



May 2022 Member Muster Outcomes

6 pm Wednesday, 18th May 2021

Welcome and apologies

Chair, Richard Daugherty opened the meeting at 6.15 pm, welcomed everyone, acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land, and Anaiwan elders past, present and emerging.

Present – Stuart Austin, Peter Barkley, Beatrice Bashford, Holly Baxter, Kate Boyd, James Croft, Richard Daugherty, Jennifer Drewitt, Christine Duncan, Lesley Ellis, Chris Eveleigh, Struan Ferguson (staff), Brian Ferris, Ren Geers, Alex Hunter, Peter Metcalfe, Jill Moore-Kashima, Cheryl Mutch, Arleen Packer, Bill Perrottet, Sara Schmude, Ashley Silver, Susan Smith, Helen Stokes, Anne Tink, Suella Tritton, Helen Webb, Bruce Whan, Gordon Williams, Craig Zirkler.

Apologies - David Steller, Bryan Johnston, Steve Harvey, David Mailler, Peter McNeill, Tom Fisher, Brad Widders, Bev Stubberfield, Karen Zirkler.

Group financials

Members noted that group financials were made available to them if they wished to see them. Group reps are invited to contact the office at any time to enquire about their group's balance.

Around our Groups

Group Reps took 2-3 minutes to share what they've been doing since we last met.

Dumaresq Landcare Group – Peter Metcalfe

The group hasn't engaged in any activities in the last year. The area was impacted by the tornado which brought down many trees so we have a plentiful supply of firewood this year.

Save the Regent Honeyeater Group – Arleen Packer

The group hasn't met much due to Covid 19 in the last year.

New England Regent Honeyeater Roadshow - Kingstown

14 people attended the 1st event in the RHE roadshow on Tuesday 26th April which started with a bird identification walk at Gwydir Park TSR. It was pretty quiet for birds that morning and particularly honeyeaters due to the lack of flowering. I managed to get a couple of lovely images of a Brown Treecreeper who obliged me by sitting still in profile for a while.

At the Kingstown Hall, participants learnt about Regent Honeyeaters and their habitat from Dr Stephen Debus (UNE) including key threats and current conservation efforts.

Next, Dr Ahmad Barati's (UNE) presentation entitled, *Woodland bird diversity on TSRs on the Northern Tablelands: current populations, trends and potential threats* included:

- Insights and findings from the monitoring of 50 TSRs for woodland bird diversity from 2019 (pre-fires) through to the end of summer 2022
- Impacts of Noisy Miner control on woodland bird diversity and abundance

- Noisy Miner movement patterns through fragmented habitat on the NE Tablelands.

Finally, Candice Larkin (NSW Woodland Birds Officer Birdlife Australia Newcastle) shared the Birdlife team's efforts and experiences at the most recent and largest captive bred release in the Hunter Valley.

Tiger Pear Removal on the Bundarra Common

We did intend to do some Tiger Pear removal at the Bundarra Common during the last half of last year, however, despite our best efforts we have not had success in gaining permission to do this activity due to local politics surrounding use of the Common.

RHE Plantings at Kingstown Public School

With the Principal, Sharon Ryan's support and Ron Jackson, the groundsman, initiating and guiding the activity, RHE preferred tree species and shrubs have been planted by the children within the school grounds. Due to Covid 19 restrictions group members were not able to participate in this activity. Nevertheless, 9 students, teachers and Ron planted 60 trees and shrubs, including some mugga ironbark and yellow box, in the school grounds in early October and another 30 seedlings in November 2021. The Save the RHE group paid for the seedlings out of our funds.

Earlier this year, the Armidale Tree Group donated another 20 or so trees and shrubs for planting. I've heard from Ron that the kids really enjoyed doing the planting.

Thanks to Ron Jackson, the groundsman, who was instrumental in bring about this activity.

Friends of Angophora Reserve - Helen Stokes

With the wet season the grass is so tall that I'm certain it is roaring at night. During Covid 19 and the lock downs use of the area and the walking track became very popular for people looking for a gentle easy walk in a natural area.

Judith Street Walking Track - Helen Stokes

Also has also been very popular during Covid 19 for people requiring a steeper walk. ARC has installed bollards restricting vehicle access. Armidale Tree Group has been auguring holes due to the rocky nature of the soil and makes it much easier planting for the volunteers. A very busy in the last year.

Sustainable Living Armidale – Kate Boyd

The group covers many issues which won't be covered tonight.

Significant upcoming event is that SLA is hosting the 2022 Nature Conservation Council's Annual Conference. Aims of the Conference are to:

- Highlight the outstanding values of the Northern Tablelands environment and wider region
- Showcase environmentally sustainable initiatives
- Discuss threats and opportunities and workshop key actions needed;
- Facilitate information sharing, skills development and collaborative planning on key policy and campaign issues;
- Provide opportunities for networking between organisations, groups, and conference attendees;
- Strengthen working relationships between groups; and
- Inspire others to become more actively involved

Some topics that may be of interest:

- Panel - 'Nature, climate change and renewables: threats and opportunities' with Rose Lovelock Anaiwan Elder and Tim Wright, Regenerative farmer and holistic grazing manager among others.
- Workshop - Protecting and enhancing cultural and natural values on private landholdings with Callum Clayton-Dixon and Steve Widders, Newara Aboriginal Corporation and Des Anderson, Koala Conservation Officer, Southern New England Landcare (SNEL)
- Workshop - Protecting and enhancing natural and cultural values of National Parks, Reserves, Travelling Stock Routes and Crown Lands in the Northern Tablelands and wider region with regional ecologists: Phil Spark, Wendy Hawes and Dave Carr
- Workshop - Renewable Energy Zone Infrastructure
- Workshop - Ecological and Human Resilience with Jai Allison – Researcher – community resilience

Arding Landcare Group Inc – Brian Ferris

The group has planted 1500 plants, and installed seating and a firepit at Thomas Lagoon. 40 people attended the opening. Our last meeting in the Arding Hall which is for sale along with the church. Our last function is due to take place this weekend with the Arding Hall Fair including a firewood raffle. We had planned to knock down some pine trees, however, we've been delayed due to the wet weather. Membership is steady.

