

Landchat

Landcare in the Southern New England, No. 112, January - March 2018



Southern
New England
Landcare

Our mission is to **lead, connect and enable** communities in the Armidale, Guyra, Uralla and Walcha areas to meet their sustainability goals.

Welcome

Welcome to Landchat 112. This edition, we showcase a huge range of achievements by our members and friends - from awards, to events and activities. Believe it or not, we were so busy in November and December that Landchat production had to take a back seat, so this edition covers 6 months of great work.

It seems to be the 'Season for Soil'! Check out the many fabulous events coming your way in the coming three months.

And remember, if you want regular updates or more information on coming events, please sign up to our regular eNews or check our events listing at www.snelandcare.org.au.

We welcome feedback and articles from members who wish to tell their story. We also welcome advertising from local businesses. Please contact us at mail@snelandcare.org.au or on 02 6772 9123.

Diary Dates

Small Grants for Groups close	19 Mar
Farming with AgroEcology David Hardwick.....	26 Apr
Regenerative Agriculture AHS & NEGS.....	10 Apr
School Ag Farm Tours Dr Maarten Stapper....	11 Apr
Science in the Pub Dr Maarten Stapper.....	11 Apr
Tag-along Farm Tours Dr Maarten Stapper	12 Apr
Soil/Human Nutrition Peter Norwood.....	16 May

Chris Duncan Awarded John Winter-Irving Bequest

Local Arding Landcare Group member, Chris Duncan, has been recognised as the 2017 recipient of the John-Winter Irving Bequest.

Chris Duncan and her husband David are working with Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and the Arding Landcare Group to conserve and manage Thomas Lagoon, an ecologically threatened upland wetland which is partly located on their property.

"We'd like to congratulate Chris for her outstanding work during the last two years to rally the local community together around Thomas Lagoon," said

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Below - Chris Duncan accepts the John Winter-Irving Bequest from the Board of Southern New England Landcare Ltd. L-R Steve Harvey, Jill Moore-Kashima, Bevely Stubberfield, Bill Perrottet, Chris Duncan, David Henderson, Bryan Johnston, and Peter Metcalfe.



NLP Small Community Grants Awarded

Coordinators Karen Zirkler and Sara Schmude assisted with four applications to the National Landcare Program Small Community Grants in September 2017, all of which were successful! Keep an eye on our fortnightly eNews for updates on events associated with these grants:

1. Harnham Landcare Group applied for funds to host Kinsey-Albrecht Soil Practitioner Derek Smith at the Kentucky Hall for a four-day soil health program called **Balance and Boom**. See article on this page.
2. Armidale Urban Rivercare Group applied for funds for their project **Adaptive Solutions to Prickly Problems in our Community**. See article on page 5.
3. Southern New England Landcare applied for funds to run a region-wide four day **Farming with Agroecology** course during April and May 2018 run by Soil Land Food's David Hardwick. See the advertisement on page 3.
4. BC² at Armidale High School applied for funds to host Dr Maarten Stapper for the **Regenerative Ag for Next Generation** event in local schools. Maarten has agreed to stay on for a few extra days so we are creating a whole week of "Season for Soil". See pages 6 and 9 for details.

Harnham Landcare Group's 'Balance & Boom'

On 28th February 2018, seventeen participants began a soil workshop series with Derek Smith at the Kentucky Hall hosted by Harnham Landcare Group.

The program aims to help participants formulate a long-term plan for soil management so in 5, 10 and 20 years, the farm is in better shape and more resilient to challenges.

Derek guides and mentors participants through this 4-day soil management program, where the first two days focus on how and why soils respond in certain ways to inputs, stock management and farming practises. Participants also explore options to improve outcomes in the short, medium and long term.

SNELandcare Coordinator, Karen Zirkler said, "On 16th May the program will engage animal nutritionist, Peter Norwood from Full Circle Nutrition in Victoria to be the guest speaker at the SNELandcare quarterly Member Muster."

"Peter will show how balanced, healthy soils equate to higher quality pastures and crops with

increased production," said Karen.

This event will be open to all members, friends and the general public and will be held at the Kentucky Hall. More information at www.snelandcare.org.au as soon as it's available.

On 31st May 2018, program participants will come together in a practical group session to study their own soil test results analysed using the world-renowned Albrecht analysis system.

This session will show exactly how recommendations are calculated, which management strategies will produce the desired result, how to mix and spread the recommended amendments, and time frames for re-testing.

"While it's probably too late to join the 17 participants for the full program, it's certainly not too late to register for the Member Muster with guest speaker Peter Norwood," said Karen.

"And if you are keen to do Derek's next program, contact us at the office and put your name down on the waiting list," she said.

Below – Participants take in the theory on Day 1 of the workshop series.



Farming with AGROECOLOGY

26-27 April & 17-18 May 2018 | 9:00-4:30

BEC Training Room, Hanna's Arcade, Beardy St Armidale & local farms

Want innovative, hands-on skills to manage your farm landscape for productivity, profit and the environment? Looking at developing or updating your whole farm plan?

- Talk soils, water, pastures, vegetation and animals; and explore how it all fits together as a landscape.
- Identify sustainability issues.
- Assess and map your farm's natural resources and landscape.
- Explore ecology-based, innovative approaches: planned grazing, diversity cropping, self-herding, stress-free stockmanship and ecological soil strategies.

Register by Monday 16th April
with Southern New England
Landcare 02 6772 9123 or
mail@snelandcare.org.au

Please have your Lot & DP information on-hand when registering.

