can be achieved by a well-trained, enthusiastic, like-minded bunch of people. We know our efforts are appreciated by the broader community and will continue to be honoured by new volunteers, future generations and visitors alike (thanks Bill).

So until next gathering keep safe and be happy. *Ann Ryan*



PMLG Life Members

Congratulations are in order for two of our long standing inmates, ooops sorry, volunteers who received Lifetime Membership Awards at the Blair Reserve barbecue. Tony Bischoff began the Blair Reserve crew. He worked tirelessly with his crew of weed warriors, has been an asset with his bird knowledge, is an entertainer and above all a nice bloke !

Our beloved secretary, Janet Slater, has endured (oops) attended many meetings and forums. Her notes keep us up to date with the latest happenings. She is affectionately called Madame Slithers because of her worm farm and is a toad catcher extraordinaire. These two decade-long members have selflessly given their time, enthusiasm and humour. Their efforts are very much appreciated by all of us. Well done and thank you both !

Ann Ryan

Becoming a Landcare member, for me, could be likened to a tree seed finding its place to germinate and grow. A decade ago, within a small group of volunteers I began to enjoy the benefits of being involved with people bringing back the bush in urban areas.

I was surprised at how much could be achieved with just getting stuck-in to remove weeds so that trees could grow more vigorously. Learning to work smarter, not harder, in the process of weed management and/or eradication has enabled the Port Macquarie Landcare Group to become more productive. Like a fast growing eucalypt sapling the group is spreading its branches to offer so much more to its community.

I suppose I've always been a dirt-girl. I grew



veggies and plants from an early age - in containers if I didn't have a garden - and was always fascinated with the life within soil. Landcare offered me scope to learn more about the wider environment and ecology...I'm still learning.

I have 'babysat' natives in polystyrene containers, participated in frog surveys and cane toad hunts, slaughtered Senna at Shelly Beach, been involved with a number of projects and taken minutes at both Wauchope (Hastings Landcare) and Port Macquarie. It's amazing to view the transformation of our coastal vegetation - from the lime-green colour of Bitou Bush infestation to the more earthy-green toning of natural habitat - to the return of wild species to their natural habitat. What a

thrill. Can you imagine what bushland reserves in Port Macquarie would look like if no-one had started to pull weeds? Good things are growing again, and we are healthier for it.

For the past decade I've worked full-time in an office but there has always been something growing that I've planted within a few metres of the front door at work or at home. I always have a worm-farm ready to give away to a good home. I may not have the time and energy to get to Sunday morning projects as I used to but there is always something that can be done in such a vibrant group as the PMLG. One day soon I shall leave the office behind and go bush...by Landcaring (I may yet become an Ent!)

Janet Slater

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Ken Errington

2009



Yvonne Errington

2009



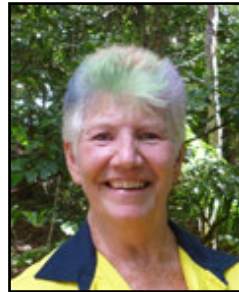
Steve Cartwright

2009



Julie Ho

2011



Estelle Gough

2012



Janet Watson

2014

It pays to recycle

Greetings all — here's hoping 2015 is a healthy and happy year for all of us!

The following news from Greenpeace is an early win for the NSW environment, even for those who are not particularly “in” to fauna and flora. Nobody wants to go for a drive or picnic and look at piles of rubbish on their outing. One could easily single out the waterways in NSW which are an eyesore and a disgrace, but there's plenty of rubbish in every corner of every state.

Whilst 10c per container might not seem much of an incentive in this modern “throw-away” world, it surely will catch on, if only to boost the fund raising capacity of local community groups (who are already on the recycling trail). Personally I strongly resent having to spend

time picking up other people's rubbish before I settle in to a bush camp. Being a “tosser” not only shows total disregard and disrespect for the environment and fellow travelers, but most importantly for our great country Australia. I have no hesitation in photographing and reporting anyone I see dumping rubbish – to



hell with warnings, they know exactly what they're doing and I treat them as Anti-Australian.

