

# Landchat

Landcare in the Southern New England, No. 106, October - December 2015



Southern  
New England  
**Landcare**

Our **MISSION** is to lead, connect and enable our communities to achieve their sustainability goals.

Contact **US** by phone 02 6772 9123 or  
email [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au)

## Diary Dates

Armidale Urban Rivercare Group Xmas Party ..13 Dec

SNELCC Christmas Drinks.....16 Dec

Stock N Chat events.....Jan-Jun 2016

2016 Landcare Adventure.....4-5 May 2016

## SNELCC CHRISTMAS DRINKS INVITATION

It's that time of year again and Southern New England Landcare would like to wish all its members, sponsors and partners a Merry Christmas, fun and safe holiday period and a prosperous New Year!

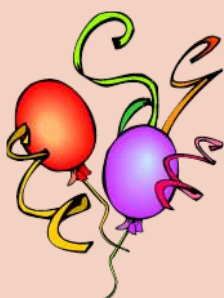
Once again we invite you all to our Christmas Drinks social gathering on the Balcony where we will present the 2015 John Winter Irving Bequest and 2015 Coordinator's Choice Award.

Celebrating persistence, tenacity and vision.

Anticipating positivity, action and vitality.

Recognising the efforts of all who have contributed.

4pm Wed 16th December 2015,  
SNELCC Office and Balcony,  
119 Beardsley Street Armidale.  
RSVP by Friday 11th December  
for catering on 6772 9123 or  
[mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au).



## SNEL partners with The Ascent Group to deliver Targeted Community Care Drought Assistance Initiative

Southern New England Landcare has been sponsored by The Ascent Group to provide the Targeted Community Care Drought Assistance Initiative in our region.

The initiative aims to increase access to community-based mental health services, including one-to-one counselling, local community engagement activities and events to increase awareness of mental health issues and link people to appropriate supports and services in drought-affected communities. In effect, Southern New England Landcare is providing an information and referral service to help people access support providers.

### Stock N Chat

Southern New England Landcare will also provide eight Stock N Chat events at the Armidale and Guyra sale yards between January and June 2016. Community members will find a 'drop-in' point offering seasonally relevant information on pest animals, weeds, stock parasites and farm safety for example, provided by local advisers. A landcare coordinator will be on hand to assist. Those who drop in and have a chat will receive a canteen voucher for use on the day!

Details are yet to be confirmed but watch local papers for advertising of dates and topics.



## CHRISTMAS BREAK OFFICE CLOSURE

The SNELCC office will be closed from 3pm Thursday 17th December 2015 until 9am Tuesday 12th January 2016. The SNELCC Team wishes everyone a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to working with you in 2016.

# Frog Dreaming – People, Place, Storytelling

## A 2-day inspirational journey into sustainable land management

*by Sara Schmude*

The 8th Frog Dreaming conference welcomed 98 students and mentors from Kentucky, Waldorf, Kingstown, Drummond, Minimbah, NEGS and Armidale High schools.

A special event to celebrate our 4th year at 'The Hill' with the Taylor family - the property, a mixed superfine wool/agroforestry enterprise, presented a colourful spring backdrop for all to delight in and wonder about biodiversity and the role it plays in sustainable land management.

There were many highlights: the Little Landcarer's project demo, Farm Diversity at The Hill with Lydie Taylor, and the lunchbox waste audit with Drummond and Minimbah's worm farm composting system.

Another highlight was the Group Action Planning where all the school groups came up with inspiring project ideas to use in their community.

But wait there's more -

- outstanding tribal storytelling led by our student mentors and their gurus
- the biggest bonfire ever and the Waldorf fire twirling
- spotlighting and those ubiquitous wildlife sightings
- Bec Smith beating the earth drum beat
- the fun had by all camping by the light of the moon
- Day 2 starting with Lydie Taylor's Biodiversity walkabout through the Frog Forest planting

- Insect hotels with Guru Steve McAlpin
- Wildlife at 'The Hill' with NTLLS Marty Dillon
- Fighting Ferals with Tim Collins
- Frog totems with Matt and his carpet python and
- the great native revegetation project with Michael Taylor, who also shared with us his amazing family property/ playground to explore, create, wonder at and have fun in.