DAVID HARDWICK - BRUCE MAYNARD - KRISTY YOUMAN

David Hardwick - agroecologist with 20+ years extension and agricultural experience, running workshops in soils, farming, grazing, and land management Australia-wide.

Bruce Maynard - innovative Narromine farmer who developed the No-Kill Cropping and Stress-Free Stockmanship approaches, and co-developed the Self-Herding approach with scientist Dean Revell.

Kristy Youman - farming systems extension specialist working with soils, grazing and land management around Australia.

Cost: \$350 or \$300 for a second person from the same enterprise - includes training, maps, morning tea and lunch.

RAA approved - 50% subsidy for eligible landholders.

This project is supported by NENW Landcare Network Chairs Inc. and Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme. Image courtesy of Benjamin Davies via Unsplash.



Southern
New England
Landcare



National
Landcare
Programme



Continued from page 1

Southern New England Landcare President, David Henderson.

Chris serves her community as secretary of the revived Arding Landcare Group where she initiates, organises and manages group events, raises group funds and helps the group grow, with new members from the Invergowrie area joining in.

Chris accesses resources and attends other regional events to develop her skills, promote Arding Landcare Group, and build the capacity of other group members. During the last year, she has participated in bird days, wetland events, a sustainable management of horses seminar, and a Trees on Small Farms workshop.

"One of the wonderful 'side-effects' of Chris' commitment has been the revival of Arding Landcare Group," said David.

"It's for all these great reasons that Southern New England Landcare sees Chris as a deserving recipient of the bequest, and we look forward to what she achieves with it," he said.

Since his passing, John Winter-Irving's family makes available an annual bequest to be used as a study grant in an activity of the recipient's choosing in order to continue John's unfailing commitment to Landcare.

Each year, the Board of Southern New England Landcare identifies someone who has shown skills, interest and commitment in either sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, rural development or leadership, and in the view of the Board has the potential for further development with the assistance of the bequest.

BOZO group planning community project

Bergen Op Zoom Ohio Landcare Group met in January 2018 at 'Marylands', hosted by John, Jill and Angus Burnell.

The group heard updates from Northern Tablelands LLS team member Phoebe Haslett, and Southern New England Landcare Coordinator Karen Zirkler, before discussing a community project they are planning near the Bergen Bridge on Thunderbolt's Way.

The meeting finished with a social barbecue on the verandah on a lovely summer's afternoon.

If your group would like an update from your local landcare coordinator, or perhaps a technical expert in a topic of your choice at your next social occasion, please contact Karen Zirkler (Rural groups) or Sara Schmude (Urban groups) on 02 6772 9123.

Malpas Catchment Group to Re-Form

During 2017, SNElandcare developed the Malpas Catchment Asset Protection Plan (MCAPP). Its development was led by Charlie Carruthers and Ruth Tremont, with input from key landholders in the Malpas catchment and financial assistance from Armidale Regional Council.

Southern New England Landcare is currently recruiting a new Malpas Catchment Coordinator, who will be working an average of 10 hours per week for at least the coming 18 months.

Their role will be to re-ignite the Malpas Catchment Group, work with stakeholders, and facilitate implementation of the MCAPP.

Watch this space to meet the new Coordinator when they come on board.



Grants for Groups

The Australian Government is investing up to \$5 million in small grants of between \$5,000 and \$50,000 to community, environment and other groups to deliver natural resource management activities that improve the quality of the local environment. The program aims to provide access to funding for projects that address the following National Landcare Program environment objective: to protect and conserve Australia's water, plants and animals and the ecosystems in which they live and interact, in partnership with local communities.

Applications close 19th March. More information at <http://www.nrm.gov.au/national-landcare-program/environment-small-grants>.

If you are in the Armidale, Guyra, Uralla, Walcha areas, and you would like assistance to apply, please call SNElandcare on 6772 9123.



Armidale Urban Rivercare Group Activities

By Bruce Whan

Armidale Urban Rivercare Group AURG are currently working on three separate projects. They are all linked by their proximity to each other and the common link of Dumaresq Creek:

1. We have finished two stages of a three-year Environmental Trust Grant that will rehabilitate Dumaresq Creek from Centennial Avenue to Canambe Street.
2. We are well under way with a Stronger Communities Fund Grant from Armidale Regional Council in partnership with Armidale Tree Group, which will rehabilitate Dumaresq Creek from Canambe Street to Cookes Road.
3. We are also progressing well with an NLP Community Grant entitled "Adaptive Solutions to Prickly Problems in our Community". This Grant enables us to install signage that identifies native species that thrive in very frosty areas close to the creek and also to tell a story about the problems of planting invasive and prolific exotic species such as Robinia, which has nasty thorns approximately 30 mm long. We are being assisted in this project by the Lions Clubs of Dumaresq and Duval. Dumaresq Lions are laying a concrete slab to house a hardwood picnic table and stools donated to AURG by Angus Adair and Rowena Childs. Duval Lions and Ducats are supplying gravel and a Bobcat to lay paths through a new planting area which showcases native plants from Armidale Tree Group that thrive in frosty areas.

*Below – AURG is having great success using river rock as a mulch and soil stabiliser. This planting has a combination of *Poa labillardierei* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana*. This particular site was planted in September 2017 and has had three floods over it and the rock has held everything in place.*



One of the pathways through our frost-tolerant exhibition plantings. Gravel will be laid in the next couple of weeks. New plants in the foreground are 4 species of callistemon. Behind that is Poa and Casuarina and behind that is Eucalyptus stellulata, Leptospermum polygalifolia, and Lomandra longifolia planted in November 2016. The E. stellulata is already over 1500 mm high.