I have been a long term monthly supporter of Greenpeace, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia and Landcare. Anyone with a few dollars to spare could do a lot worse than support one of these groups who represent the future of environmental Australia.

[To read more go to](#)

<http://www.portnews.com.au/story/2898720/cash-for-cans-scheme-gets-green-light/?cs=257>

Happy and rubbish-free traveling.

Tony Bischoff

PMLG Life Members continued...

In 1998, my child-bride Fay and I purchased a house and land adjoining Blair Reserve. Being keenly interested in the natural environment and a long-time bird watcher, I immediately recognized the value of this wonderful area of urban bushland and wetland right next door to us.

After a settling in period and the establishment of a native garden on our own block in 2002, I turned my attention to the bigger block next door - Blair Reserve. At the time, Council were super keen on mowing, and I decided my key policy would be to “Stop the Mowers”!!!

I began removing lantana and other invasive weeds and replacing them with wattles and koala food trees such as Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*). This replanting gradually replaced previously mowed areas (ssshhhh).

I approached Council about obtaining free local trees for planting and was referred to Julie Ho, and later Estelle Gough. Thus began my long and happy association with the Port Macquarie Landcare Group.

Volunteers are never easy to find, but we had some fantastic people who came and worked in Blair Reserve. Often up to our knees in mud and slush, the relentless crew left no Morning Glory unturned in the quest for a better Blair. The piles of Tobacco Bush and Morning Glory made Mt Kosciusko look like a bike jump.

And then there was the joy of planting – my memory says upward of 16,000 plants went in the ground during the first decade or so. So many holes were dug it really is a wonder Blair didn't just sink out of sight.

Let's not mention the morning teas



VOLUNTEERS: I do not dare name names as the honour list is long. I started the list and stopped when I got to 30. Many of you have become very close friends and remain so to this day. Well, not with me, but with other people (that's a joke).

Such is the family of Landcare.

And so this award is not so much for me, but rather for EVERY ONE of those cheerful but incredibly determined and hard-working Blair Reserve friends. This includes of course all those who have followed since my retirement, and to Estelle who flogged every one of us every inch of the way!!! But somehow we didn't seem to mind.

Tony Bischoff

The Early Days: Part One

Ken and I moved into Gardenia Avenue in 1995 and there was no back fence to the property, just an impenetrable wall of Lantana. We knew the pond was there, but it could only be glimpsed from Koala Street. The only natives were several large wattles and pittosporums but the wildlife was profuse. I spent most of my leisure time on our back deck so soon realised the birdlife was exceptional and reptiles plentiful in species and number.

Soon after we moved in, one of the large wattles fell on to our back deck, during a storm. I rang the Council and it was agreed they would remove it. Fortunately, I was home when they came to do the job, arriving in a huge bulldozer intending to doze the whole area. After a 'chat' with the driver I finally said, "You will have to drive over me first!" (and there I stood, only 5'2" and 7 stone of me). I had seen the removal of the tree as an opportunity to gain entry, start clearing and then plant my own little "Sea Acres", just the width of our block and down to the water – that was the plan.

I wasn't sure how pleased Ken would be with me for seeing the dozer off, after all, we still had a huge tree across our lawn. I worried needlessly, because later that day Council's Mr Pontifax rang to see if I was satisfied with the job. When I told him what I had done, he was astounded, but was kind enough to ask me what I had in mind. I tentatively explained that maybe a Bobcat and chainsaw could be used and outlined my regeneration intentions. To my amazement he was receptive but explained



they could not supply any plants.

The next day, the workers checked with me before they started work. Wow! I was impressed. They removed the fallen tree and made a pathway. I began immediately to hack and pull out the lantana and weeds and was soon joined by Ken. It didn't worry us that the neighbours thought we were mad (they weren't averse to telling us so either). We just kept working and when we had several huge stacks of lantana, I rang Mr Pontifax and he suggested I burn it. He also advised that we ring the Fire Department so they would be aware of what was happening. So this is what we did – carefully of course.