This year our returning mentors were awesome - they played an active and keen part in creating meaningful connections with and between the students - thank you Georgie, Zia, Fitz, Grace, Siobhan, Aziz, Emily, Bonnie, Sam, Phoebe, Francesca, Rhoie, Georgina and Harriet — you are all beautiful people.

To view more pictures of the event, visit [www.facebook.com/pages/Frog-Dreaming/345505065515650?ref=hl](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Frog-Dreaming/345505065515650?ref=hl)

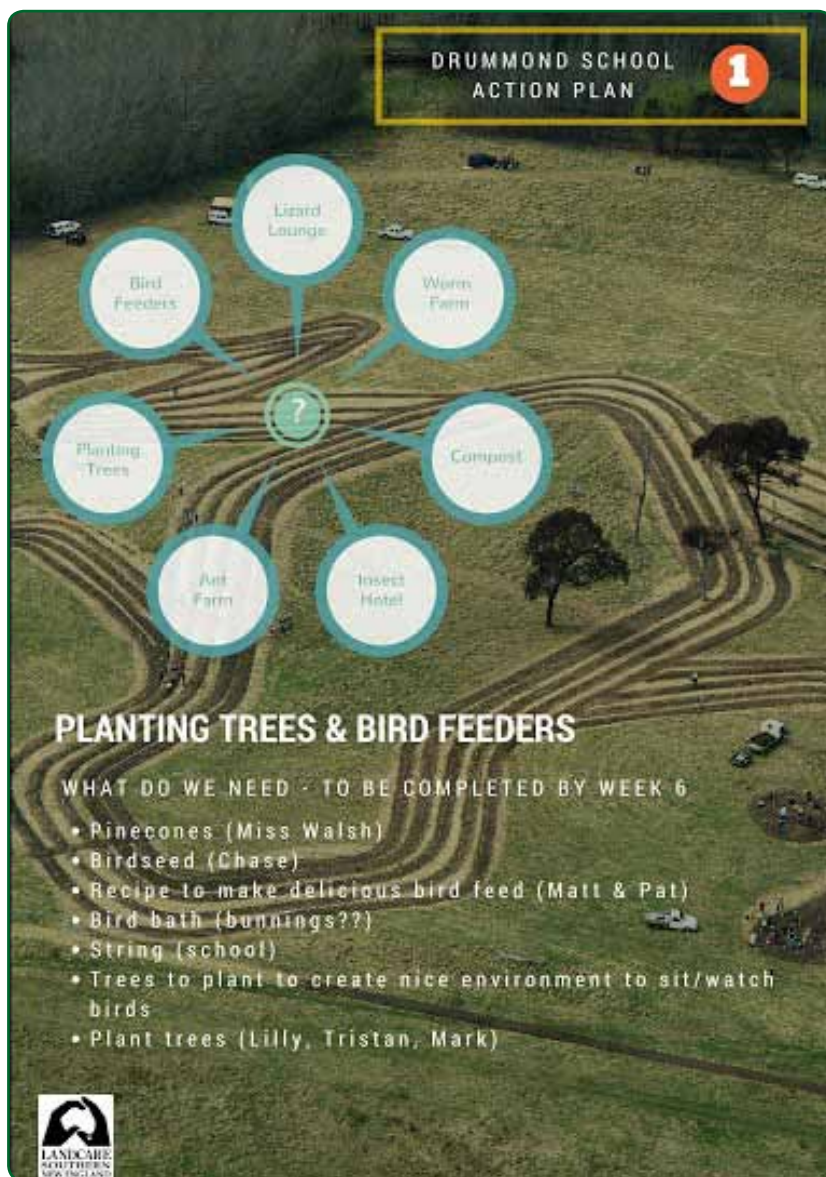
A special mention and a big thank you goes to the Gurus, the same inspiring people who volunteer their time year after year. They are Matt McKenzie (Thalgarrah), Tim Collins (Armidale Tree Group), Carina Johnson (NT LLS), Ruth Tremont (SNEL), Helen Schwarz (Herbert Park Landcare), Steve McAlpin (the Universe), and Bec Smith (AHS Ag teacher and Frog founder). And to Tom Livanos and Kristy Youman for all your help on the day.

And lastly to our valued sponsors - thank you for your on-going support, especially Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and Northern Inland Regional Waste.

**Frog Dreaming will be held from  
20-21 October in 2016.**







Above - This year, students learnt how to 'action plan' as a group and came up with a wonderful array of projects and activities they will carry out in their school.