SEASON FOR SOIL WITH DR MAARTEN STAPPER

Dr Maarten Stapper is a farming systems agronomist with 40 years' experience on four continents and a former senior scientist with CSIRO who was awarded a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology. Employing a holistic approach, he is an expert across a wide spectrum of agricultural areas in research, development and extension. He has found regenerative farming the most sustainable for producers, consumers and landscapes. Such farming improves soils with low external input and flexible management based on planning and observation. Maarten's focus as a private consultant is on regenerative farming systems that help farmers improve the profitability of their operations by harnessing the power of natural processes with practices creating healthy soils and improving quality of produce.



Tuesday 10 April - Regenerative Agriculture at AHS & NEGS

Maarten will focus on management for healthy soils as the foundation of regenerative farming and the science that underpins it; explaining how healthy soils grow nutrient-dense food plants that are resistant to diseases and pests. **SCHOOLS EVENT ONLY**



Wednesday 11 April - School Ag Farm Tours

Maarten will spend the day visiting three High School Agriculture Farms - talking with the teachers and students about the principles of regenerative agriculture and how to apply these to their school-based agricultural enterprises. **SCHOOLS EVENT ONLY**



Wednesday 11 April 7pm start - Science in the Pub

A fun get-together at the Wicklow Hotel. Maarten will join a panel of scientists in sharing their fascination for their favourite subjects - 'Soils and Ethnobotany'. Plenty of audience participation with beverages and food available. **PUBLIC EVENT**



Thursday 12 April - Tag-Along Farm Tours

Join Maarten in a tour of local farms that have a focus on building soils that support soil biodiversity, improve water infiltration and increase drought resistance. Tag along in your own vehicle and join in the walk/talks with some forward thinking folk! **LIMITED PLACES**



Media Opportunities

- ABC Country Hour Interview (TBC)
- In Situ Science Podcast Interview with Dr James O'Hanlon (UNE)

Further information - Sara Schmude | 0419 697 651 | sara.schmude@snelandcare.org.au

NLP Phase 2 Begins

Phase 2 of the National Landcare Program was announced in late 2017, with several opportunities for individuals, groups and our network to submit applications or take part in consortium tenders.

Your coordinators Karen Zirkler and Sara Schmude were very busy during November and December, helping to secure funds for our region. Here's what they were up to:

Smart Farm Small Grants

Karen assisted 8 local members to submit applications for projects on their own properties, to the combined value of approximately \$300,000. We expect successful applications to be announced by May/June 2018

Smart Farming Partnership Grants

Two major applications were submitted by Southern New England Landcare Ltd, which will provide opportunity for the whole community to participate should they be successful. Funds requested total \$1.2M, and with in-kind contributions, \$2.7M:

Paddocks of Plenty – from 2018 to 2023, the project will implement an on-farm paired-paddock program to investigate and demonstrate balancing soils using Kinsey-Albrecht soil balancing methods. Project partners Working With Nature (Derek Smith), Dr Judi Earl and Southern New England Landcare will also run a series of 5 pasture workshops and 6 field days and infographics and videos of the

sites involved.

High Country Biodiversity Project – from 2018 to 2023, the project will create 20 urban and rural biodiversity sites where five local citizen science groups actively participate to learn, share and add significantly to a regional biodiversity database via the Atlas of Living Australia. It will also install 8 Tree Sap monitors on rural properties, create seasonal calendars, a calendar of monitoring events and produce a short film called 'Frog Dreaming: Searching for Pobblebonk'.

Regional Bid Consortium

In addition, the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services (NTLLS) invited the four Landcare networks in our region (SNELandcare, Gwymac, Glenrac and GBLC) to partner in a consortium and put a bid to the Federal Government for the next five years of regional National Landcare Programme funding.

Through a series of workshops and meetings spanning nearly 3 months, a bid was prepared by a team of committed partners and submitted on 27th February 2018. The bid is requesting approximately \$2.4M into the region in the first of five years.

New RLF

We would like to welcome Anneka Ferguson as our new Regional Landcare Facilitator across the tablelands! Anneka has contributed significantly to the NLP2 regional bid and formed strong relationships with our landcare networks.



Vote of thanks

At the February 2018 board meeting of Southern New England Landcare Ltd, a motion was carried to express thanks to the NT LLS for partnering with Landcare in the NLP2 Regional Bid consortium. A letter was prepared and expressed appreciation as follows:

"It is with pleasure that we write to let you know that we very much appreciate being part of the consortium and a true partner in the process," it said.

"We congratulate the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services team on their exemplary efforts to work as a team to prepare the bid. It has been a huge effort, and your team has surpassed expectations in their professionalism and enthusiasm."

"We wish you and the consortium all the best in the bid process and look forward to working with you during NLP Phase 2."

Yours sincerely, Southern New England Landcare Ltd.

10th Frog Dreaming Celebrated Citizen Science

Highlights

- The Mt Duval Trek
- Stuart Harris – Citizen Science Guru
- Bush film night
- Maratus Docu-mystery
- Moonlight camping
- Steve & Jannifer's WTC & smoking ceremony
- Totem groups & storytelling
- Finding peacock spiders in mating season
- Our wonderful mentors and elders
- Involving 85 bright children from diverse backgrounds
- UNE Discovery Program
- The magic of Dave Waugh's storytelling
- TAS Year 6 raised \$267.70 to put towards tree planting.