The pattern was there, right from the start, of Council cooperation in supporting me to reclaim what was wasteland. I had hoped to

find some trees etc. struggling for light, but there was nothing but a desert. I started planting palms that Sea Acres had given me. On my birthday, everyone put money in a box and I bought hundreds of plants off Bob Dean, a fellow guide at Sea Acres. Bob's hobby was propagating tube stock and for \$1 each, most of them thrived.

It didn't take long for regeneration to start – first some bracken fern, then a Guiao, then Rose Maple, Sandpaper Fig and Bleeding Heart, but mind you, along with these welcome wonders came the Fleabane, Thickhead, Thistle, Paspalum etc. etc. but we were on our way with not one inkling that our project would result in something as wonderful as Landcare. More next edition...

Yvonne Errington



Protocol for removal of Camphor Laurel

Camphor Laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*) was introduced to Australia as an ornamental species about 1822 and widely planted in parks, gardens and school grounds. It was also widely planted for shade and shelter on north coast dairy farms in the late 1800s.

Camphor Laurel has rapid growth rates, is a prolific seeder (with seeds widely dispersed by animals) and readily colonises disturbed areas. These factors have ensured that Camphor Laurel has widely spread into many areas of bushland estate over the last 200 years.

Camphor Laurel is a concern because it has a tendency to form single species communities and exclude most other tree species, including desirable native vegetation. It can also destabilise stream banks due to undercutting by the shallow root system and the general lack of ground cover species around the trees to hold the soil in place.

Although not a difficult pest to control, the sheer large size of mature trees, their tendency to drop limbs following poisoning and their ability to regenerate easily after lopping make practical management of Camphor Laurel slow and expensive work. Furthermore, factors such as a 'love-hate' affection by many within the community, and the fact that Camphor Laurel can actually have valuable ecological roles in the landscape (e.g. fruit for birds, shelter trees for koalas and 'stepping stones' for animals across the landscape) often ensures that a gradual, staged reduction of individuals within a stand may be appropriate, as opposed to killing every individual within the stand.

Because of these considerations, in

2014 Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (PMHC) adopted the Protocol for Removal of Camphor Laurel on Bushland Reserves. This protocol aims to guide land managers and works coordinators through the decision-making process when deciding whether or not to proceed with individual tree as well as stand removal (note: for the purposes of the Protocol, the term 'removal' may be taken as the same as killing and leaving on-site).

Although Camphor Laurel has been actively managed on public land across our LGA for many years, the direct application of the Protocol was first utilised in Yarranabee Creek, Port Macquarie in 2014. In this work zone,

there were several significant issues to consider before commencing work, including:

- What risks would there be to future workers?
- Will collapsing trees cause log-jams and flooding in the creek?
- What unintended consequences might there be on local wildlife?

By applying knowledge of the role (positive and negative impacts) that camphors play in such landscapes and weighing up the scale of the issue with available resources, Council staff undertook to treat as many camphor laurel

trees as possible by stem-injection method whilst staying within the protocol. Specifically;

- Stands of trees have been thinned to retain canopy connectivity until native vegetation replaces it;
- Trees near park edges, houses, streets or Asset Protection Zones that cannot be directionally-felled have been retained, and;
- Single, large trees that will require specialised services (crane/tower/climbers etc) have been retained.

For any of the aforementioned 'retained' trees, Council's goal is to undertake gradual removal as financial resources become available and/or as canopy gaps are replaced by native vegetation.

For more information on camphor laurel management or control, please contact PMHC Ecologist on 6581 8111

Peter Michael
PMHC Bush Regeneration Team
Coordinator



Native Plant: *Microlaena stipoides*

Many native grasses are being trialed as lawns, and Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) is one of the best. Good preparation and establishment are needed for it to successfully grow.

Weeping Grass grows in tufts with fine blades and turns into a soft, compact lawn.

Weeping Grass tolerates a range of conditions. It is drought and frost tolerant and grows well, even in deep shade. This native grass flowers in spring and autumn then sets seed. Weed control is important during the establishment stage. Don't mow until the new seed has dropped

because it will sprout and keep the lawn really dense creating its own weed control.

It is a matter of personal choice as to whether you mow Weeping Grass once it is

established. If you do, cut to a height of more than 37mm.