## It takes a village to raise a child

The expression 'It takes a village to raise a child' comes to life at Frog Dreaming - it takes a community to embrace children and guide them to the rich, full life that is possible for them. This was evident in the passion the adult leaders brought to the event, both in the supportive role of developing leadership in the mentors, which the event provides; and in inspiring the younger students to work together in thinking smartly about caring for the environment, facing challenges, being respectful and using common sense to manage behaviour.

Joanne Lowe  
Waldorf School teacher



**Local Land Services**  
Northern Tablelands



# City to Soil: if it grows, grows or grazes, we compost it!

It was a buzz at the City to Soil Composting Workshop on Tuesday 24th November.

Resource Recovery Australia's Gerry Gillespie and David Hardwick from Soil Land Food provided information on the what, why and how of composting, examples of farmers using compost at a farm scale, and what you can do in your own back yard in town.

Participants were shown how to make their own inoculant and given a variety of recipes. James Turnell and Megan Cone provided a tour of the City to Soil Project at the Armidale Waste Transfer centre.



*James Turnell from Armidale Dumaresq Council demonstrates the method for applying the inoculant to the compost piles.*



*Participants at the workshop inspect the various stages of the composting process at the Armidale Recycling Centre.*



*Participants are impressed with the high quality compost made by the City to Soil program in Armidale.*

Participants saw on a larger scale how the inoculant has been successfully used at the City to Soil site with 100 ml required for 10 m<sup>3</sup> of green waste.

Two grades of compost are produced at the site and available to anyone in the Southern New England region. Due to high demand for the compost customers are limited to one trailer load each (1m<sup>3</sup>). Grade A and B compost are available at \$36/m<sup>3</sup> and \$25/m<sup>3</sup> respectively.

Due to the level of interest, Southern New England Landcare is considering hosting another composting field day, perhaps with a more hands-on focus so participants can make their own (small or large scale) composting systems at home. If you would like to register your interest, please contact us on 6772 9123 or [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au).

## NTLLS Small Community Grants announced

Five projects were successful in the recent round of Northern Tablelands LLS Small Community Grants. Congratulations to the following groups and projects. Watch out for how you can become involved:

1. Frog Dreaming kids teaching kids conference.
2. Horses for Courses workshop/field day with keynote speaker – targeting horse owners.
3. Native revegetation for woodland birds field trips.
4. Armidale Urban Rivercare Community engagement and planning.
5. Uralla Rivercare Group's River plan, today, tomorrow and in the future.





# Groups come alive with action planning!

Local landcare groups are finding new inspiration as a result of getting together and doing some action planning. Dumaresq Landcare group are planning some revegetation works and have applied for funds from NT LLS. BOZO Landcare group have met for the first time in nine years, electing a new executive who are all under 40 years of age! Pastures and pests are big on their agenda, among other things.

If your group would like a revival boost, call us on 6772 9123 or [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au) and we can help to get you started. A Landcare Coordinator is available to attend your group meeting to facilitate a session that meets your needs. Why not make it a Christmas gathering or a New Year's resolution?

This project is supported by the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services through funding from the NSW Government's Catchment Action NSW and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.



*BOZO Landcare Group came together for the first time in many years to discuss the future of the group. They have a new under 40's executive and some great ideas for the coming year.*

## Bushcare Report *By Kate Boyd*

During 2015, some 26 different individuals have been involved contributing at least 507 volunteer hours to bushcaring in the city of Armidale. Twenty three people helped in Snow Gum Reserve, and nine in Drummond Park with some individuals working in both reserves.

Some 292 volunteer hours were contributed to regenerating Drummond Park bushland, mostly by Celia Smith, Kathy King, Jenni Ford, Carole Fullalove and myself – almost every Friday morning between two and five

of us can be found chatting as we weed for one to four hours. Occasionally we attract one or a few extra helpers.

At least 215 hours were recorded for Snow Gums Reserve where Andrew Lawson, Chris Nadolny, Tom Fisher and his boys, Kathy King and I were the most regular workers, plus Celia, Jenni and Carole for a few Fridays stopping broom seeding.

SNELCC would like to say “well done” to our local volunteers who contribute so much to the aesthetics and environmental health of our city [Ed].