The aim of the Frog Dreaming gathering is to provide an opportunity for young people to take an active role in developing an understanding and appreciation of local natural resource assets and issues using the power of storytelling to create a forum for our youth to connect with each other and ultimately

foster a connection to our country.

Our intentions are to:

- Link our school communities with local Landcare natural resource projects and NRM professional and environmental education specialists from UNE
- Build the capacity of our youth in the skills and knowledge of our local natural resource assets & issues
- Broaden the Landcare ethos into schools and associated communities
- Link all tiers of education in a celebration of biodiversity at "Newholme" field laboratory.

Outcomes include:

- 85 students from 8 schools: Minimbah, Waldorf, Bald Blair, NEGS, TAS, Armidale High School, Duval and O'Connor
- 700 natives planted with assistance from Dan & Tom from Welder's Dog, Paul from Armidale Tree Group and UNE Environment and Rural Science (nothing's too much trouble) technician Anthony McKinnon
- Biodiversity workshops included Peacock Spiders with Stuart Harris, Wildlife Ecology with Dr Karl Vernes (UNE), Biodiversity Game with Dr

Tom Barrett (OEH) and School of Ants with Dr Kirsti Abbott (UNE Discovery)

- Supporters included University New England Environment & Rural Science staff and students, Thalgarrah, Welders Dog, Armidale Tree Group, members of Rivercare, Northern Inland Regional Waste, Landcare NSW, NSW Environmental Trust and our wonderful teachers & group leaders.

Frog Dreaming is...where we dream about frogs. Oshen Noakes (student).

Frog Dreaming is...biodiversity in itself, it's the place where it is cool to be sciencey and nerdy which is pretty much my childhood dream. Ella Pringle (AHS mentor).

It's amazing to be involved in something like this... to come visit a beautiful place like this... to walk in and see kids running around enjoying themselves and experience freedom in nature, it's just fantastic. Stuart Harris (Maratus star & citizen science guru).

I think it is a fantastic initiative and I think when you look around at the kid's faces you see that rapture about nature... Louise Drielsma (Frog Dreaming Elder and AHS teacher).

Check out the 2017 Frog Dreaming video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLS4Jwit7J8&t=2s>

Left - Welcome to country at Mt Duval summit with Anaiwan Elder Steve Widders.





PLC Girls Increase Biodiversity During Community Week

This year was our 6th year hosting on average 12 PLC girls over the course of a week. The students are happy to get their hands dirty shovelling mulch, removing weeds and revegetating the biodiversity sites around Armidale.

"Many times over the week I was happy to hear the girls laughing and singing and getting about the job of mulching in such good spirits," said local landcarer Helen Webb, talking about the joys of working with the PLC girls.

Top left – PLC girls and Helen Webb with wheel burrows of weeds. Image courtesy of Sara Schmude.



The Agricultural Departments from Armidale High School & New England Girls School co-present

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

- When | 10.00am-2.30pm Tuesday 10th April
- Where | Armidale High School & New England Girls School
- More info | Landcare Coordinator Sara Schmude 0419 697 651
- SCHOOLS ONLY EVENT - Book your free tickets by 23rd MARCH at <https://www.slickytickets.com.au/64696>








Managing Soil Ecology with Dr Maarten Stapper

Maarten will focus on management for healthy soils as the foundation of regenerative farming and the science that underpins it; explaining how healthy soils grow nutrient dense food plants that are resistant to diseases and pests.

Paddock to Plate to Paddock

Hear all about the trials of creating a circular economy at the New England Girls School. Join Ag Teacher, Mr Mark Fisher and his passionate students on a tour to discover how this system works on a boarding school scale.

Chilean Needle Grass Trials at AHS

Join with Armidale High School Ag Teacher, Mrs Rebecca Smith and her Ag students to explore their experience trialing different methods to control/eradicate the highly invasive Chilean Needle Grass.

Composting with a Difference

With the 'War on Waste' becoming more an issue than ever before NEGS are taking on the challenge of minimising the school's environmental footprint by utilising kitchen, riding school and garden waste to create a rich compost that feeds back into the Ag Farm and school gardens. Presented by James Turnell, 'City to Soil' program manager for Armidale Regional Council

SoilKee Renovator Field Demonstration

Dorrigo farmer, Randal Braund will demonstrate his SoilKee Renovator and the benefits it has on aerating the soil with minimal pasture disturbance. The SoilKee Renovator simultaneously buries organic matter, top-dresses the pasture with soil and drills seed into the rows.






State Landcare Conference

Coordinators Karen Zirkler and Sara Schmude, along with Southern New England Landcare's current Chair, David Henderson, attended the State Landcare and Local Land Services Conference in Albury during October 2017.

The event was a great success and showcased how well Landcare and LLS are working together in the south of the State. The next state conference will be held in 2019.

2017 Black Gully Music Festival

The Black Gully Music Festival is a collaboration driven by the NENW Science Hub with membership primarily comprising of SNE Landcare, Armidale Tree Group, NERAM, UNE and Sustainable Living Armidale. Headed up by Dave Carr, the

group aims to bring awareness of the need to restore and conserve our natural and cultural heritage – be that the riparian zone at Black Gully or performance spaces for our local youth and artisans.

Different to past years where we focussed on plantings, biodiversity

walkabouts and displays, this year our focus was on a new crowd, the ones concerned about the volume of fashion waste going to landfill. And so, the 'Landcare not Landfill' campaign was born, kickstarted by our Friends of Black Gully group – a collective of adventurous folk keen on making a difference.