We have grown Weeping Grass at the nursery for a couple of years now and have planted it on our sites with great results. This plant is a valuable frog habitat, and I have seen it grow happily into a dense clump in the water flow of a creek-edge. It is now sprouting

everywhere on our sites so it is vital to be able to identify it from the invasive weed *Ehrharta erecta*.



Weed: *Ehrharta erecta*

Panic veldt grass or *Ehrharta erecta*

Origin: South Africa

This is a tufted grass that can grow up to 0.6m high. Will grow almost anywhere even in shady positions. It especially likes moist conditions.

This aggressive, perennial grass is almost constantly in seed and develops large populations very quickly. Because it is so prolific it dominates the ground layer in native vegetation, restricting the growth and regeneration of indigenous plants and eventually eliminating smaller native species. Panic veldtgrass (*Ehrharta erecta*) occurs in grassy woodlands, forests, heathland, riverbanks and coastal environments and often invades undisturbed natural vegetation. It grows vigorously in open areas and is also relatively tolerant of sheltered, moderately shaded conditions.

Leaves are soft and often a paler shade of green than surrounding grasses. The seed head (panicle) is usually erect and 6 to 20cm long. The

seed forms on this grass in a very short timeframe possibly in as little as a few weeks. To locate this grass it is easiest to find the seed heads above the grass and track back to the

removal is required. May be sprayed with glyphosate if not growing amongst natives.

These plants grow vigorously and seed prolifically, sometimes all year round, definitely one to watch for on our sites and treat carefully.



base of the plant for removal. The whole plant should be bagged and removed offsite. The roots are fine and easy to remove, however care should be taken as they have a tendency to break off above the roots or split in two. To eradicate this grass thorough and regular hand

by cleaning off tools and clothing before leaving a contaminated site, working from clean areas toward infested areas and avoiding movement through infested areas on the way to clean areas.

Warning :Do not underestimate the impact of this seemingly innocuous grass. Develop a strategy for limiting and reducing the infestation before rushing in. Exercise good weed hygiene

Site Profile: Merinda Reserve

Our neighbourhood Christmas party in the reserve was well attended. Six families from adjoining homes on Merinda Drive and Bundaleer Crescent joined in the fun. We began with a morning working bee where we mowed and removed weeds. Then it was on to Christmas celebrations during which we planted two koala food trees.

In spring this year the neighbourhood lost two

long-time residents – Alan Hill and John Cutcliffe. Their widows, Carole Hill and Kath Cutcliffe, were on hand to help plant memorial trees for their husbands. Robert Menham, Port Macquarie Koala Hospital habitat coordinator, generously donated a tallwood and eucalypt hybrid for this special occasion.

Lewis Kranitis (seen above planting a tree for his grandfather, Alan Hill) received a certificate

for the Landcare project site's Volunteer of the Year award.

Since Alan took ill, Lewis has maintained the access path and northern end on the reserve by mowing every two to three weeks. He has also helped Carole with other gardening tasks whenever asked.

Janet Watson



Above: Lewis Kranitis



Above: Janet Watson and Poppy Turnbull get busy as Kath Cutcliffe, Carole Hill, Jenna Turnbull and Simon Turnbull look on.

Kylie's Beach Bush Regeneration Camp

This year will mark the 35th year of the National Parks Association's bitou eradication project in Crowdy Bay National Park, south of Laurieton. A camp will be held from 14 – 19 April 2015 at the gorgeous spot of Kylie's Beach. Never been there? You don't know what you're missing!

We have the use of a fully equipped catering trailer with hot water urn, cooking and eating gear. That makes packing for the camp much easier for those who, like me, might find it a daunting task. Camping will be free and we will

provide a barbecue on the Saturday night. We will have a camp fire each night – come along and join in the fun! We are a very friendly bunch and will look after you.

We are more in need of help than ever, due to the effects of the 2013 bushfire and the explosion of seedlings it produced. This means there are additional sites to those that we normally clean up on our two-year rotation cycle. I need a small army of volunteers! The National Parks Association is extremely pleased

to have received a 25th Anniversary Landcare grant of \$20,000 to put towards the cost of this clean-up of the explosion of weed seedlings along Kyli's Beach.