# Sharing is Caring

At the recent SNECC meeting in Uralla, groups who attended shared what they've been up to. This is a valuable activity that enables 'cross-fertilisation' of ideas, lots of discussion and even new innovations.

- **Uralla Rivercare** - *Bev Stubberfield* - Successful with NTLLS grant. No contract so far. Planting in about 2 weeks.
- **Balala-Brushgrove** - *Tim Wright* - Fox baiting program went well with increase in participants in the region and successful results. Need to follow up for people doing fox baiting to get a response from and to advertise/promote 2016 fox baiting program for following year. Hoping to revitalise area, new people coming into the area, having a group get together every month called Grub Fest to have a chat. From this getting group active again.
- **Dumaresq** - *Peter Metcalfe* - Had a meeting with Ruth Tremont - about 10 people got together. 2 group projects for LLS funding. One successful - 7 landholders doing some remnant fencing & planting. Things going ahead. Working on a corridor from Dumaresq Dam to Dumaresq Railway Station. Feedback on Agroforestry PGM program with 4 farm visits from Nowendoc to Kingstown. Very effective program communicating with landholders.
- **Armidale Urban Rivercare** - *Bryan Johnston & Bruce Whan* - Have working bees 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month. Planting trees this Nov. Oct & Sept working bees. All up have planted 1000 trees & shrubs. 11<sup>th</sup> Oct planting done in conjunction with SLA. Attendance ranges from 15 – 20 members. Successful in getting small community grant. Lack of funding has meant had to scale back but little working bees through donations from individuals and groups which is great, helps and has kept the group going.
- **Sustainable Living Armidale** - *Kate Boyd* - SLA main focus is climate conference coming up special Road to Paris event in Armidale Central Park on 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> November. Australia-wide National march to get government to realise support for strong action on climate change and build support for conference in Paris.
- **Friends of Angophora Reserve** - *Helen Stokes* - 2 working bees planting for koala habitat. 7 – 8 members came to each. Removal of woody weeds continues.
- **Herbert Park Landcare** - *Helen Schwarz* – Armidale Tree Group going to look after woody weeds, weeds taken off recently. Some started to reshoot in plantings.
- **BOZO Landcare** – *Judy Blanch* - With Ruth's encouragement I have sent out letters to all previous members and young people in district. Hoping for a good roll up tomorrow night to try and reorganise the group. James & Caroline need a change as they have carried a lot of the load over the years. Going to try to encourage young ones to step up. Have done a wonderful job and thank Caroline & James for their work.
- **Soil Health Forum** – *Jill Moore-Kashima* - Last meeting at Walcha reported little to no activity. Shortly after meeting Mitch Palmer rang me with funding offer. Ruth helped to do a plan for species. Under Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot recovery program. New people in the area showing great deal of interest.
- **Armidale Tree Group** – *Peter Metcalfe* - 6 landholders planting Yellow Box or New England Peppermint and associated species. Received funding for plantings. Missed out on management of Tolly's Gully TSR would have been an interesting one. Had a successful open day. Armidale Tree group looking for seed from local eucalypts as some trees have not produced seed in over last 2 years, flowering but no seed. Landholders perceptions of what is happening to trees, dieback. Package to put together to get landholders to look and record what they see. Online product – putting together information about the plants of the tablelands. "Plants in your Pants" equivalent for the Northern Tablelands so wanting to do something.

# Biodiversity in Armidale

Armidale Urban Planting Maintenance (AUPM) is a SNELCC program developed to manage Armidale's urban environmental assets. The program, now in its 4th year, is made possible with the on-going financial support and direction provided by Armidale Dumaresq Council (ADC).

Works coordination, reporting, monitoring and evaluation are the responsibility of staff from Southern New England Landcare, while contractors conduct works and the AUPM steering committee provides advice and feedback. The steering committee is made up of members from the Armidale Tree Group (ATG), Armidale Urban Rivercare Group (AURG), SNELCC and contractors.

The environmental assets included in this program are Showcase planting sites 1-13 along Dumaresq Creek, Black Gully, Northern Gullies, Rivercare community plantings and Snowgum and Manna Gum Bushland Reserves.

Maintenance works include removal of weeds, planting, trimming branches and mulch application. Although the program is primarily aimed at maintaining the healthy condition of these biodiversity sites it has the added benefit of engaging with a broad cross-section of the Armidale community in both volunteer time and raising awareness of how biodiversity is pivotal in maintaining ecosystem function and health.