Together, in lead-up to the festival, we collaborated with schools and community to raise awareness and think of ways we could make a change. The festival was an opportunity to showcase just how easy it is to make that change.

"I didn't know how it would work but it did!" said Sara Schmude, Local Landcare Coordinator and member of Friends of Black Gully Group.

For the 'Slow Fashion Parade', students from five local high schools made new designs from old clothing and paraded them on the day – it's called upcycling and it's the all the rage!

There was also the 'Clothing Swap', a stall where customers were invited to bring along clothing items to swap with each other. There were only a couple boxes of clothes left over and they will go to refugee families arriving in Armidale over the coming months.

"We now have a whole new market talking about the need to reduce our carbon footprint," said Sara.

"It's reassuring to be involved in a community that embraces campaigns like this, it extends the Landcare ethos even further," she said.

Top – festival goers enjoying the slow fashion clothes swap and fashion parade.

Left – Sara Schmude swaps her Florentine suede jacket for some help from Sam Moffitt planting trees at Frog Dreaming.



Vale John Davidson World Wetlands Day at Racecourse Lagoon

14.11.1936 – 28.9.2017

John Duncan Randall Davidson (BRurSc) was respected by friends, colleagues and students for his dedication to rural practices.

As a member of National Parks Association (NPA) for some time he contributed greatly to the Armidale Branch by organising excursions in the New England Region. He loved the 'great outdoors' particularly our local national parks and was a strong advocate for their protection and management.

He often gave constructive advice to NPWS by following up field observations on the condition of tracks and facilities.

In later years, he spent more time on introducing international students to the bush by taking them on excursions.

He was enthusiastic about raising awareness of the values of our environment by creating brochures and in sharing the wonders of national parks with visitors to Armidale, through his considerable voluntary work at the Armidale Visitor Information Centre.

John is fondly remembered by the staff at Southern New England Landcare as someone who was a great supporter of the Balala-Brushgrove Landcare group.

In recent years, John would also provide a constant supply of fresh eggs to the office for anyone who wished to purchase them.

His ashes have been scattered and a plaque is to be erected in the Memorial Garden at Piddington's Crematorium, Armidale.

By Struan Ferguson

We arrived, a while after the rising sun, at Racecourse Lagoon; to observe the birdlife with Dr Steve Debus, to hear about the Wetlands of the New England Tablelands from Dr John Hunter, to learn about the frogs of Upland Wetlands and, and to celebrate over breakfast, World Wetlands Day, which occurs every year on the 2nd February.

The group saw the wetland birds in situ and witnessed a Peregrine Falcon and a Swamp Harrier attempting to catch breakfast.

We experienced the wetland close-up as we walked down through the different circular zones that form it and learned about the vegetation that occurs in each zone and its response to wet and dry periods, and we didn't even get our feet wet.

Des Andersen (Uralla Shire Council) spoke about the management of Racecourse Lagoon and Kate Boyd (Uralla Shire Council) explained the significance of the wetting and drying of the soil and how it contributes to the health of the upland wetland system.

We were shown the Frog ID App by Sophie Collins from University of New England, who talked about frogs she has met and heard during her studies.

Sandra Eady spoke about the

Sustainable Firewood Project being run by Uralla Z-Net, while Tim Wright spoke about the importance to agricultural production and sustainable firewood, of regenerating woodlands. It was a thoroughly enjoyable morning.

There are 58 Montane Wetlands on the Northern Tablelands and 20% of them are in reasonable condition.

They are recognised as an Endangered Ecological Community by both State and Federal governments.

Upland Wetlands occur at altitude (approx. 900 m or higher), in areas where there is a depression in the underlying rock substrate (in this case granite), and in their natural state are neither connected to a creek or stream, nor drain away, but receive their water from the surrounding catchment to form either a permanent or temporarily wetland.

The event was hosted by the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and supported by Southern New England Landcare, Arding Landcare Group and the above-mentioned participants.

Below – participants take a closer look at Racecourse Lagoon's zones.



Woodland Birds Show the Way for Habitat on Farms

Establishing habitat that allows threatened and declining woodland birds to forage, shelter and reproduce across landscapes used for primary production, was the focus of the Bush for Birds afternoon at Hariet Gully near Kelly's Plains recently.

Ruth Trémont, from Southern New England Landcare said, "A bus tour of local properties showcasing tree and shrub

plantings, gave participants opportunities to hear and see how individual landholders had tackled revegetation on their properties."

"Hariet Gully is central to a 20 km-wide gap in habitat that extends from Invergowrie in the west to Dangars Gorge in the east.

"Diverse tree and shrub plantings

that connect together and link creeks with hilltops and other vegetation are really important," she said.

Dr Andrew Huggett, an ornithologist from InSight Ecology attended the event as a guest presenter. Andrew explained that plantings 20-40 m wide and blocks of native trees and shrubs support more birds and a greater variety of bird species.

"We saw different species of birds and more individual birds in blocks of trees and shrubs and well-established planted linkages than in open paddocks and new plantings," he said.

"This reflects the wider range of food, roost and nest sites usually available to woodland birds in plantings of greater than 6-7 years old than in the new plantings and open paddocks.

"Blocks of older plantings such as along Stoneleigh Road and on the corner of Old Gostwyck and Hariet Gully Roads also provide important stepping stones for birds to move through this part of the Hariet Gully landscape, adding to the biodiversity value and overall ecosystem health of the area," said Andrew.