If you intend to come please contact me on 6559 7134 so I can plan ahead. We hope to see you there and wish you the best for your various Landcare endeavours in 2015. What a difference we are all making!

Sue Baker

Taro Busting



Thriving example: The taro above clearly shows a corm with the laterals beginning to shoot.

Heads down bums up: Volunteers transform taro habitat into Landcare habitat.

Xanthosoma violaceum, Colocasia esculent

Taro is the generic term applied to a number of naturalised plants in the Araceae family, which have naturalised extensively throughout greater Port Macquarie. Controlling the plant is difficult, often hazardous and always time-consuming, as the favoured habitat for the plant to establish are our coastal minor and ephemeral (occasionally wet) fresh water creeks. The plant enters the waterway usually through the act of deliberate planting by well-meaning residents, but also through the actions of illegal dumping of green waste, and to a lesser extent by the extensive vegetative spread of the plant directly from private yards into public bushland. Because of its preference for wet areas, this greatly elevates the workplace safety dimension and usually dictates that long-term control will need to be factored in.

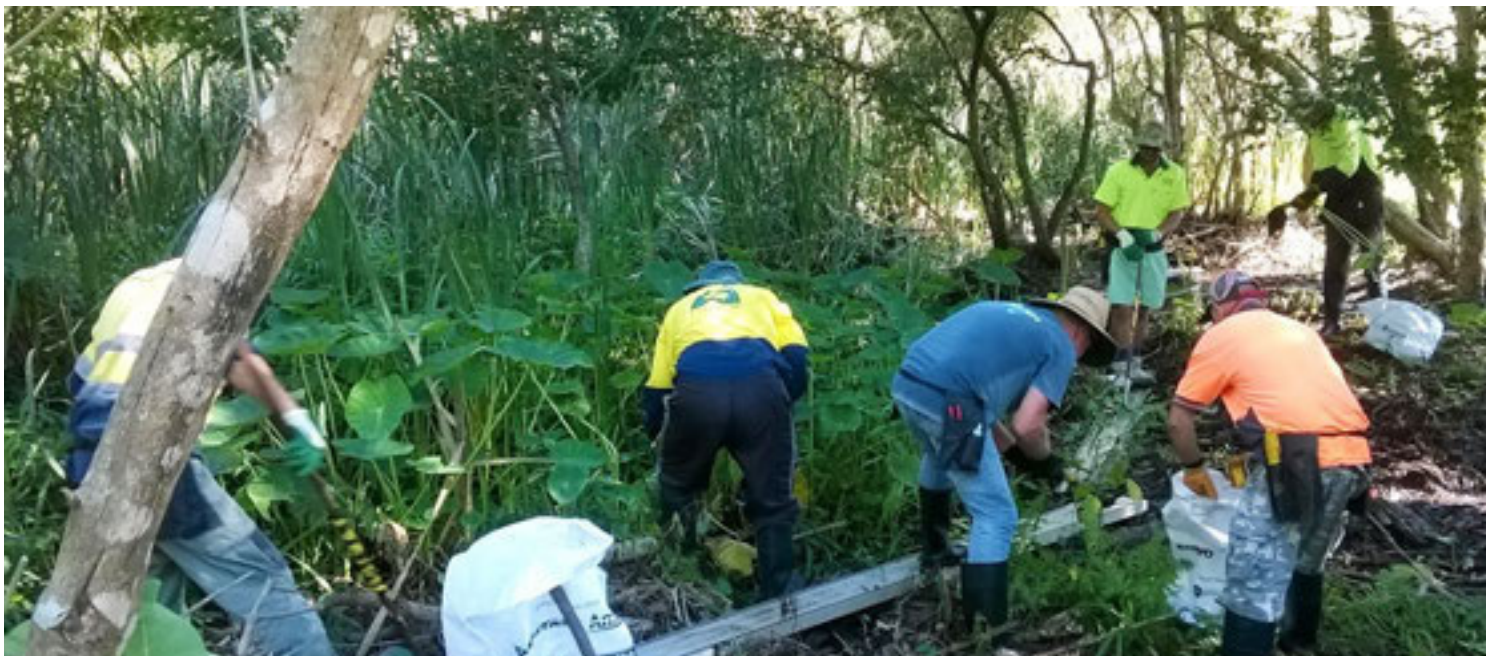
In February and March, I conducted two workshops with Port Macquarie Landcare Group on the technical control aspects of taro and managing the associated workplace safety risks while doing so. In both workshops, the participants were interested and hard-working and even a bit cheesed-off when I told them that the weed issue plaguing our bushland areas was usually the result of the actions (or inactions in many cases!) of households nearby.