Highlights of the 2014-15 year include Armidale Urban Rivercare Group's biodiversity working bees/walks/talks along Dumaresq Creek, Black Gully Music Festival, PLC community week, Bushcare regeneration works, National Tree Day and Clean up Black Gully Day.

The report submitted to ADC is available for public viewing at our SNE Landcare office.

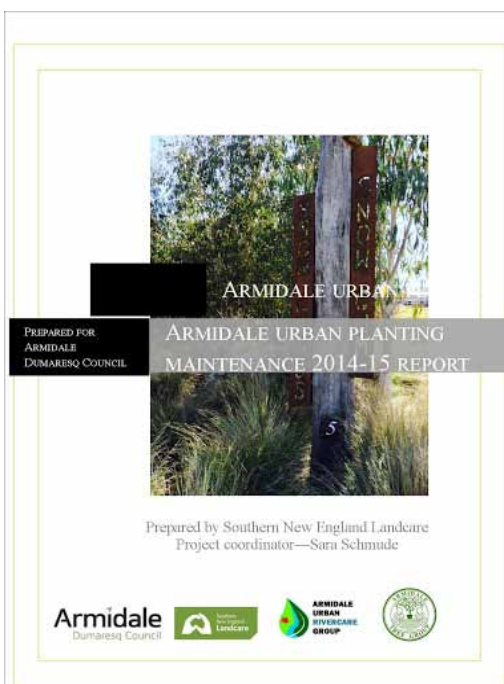
**Any queries contact Sara Schmude**  
**sara@snelcc.org.au**



*Black Gully spring planting with SkillsTrain.*



*Landcare sponsored soccer team - the 'Updogs'.*



*Urban Biodiversity Report available at the SNELCC office.*



*PLC community week planting along Dumaresq Creek.*



# ARMIDALE URBAN RIVERCARE GROUP

Volunteers with Armidale's Urban Rivercare Group (AURG) have been working along Dumaresq Creek since 2002 to replace weeds with native vegetation. If you walk along the creek from Sport UNE to Cooks Road, or at Black Gully, Martin's Gully or Tilbuster Ponds, you won't be able to miss the work they've been doing.

AURG gets funding from the State and Federal Governments as well as significant support from Southern New England Landcare, Armidale Dumaresq Council and the Armidale Dumaresq Lions Club.

At 118 members strong, they conduct working bees along Dumaresq Creek on the second Sunday of each month except in June, July, December and January. During 2014-15, they spent 392 hours doing on-ground works that resulted in approximately 3000 native trees, shrubs and groundcovers planted along the creeklands. With an overall survival rate of 95% this is a great achievement. A highlight for the group was working alongside Sustainable Living Armidale (SLA) in support of their 'Road to Paris' campaign – 480 natives now reside along Dumaresq Creek between Donnelly and Niagara Streets.

It's no wonder the group received the New England North West Regional Landcare Community Group Award this year. Congratulations to Armidale Urban Rivercare Group and it's members and volunteers!

Next year, with support from the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, the group plans involve weed removal and revegetation east of Taylor Street.

If you would like to get involved with AURG contact: Bryan Johnston at [bryan.johnston@bigpond.com](mailto:bryan.johnston@bigpond.com) or check out AURG on Facebook.



*Rivercare planting alongside members of Sustainable Living Armidale.*

## Need some equipment to complete your project?

With the growing season now well and truly here we remind you that SNELCC has various pieces of equipment that can be hired by members only, and a Meeting Room, which can be hired by community members.

The table lists the equipment available, with prices current at the time of publishing but subject to change at the Board's discretion.

Maximum hire period is 7 days unless previously arranged. Equipment returned late will be charged for at the daily rate for all excess days. Terms and Conditions are included in Southern New England Landcare's 'Equipment Hire Agreement' which can be obtained when booking. All bookings to be made through the SNELCC office by phoning 6772 9123 or emailing [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au).

Item	Deposit	Per day
Trailer with SPRAY UNIT	\$300	\$50
Trailer with MOUNDER	\$300	\$50
Trailer with DIRECT SEEDER	\$300	\$50
Trailer with HAND TOOLS	\$300	\$50
Spray dome	\$50	\$25
Potti Putki/Hamilton Planter	\$30	\$15
Hand tool (other than planters) each	\$20	\$10
Indian Myna Traps	\$30	\$0
Meeting Room (max 8 people)	Available to community members – please contact us for more information and bookings.	



# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

## New look Board! New look organisation?

The Southern New England Landcare AGM was held on 18th November in Uralla. The following are your executive committee/board for the following 12 months: Stephen Harvey – President (Dangarsleigh Landcare Group), David Henderson – Individual member (Deputy President), Bill Perrottet (Malpas Catchment Group), Peter Metcalfe (Dumaresq Landcare Group), Tim Wright (Balala Brushgrove Landcare Group), Bev Stubberfield (Uralla Rivercare Group), and Jill Moore-Kashima (Soil Health Forum).

Steve Harvey thanked retiring board members Karen Zirkler and Michael Taylor for their 7 years of service to the Board. Karen Zirkler has been appointed as Company Secretary, which aligns with her role as Executive Officer.

## Mergers in the wind...

A key consideration to arise from discussions around this year's Southern New England Landcare Ltd audit is a soon to be released accounting standard that states we may have an obligation to consolidate the accounting of both Southern New England Landcare (SNEL) Ltd and Southern New England Landcare Coordinating Committee (SNELCC) Inc.

The Board and Executive committees of both organisations are in the process of considering whether there is any net loss to members or groups to be a part of Ltd versus part of Inc, and hence whether or not it makes sense to wind up one or the other.

Further investigations are underway. Members are invited to submit their thoughts or suggestions to the office via [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au) by 31st December 2015 or to contact any of the new board members to discuss their thoughts.

## Membership subs support your projects

Southern New England Landcare Board and Staff thank all who have supported us during the last 12 months. Despite the challenges SNELCC was facing this time last year, we have been fortunate to receive ongoing funding and to retain some of our staff.

Landcare was founded on groups coming together to understand and address local issues – and we are glad to be able to say that, with the funding we have been able to obtain, SNELCC can return its focus to

supporting local outcomes, and building stronger local communities.

We encourage you to remain or become a financial member of SNELCC, rather than just be listed on our database. SNELCC is reviewing its membership packages and looks forward to offering you improved services and opportunities in the future.

SNELCC Membership will entitle you to:

- have active project Expressions of Interest with SNELCC so we can access funding on your behalf
- be eligible to receive funding for your on-ground works through SNELCC
- have access to landcare equipment for hire and
- be able to participate in groups and events at subsidised 'member' rates.

From now on, you need to be a financial member of SNELCC to access these services. However, SNELCC is endeavouring to keep membership costs at reasonable levels while also offering more rewarding membership opportunities – at free, subsidised or fee-for service rates.

Please don't hesitate to contact SNELCC staff (by phoning 6772 9123 or emailing [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au)) or come into the office if you would like to discuss any aspects of your land management activities which you are developing or need help to continue to develop. You can also visit the SNELCC website ([www.snelcc.org.au](http://www.snelcc.org.au)), which includes all the Landchat Newsletters and you can elect to receive SNELCC's e-news if we also have your email address.

## Our online presence

The Board asked staff to have a digital 'rethink' early in 2016, to overhaul our website and facebook presence. It is likely membership renewals will become an online process as part of this. Suggestions and feedback are welcome to [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au) by 31st December 2015.

## Sponsorship

Southern New England Landcare is currently developing a sponsorship prospectus. There are several categories so we can offer prospective sponsors a package that suits their needs and ours. We are hoping to attract a range of sponsors to coincide with the 2016 Landcare Adventure in May. Please contact us if you know of a potential sponsor!

# New technique evaluates the Agroforestry Peer Group Mentoring Program

Have you ever thought about some of the changes that have occurred as a result of attending a field day, workshop or being involved in a project? Maybe it's a change in the way you do things or see things?

Many of the Agroforestry Peer Group Mentors recently completed training in the Most Significant Change Technique. The technique collects qualitative data as opposed to the quantitative data that is usually collected. The process involves a short interview with participants of the program or event being evaluated to collect their stories.

Participants' stories are written up in the first person and highlight the most significant change they have experienced as a result of being involved. Stories are then shared among the evaluators (in this case the Peer Group Mentors) at a workshop, where the discussion and the learnings generated are recorded, and are indeed the most important aspect of the technique.