Top left – A Grey Fantail, recorded in 8 year-old revegetation in the Hariet Gully area, Kellys Plains. Image courtesy of InSight Ecology.

Left – Participants in the recent 'Bush for Birds' farm tour appreciate established habitat plantings and the birds around Hariet Gully, Kellys Plains. Image courtesy of SNElandcare.

A highlight of the event for one participant was witnessing other peoples' enterprises with their plantings and achievements.

Another appreciated the collaborative local approach to tackling the problem, while yet another reported changing their perception of their own enterprise because they can now just take time to listen and get to know the birds in their patch.

One participant enjoyed learning of the importance of small patches of vegetation and blocks rather than just 'fringing' windbreaks.

Andrew explained that blocks of vegetation provide much more protection from edge effects such as predation by Grey Butcherbird and Pied Currawong and competition from aggressive species such as Noisy Miner.

Low biodiversity and lower ecosystem health can be indicated by generalist birds such as Australian Magpie, Eastern Rosella, Grey Butcherbird, Noisy Miner and the introduced Common Starling.

More complex and larger established areas of native trees and shrubs are used by birds including Rufous Whistler, Grey Fantail, Scarlet Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Striated Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, the threatened Diamond Firetail and, in time, Eastern Yellow Robin.

Birds are great indicators of how healthy the ecosystems of an area actually are, and, as one participant said, even young plantings attract birds!

The Bush for Birds event was part of a project that seeks to protect and re-connect habitat for woodland birds and other fauna in a highly fragmented landscape. The afternoon was run by Southern New England Landcare, with funding support from the NSW Environmental Trust and input from local landholders.

Trees on Small Farms Project Update

The Trees on Small Farms project is well underway with unprecedented interest and participation!

SNELandcare Coordinator, Karen Zirkler said, "Thirty-four participants attended the planning workshop in September 2017, where they heard from guest speakers, and planned their tree projects on maps kindly provided by the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services."

"Some were new to the district, and many had never undertaken any landcare or tree planting projects before," said Karen.

"Soon after this, we received 43 applications, which were assessed in mid-October, with 26 of those able to be funded before the money

ran out," said Karen.

Site visits were then conducted, mostly by SNELandcare's Agroforestry Peer Group Mentor team, to help participants finalise their plans and sign their Landholder Management Agreements.

On-ground works are now underway on many of the participants properties. The project is due to be completed in April 2019.

This project is funded through the National Landcare Program with support from the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.



Local Land Services
Northern Tablelands



Below - There was so much interest in the project that the Arding Hall was almost too small!



PEER GROUP MENTORING SERVICE FOR AGROFORESTRY



FARMER TO FARMER EXTENSION

FOR FARMERS
MANAGING TREES
FOR REASONS THAT
MATTER TO THEM!



WHO ARE THE MENTORS?

- LOCAL EXPERIENCED TREE GROWERS
- MASTER TREEGROWER PROGRAM GRADUATES
- TRAINED MENTORS



WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED?

- FARM VISITS SUPPORT YOUR IDEAS & GOALS
- TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND INFORMATION
- SITE REPORTS



WHAT TOPICS CAN BE COVERED?

- Shade and shelter
- Farm aesthetics
- Natives or exotics
- Tree establishment
- Habitat
- Farm tree planning
- Native forest management
- Species identification
- Trees for timber

HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

Most significant change technique tells the story...

The suggestions and guidance of what species to try, planting locations, when and in what season to plant, as well as planting designs have all been of tremendous value.

Helga Nink & David Menzies, Castletbrook, Urella

The mentors passed on valuable insights about the diversity in my forest and helped me see it as a whole ecosystem. They also provided useful practical tips which filled out much of my own opinions on where to go with its management.

Rob Laurie, Brigadono, Nowendoc.



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A project of the New England Agri-Woodland Network (NEAWN), a sub-group of Southern New England Landcare Ltd. This project is supported with funding from the Australian Government, and in-kind contributions from the Australian Agroforestry Foundation.



Thumbs up for Agroforestry Peer Group Mentoring

To evaluate our current Agroforestry Peer Group Mentoring (PGM) Project which has been funded by the National Landcare Programme, SNE Landcare has been interviewing participants and recording their stories. Over the next several Landchats we plan to share these stories to illustrate the benefit of the PGM network we have developed locally.

In this edition, Fiona Smith shares her story. Fiona lives with husband Derek on their farm "Kenilworth" at Guyra and she was interviewed by Karen Zirkler on 26th February 2018.

Fiona's Story

After I did the Master Tree Grower Program in 2016, I took the opportunity to have the Agroforestry Peer Group Mentors come out because I wanted to get a more comprehensive idea of different ways of using trees in the landscape. I already had tree lots fenced off, but I felt it could be done better: my post tree planting care was not good enough. We hadn't done any tree planting on a large scale for some years and I needed motivation and ideas.

During a visit from the mentors, we went over the property plan, and did a bit of driving and walking around the farm. We talked about what sort of trees would be best for my situation – it all depended on the prevailing winds, terrain, frost etc. This was

really helpful because you can read all you like but it comes to a point where you need to get really focussed and start doing it. I got a site report at a second meeting with Garry. It was very good because it formalised a focus for me.