The workshops covered the biology and ecology of taro (what it is and where it grows) as well as Work Health and Safety considerations when dealing with it eg irritable sap, using gumboots and waders, utilising builder's planks to access deep and/or boggy areas, manual lifting and so forth.

The workshop also covered the 'sizing up' of the site and the importance of having a work plan instead of just launching in. As many readers will attest, part of taros difficulty of control is removing the substantial network of underground stems which form new plants. My advice to the workshop group - and to other taro-controllers - was to start along the edges of the infestation and systematically work inward, all-the-while reducing the size of the patch. Beware the temptation to charge straight into the core of the infestation, as this will inevitably break the creeping underground stems into dozens (or hundreds) of fragments; each one likely to resprout as a new plant. The consequences of this will be years more work and greater likelihood of further spread. All in all, though, the workshops had achieved their goal: taro removed, workers muddied and everyone a little more aware of the need to do their bit to help out our natural heritage.

Peter Michael

PMHC Bush Regeneration Team Coordinator



World Wetlands Day recognised in Port Macquarie

WETLANDS play a vital role for both [humans and wildlife] in nature conservation. World Wetlands Day was celebrated in Port Macquarie in an attempt to raise awareness about the importance and value of wetlands around the country. Every [Tuesday], Port Macquarie's Landcare group rehabilitates degraded wetlands and other natural habitats at Blair Reserve.

Volunteer Roz Anderson said something as simple as weeding gave the natural vegetation the opportunity to regenerate. "By eradicating the weeds it allows the natural vegetation to hopefully take over and we regularly revisit most of our sites," she said.

Wetlands are an important part of the larger environment as they supply freshwater, food, building materials, provide flood control, groundwater recharge and climate change mitigation as well as nurturing biodiversity. Latest research reveals over 64 per cent of the world's wetlands have been destroyed since 1900.

Blair Reserve at Lighthouse Beach began in 2004 with the construction of a raised boardwalk through the wetland area - an important habitat pocket for Port Macquarie's native wildlife as well as

being home to three threatened species, 72 birds, five frogs and three mammals including the koala. Landcare president Estelle Gough said most of the wetland problems stemmed from human intervention, but the wetlands help themselves when "humans help them". "We have monitored water quality in some areas and there has been an increase in water-organisms after regeneration, which is the sounding-board for improvement," she said. "Anecdotal evidence indicates an increase in native wildlife in the wet areas."

Port Macquarie Landcare has planted over 15,000 plants which include more than 3000 koala food trees. The Lilypond Reserve on Koala Street is a headwater wetland or artificial wetland created by the road embankment which is home to 115 species of bird, water dragons, land mullets, tortoise, eels, native fish, koalas, ringtail possums, frogs and of course native plants and water lilies.

Landcare's \$250,000 Environmental Trust project will have a significant impact on Kooloonbung Creek Nature Reserve which contains mangrove wetland, salt marsh and swamp forest. "Hopefully the natural vegetation will take over after time," Ms Anderson said.

Paul Jobber, Port News, 6 February 2015



Doing their bit: Landcare volunteers Jeff Woodgate, Jo Ormsby and Roz Anderson at work during World Wetlands Day. Pic: Peter Gleeson

DATE / TIME	EVENT DETAILS	CONTACT
12 May Commencing 7pm	General Meeting Port City Bowling Club Owen St, Port Macquarie	janetslater1237@bigpond.com

Habitatler Team: Sam Dobner and Nikala Sim Email submissions to: habitatler@gmail.com