Soil Health Forum – Jill Moore-Kashima

No new members – wondering if we need a name change. Our focus is not just agriculture but general soil health. A new informal group has formed in our area whose focus is wildlife – an interest that has developed after the fires. There is a koala community out around Kingstown. The wet has made access difficult with maintaining pig traps and managing coolatai grass. We had a tornado which causes the loss of a fair few trees including a lot of Angophoras. We are interested in making indigenous connections however our area suffered a huge loss of people and culture during settlement.

Harnham Landcare Group – Beatrice Bashford

There is some planting planned however the wet conditions have contributed to delays. Kentucky School's old pine plantation was cut down and removed and 1600 native seedlings planted.

[An oak seed collection day held at Terrible Vale – Michael Taylor's property in April, Ed.]

Friends of Black Gully – Sara Schmude

Black Gully Festival planned for 12 November. Partnership with Goodyear and AURG – 'A Goodyear to plant a tree' with a planting in spring.

Malpas Catchment Group – Bill Perrottet

Held a couple of meetings including sailing, fishing and rowing clubs in relation to ARC - Water Quality Strategy. There has been more people at Council mtgs.

Action: Catchment Action Plan on the SNEL website.

Friends of Barry Munday Reserve – Peter Barkley via Alex Hunter

Tennis courts. UPC Grant will be done after the USC grant finishes. Planting in Spring. Noticeboard with sponsors names

Quiet with grants, awaiting grant outcomes. A couple of members are participation in the Natural capital side of things with the Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting Project (2020-2023) including 50 participants with NCA expert Sue Ogilvy of Latrobe University.

Coming opportunities

Members noted that all coming events hosted by SNElandcare and its groups are listed at <https://snelandcare.org.au/group-events.html>.

1. Landscape Rehydration Fundamentals with Mulloon Institute, being hosted by Bill Perrottet on his property, Urandangie, Guyra, Friday, 3rd June from 9am – 1pm.
2. Protecting New England Biodiversity - 'Eastlake', Field Day, Friday, 17 June

Guest speaker Stuart Austin

The Chair provided the following bio on our guest speaker for the night.

Stuart Austin is the General Manager of Wilmot Cattle Company.

He has an Associate Degree in Agribusiness, and has spent a number of years in northern Australia, as well as living and working overseas.

The Wilmot Cattle Company team take a regenerative approach across three properties Wilmot, Woodburn and Morocco – spanning 5,665-hectares in the New England region – to produce grass-fed beef and sequester soil carbon.

Stuart notes subtle changes in the landscape, each time he shifts cattle to fresh pasture on Wilmot, an 1854-hectare-property, near Ebor, where he and his family are based.

Native plants are emerging, and the pasture biomass and ground cover continue to flourish, following a shift in grazing management nine-years-ago.

Since switching to a soil health focus in 2012, soil carbon results have increased from 2.5 percent to 4.7 percent at Wilmot.

Stuart demonstrates the importance of farmers in restoring ecological function alongside building a profitable and robust business.

“Our role is to provide food and fibre for the world but also to preserve the environment we manage,” Stuart says.

“As farmers we manage so much of this landscape on a percentage basis and a full ecological system includes animals. If we manage those animals in a positive way that benefits the environment, then we can have a huge positive impact on the landscape, which is what’s required for us to have a really significant impact on the climate.”

Stuart, together with his wife, Trisha, are the dynamic duo of Wilmot Cattle Company.

Stuart is recognised as being the big picture strategic thinker, driven by the vision and goals of the business, Trish is the quiet achiever, a deep thinker focused on the detail.

Together they share a passion for the vision of Wilmot Cattle Company, and all that it speaks to in terms of land regeneration for the health of our planet and its people.

They consider living at Wilmot a privilege, and they don’t take for granted the opportunity to raise their family in such a beautiful environment. Together they contribute to the local community wherever possible.

Stuart and Wilmot Cattle Company have been a Corporate Member of SNEL since 2017. And we thank them for their support.

Q&A Session

Stuart fielded questions from members and friends.

AGM announcement

The AGM, and next Member Muster will be held together on Wednesday, 16th November 2022. The guest speaker was announced as Dr Rachel Lawrence, speaking on Natural Capital Accounting.

Conclusion

Richard Daugherty thanked Stuart for his educational and enlightening presentation. And also to his three guests for joining the gathering. Richard also thanked all Group Representatives for attending and participating.

This event is part of the NSW Landcare Support Program and funded by the Australian government.

Supper and networking

Catering was supplied by Michael's Café, Uralla.

Images

Below – images of members enjoying the evening, courtesy of Struan Ferguson.