As a result, I now have better tree identification skills, I have a better understanding of where I should put certain trees and how valuable native grasslands are on our farm. I now know how important it is to leave dead remnant vegetation where it is for other critters. And I understand the importance of using chemicals in a spot spray regime to give the trees a good start – that was a resistance of mine. I also learnt to appreciate that you don't have to do a very big area – even pockets of dense understorey for the woodland birds. In my mind, I can do little bits and make a difference. And never underestimate the value of your house yard! This is probably where you have water and you can attend to these plants and create a haven for your birds, insects and animals. This will keep them going until the rains come or the Spring comes – it is really important.

I'm an aesthetics person and it's important that the native animals and livestock have a comfortable existence – that's really important. And it's also important to create a beautiful environment to work in. Every time it rains I'll go and plant whatever I can in the time I have, but if I plant it, I have to protect it, because I have the layer hens and the cattle. Protecting it is

my slowest thing and time is a big factor – the trees are cheap really – allocating time and making sure it gets done is the hardest.

I've got about 50-60 trees being propagated at any one time. Last night, it's 2.30am and it's raining, and my first thought is, "Where am I going to put those trees this week?"



Farm Tree Advisory Service

Would you like some help designing or establishing trees and shrubs for your property?

Don't know where to start?
What to plant? How to do it?

We can provide you with very experienced landholders and technical experts to assist you with your ideas and goals.

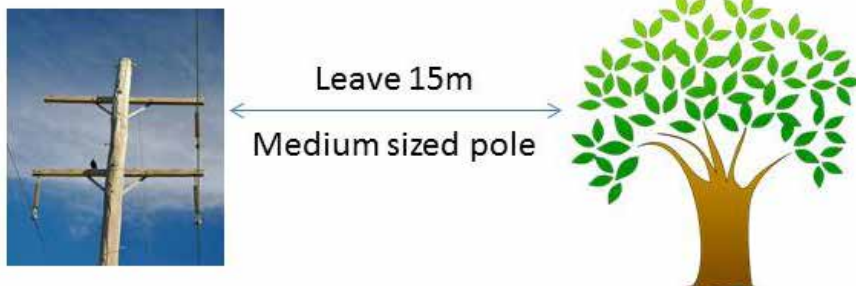
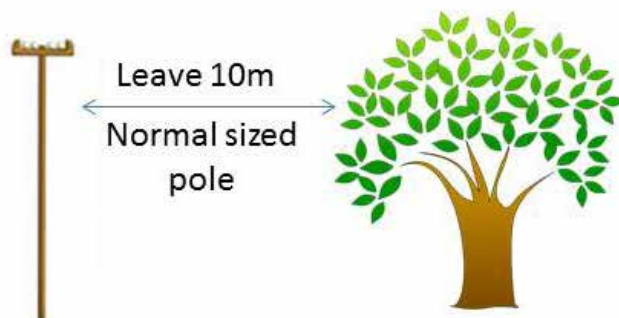
This service is available for a small fee as the project is heavily subsidised by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.



Beware power poles when planting!

Southern New England Landcare has had a friendly reminder from Essential Energy recently, regarding the distances required between landcare plantings and power lines. We have put together this diagram to illustrate to our members as a reminder! Note the distances required for different types of poles.

Plantings near power poles must leave adequate space! Measure from the edge of the power line to the maximum grow point of the tree when it is mature.



Seeding the Future:

Local Land Services Seed Bank stocks up

It seems remarkable something as small as a seed has the capacity to renew and repair our native ecosystems.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services (LLS) has just completed its fourth year of community seed collecting workshops, funded by NSW Catchment Action, to increase community education and skillsets in the collection, preservation and propagation of native seeds.

Ivan Lackay, Northern Tablelands LLS Project Officer recently delivered two workshops in partnership with Stringybark Ecological Services. The sessions are designed to enable landholders to collect, process, store and grow the seeds endemic to their local area for use on their own properties, and for the Northern Tablelands LLS Seed Bank.

The Seed Bank was born in 2012 to supply the region with viable seed of local provenance for revegetation and restorative activities.

Ivan said 25 participants, including members of the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Reference Advisory Group, completed the workshops over two sessions.

The first two-day workshop discussed plant and tree species, seed identification and best-practice collection techniques in the field. Participants were given homework: to explore their own landscapes and collect seed.

The sessions assist people to identify, clean, process and store their seed, and learn the recommended procedures for each species to plant to ensure successful germination.

“Once they’ve completed the course, they become accredited seed collectors. We can rely on them to collect and deliver quality seed within genetic guidelines and cover key principles such as plant identification, genetic diversity, and matching provenance based on environmental factors,” Ivan said.

“We’ve also been working with Aboriginal land management organisations to give Aboriginal people the opportunity to participate in this industry and get back on Country. It was good to see like-minded people gaining skills and putting them into practice at home.”

Ivan explained that the knowledge and skills required for seed collecting are of growing importance, not only for landholders wanting to revegetate their own land, but

for the region as a whole.

“This sort of species insurance is essential to the longevity of important species on the Northern Tablelands”, Ivan said.

“We can actually purchase seed from the participants, so we’re completing a cycle. We’re training people, empowering them, and then helping them generate income.”

For more information about the Seed Collection workshops, the Northern Tablelands LLS Seed Bank, and upcoming opportunities contact Northern Tablelands LLS Project Officer Ivan Lackay on 0455 031 598.

Below - Eucalyptus seed after sieving. Image courtesy NT LLS.



St John's Wort : Time to Take Control

By New England Weeds Authority

St John's Wort has spread across Eastern Australia and is now considered one of our worst widespread weeds.

It is highly suited to areas receiving more than 600 mm annual rainfall and above 500 m altitude. This makes the New England perfect habitat for St John's Wort and we have a number of areas that are heavily infested. With some good rain this season the Wort is now in full flower and immediate control will help reduce the seed bank in future years.

It's believed that St John's Wort was brought to Australia in the late 1800's, either as a garden or medicinal plant.

The main problem with St John's Wort is that it is toxic. It produces a compound called hypericin, which causes photosensitisation in animals that graze on it. Basically, these animals become allergic to sunshine and the skin damage caused by hypericin poisoning is a horrible thing to see. It also causes loss of condition and in some cases

death. Generally, stock will only eat St John's Wort when other feed is scarce.

St John's Wort produces distinctive 5 petaled yellow flowers, about 20 mm across, between October and January. New plants do not flower in the first year.

The leaves are a very distinctive identifier as they have small perforations, or clear dots, within the leaf that can be clearly seen when held up to the light. It is these oil glands that hold the hypericin.

St John's Wort produces a sticky seed that will cling to animals, humans and vehicles. This is the key way that St John's Wort is spread. A single plant can produce up to 30,000 seeds per year. Additionally, seeds can remain viable for up to 12 years. This highlights the need to be vigilant when managing Wort on your property, allowing one plant to set seed can ensure 12 more years of ongoing work.

The roots of St John's Wort sucker and grow from fragments; as a result, cultivation and disturbance can also spread the plant.

Land managers must mitigate the risk of introducing St John's Wort to their land and it is an offense under the Biosecurity Act 2015 to knowingly distribute the weed, so take care with moving stock out of infested areas.

Management techniques include burning, physical removal and herbicides. Careful pasture management can increase competition from desirable species. Heavy grazing in spring when the new flowering stems appear can significantly reduce growth and in turn reduce hypericin production.

Given the long seed life of St John's Wort a good management plan will involve a number of approaches over a number of years.

For help with weed identification and management please contact us on 6770 3602, call into our office at 129 Rusden St Armidale or visit www.newa.com.au.

Below left - St John's Wort Flower.

Below - St John's Wort leaf showing the spotty oil glands. Images courtesy New England Weeds Authority.



Help Stop the Spread of Pest Fish Tilapia

The Murray Darling Basin is under threat from invasion by the pest fish Tilapia.

Landholders, fishers and river users are encouraged to be on the lookout for Tilapia in the Northern Tablelands region. Tilapia are widespread in many coastal catchments of QLD and parts of northern NSW and are at risk of spreading rapidly.

Independent Fisheries Scientist Charlie Carruthers said, "If Tilapia make their way into a flowing river or creek in the Murray-Darling Basin it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible to eradicate them".

"Unfortunately, most new Tilapia introductions are thought to be caused by people moving them between waterways" added Mr. Carruthers.

Tilapia impact native fish through competition for habitat and food, aggressive behaviour, reducing water quality, disturbing aquatic vegetation and potentially spreading diseases.

"The Northern Tablelands region features some spectacular waterways, numerous rare species of fish and great recreational fishing. If Tilapia become established in the region, native fish, local communities that rely on tourism and stock and domestic water users may all be affected" said Mr. Carruthers.

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services Manager Biosecurity & Emergency Services, Melissa McLeod said, "Northern Tablelands Local Land Services is considering opportunities for pest fish management as part of the Northern Tablelands Regional Pest Animal Plan, however the

best form of pest fish control is prevention. Possessing, selling and moving live Tilapia is illegal and heavy penalties apply. The more people that understand the importance of these rules and know how to correctly identify and report Tilapia to the appropriate authorities, the better."

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services is working with landholders and the community to reverse the decline of native fish through river and wetland rehabilitation programs.

To help stop the spread of Tilapia:

- Don't throw caught Tilapia back into a waterway, it's illegal – kill the fish humanely, take a photo and either bury them or put them in a bin.
- Don't use Tilapia as bait (dead or alive).
- Don't stock dams or ponds with Tilapia – stock native local fish instead.

- Learn how to correctly identify Tilapia by visiting <https://goo.gl/Qj7cfv>.
- Report Tilapia catches and sightings as soon as possible.

To report Tilapia sightings or catches, illegal movement or stocking in NSW, call your local Fisheries Office, NSW DPI Aquatic Pest Hotline (02) 4916 3877 (24 hour hotline), email aquatic.pests@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au.

In any case of uncertainty about identification of a fish that you have caught, take a good quality photo and call the Aquatic Pest Hotline immediately for confirmation.

The Keep Tilapia Out project is supported through funding from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

Below - Tilapia have pale olive to silver-grey bodies, with a long continuous dorsal (top) fin that ends in a sharp point, and can grow to more than 36 cm. Image courtesy of A. Norris, Qld DAF.



If undeliverable return to Southern New England Landcare,
Suite 10, 128 Beardy Street, PO Box 85, Armidale 2350.
Tel 02 6772 9123, mail@snelandcare.org.au.

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Landchat presents a forum for the expression of a range of opinions. While every effort is made to publish accurate information, Southern New England Landcare and its employees do not accept responsibility for statements made and opinions expressed in this newsletter.



Need Insurance

for your farm, equipment, car or household?

We recommend Wesfarmers Federation Insurance, proud supporters of Landcare.

Mention you are a member of Southern New England Landcare, and 3% of the value of your premium is returned to SNElandcare to support projects! Contact David de Ferranti on 1300 934934 or 0412 328 911.



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