The evaluations from our PGM pilot project will be collated together with that from the other pilots in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria as part of a national evaluation of the program. A national report will be produced to inform the Federal Government of the success of the program. Hopefully we will see more programs using this innovative extension technique roll out in the future.



*Participants in the Most Significant Change Technique training held in Uralla.*

*L-R Carol Mackerras, Chris Eveleigh, Craig Zirkler, Garry Bashford, Silvia Danielli, Richard Moore (trainer from Western Australia), Simon White, Shane Andrews, Kristy Youman, Annabel Kater.*

*Photo courtesy Karen Zirkler (also a participant).*

## Fox control program evaluation dinners 2015

Thank you to all the fox group coordinators for volunteering their time for the 2015 Coordinated Fox Control Program. Dinners were held in Armidale and Walcha to thank the coordinators, evaluate the program and develop ideas for improvements for 2016 and beyond.

Some of the key ideas for improvement included increasing participation in the program (especially cattle producers), the need for more education generally, pre-season training for coordinators, the effectiveness of bounties, the use of smart phone apps like feral scan, behavioural science and compulsory baiting.

If you have ideas, please contact your local fox group coordinator (a list is available at the SNELCC office) or the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.



# CWC Native Vegetation for Woodland Birds Project Wraps Up

The 2013-15 NSW Environmental Trust “Vegetation Management for Threatened Woodland Birds, Stage 2” project of Citizens Wildlife Corridors Armidale Inc. is now wrapping up. Despite the dry seasons of the last two years funding from the NSW Environmental Trust (Project 2012/RR/0011) has provided for the successful rehabilitation or revegetation of woodland sites on 14 CWC members’ properties, from Wards Mistake and Tenterden in the north to south of Walcha.

Overall, 15 landholders participated in the project, with 17 sites being managed for woodland restoration. A total of 38.8 ha of woodland was rehabilitated or revegetated, including 17.5 ha of remnant woodland protected and 21 ha revegetated. Just over 17,300 native seedlings have been planted across both upland and riparian sites.

Bird surveys were also conducted, as well as the woodland restoration works. Twenty five sites on 12 properties were surveyed for their bird life, and the results add to the growing body of data we have on how birds utilise native vegetation and wildlife corridors landholders are developing. The surveys found that: more birds and more bird species were present in spring; a small group of abundant generalist species occurred across remnant, revegetated and open pasture habitats, greatest numbers of birds and species of birds occurred in woodland remnants although few individuals of each species were observed; 4 endangered bird species were observed in remnants; open paddocks had few species but most were open-country specialists; introduced and pest birds were found in expanding numbers and sites compared with previous surveys; and only the abundant generalist species were observed breeding, not species from the diverse but declining group of birds.

More details of the bird surveys were reported earlier this year (Landchat 104). An illustrated poster-brochure is available from the SNELCC office.

In addition, a spring fauna identification morning saw over 25 people develop their knowledge and understanding of fauna and habitat management. A farm-walk also facilitated participants’ appreciation of managing woody vegetation for native birds, and helped develop farm planning concepts and activities to manage bird habitat and ecosystem services.

This project has achieved very significant outcomes and the landholders involved are to be congratulated for their enthusiasm, perseverance and forward thinking!



*Growing ideas and new projects through field events in on-farm woodland habitats.*



*Large remnants protected from frequent grazing support diverse populations of woodland birds.*



*Native plantings more than 50m wide and as long as possible will provide significant habitat for woodland birds.*





# Moths Magpies and Marsupials enhancing on-farm biodiversity

After being awarded a funding grant from the NSW Environmental Trust in 2014, Southern New England Landcare has been working with a dedicated collection of landholders through 2015 to implement on ground works for the 2014-16 “Moths Magpies and Marsupials, Enhancing On Farm Biodiversity” project.

Works are aimed at restoring habitat on farms to enhance biodiversity, provide habitat for fauna and provide shelter and protection for livestock and pastures.

The on ground works part of the project is nearing completion and when finished will revegetate over 17 hectares of private land with native plants and conserve over 300 hectares of remnant vegetation through fencing and livestock management.

A key part of this project is surveying the woodland bird activity on each of the 11 individual project sites. Southern New England Landcare where possible collects this data from on ground works sites in order to generate “baseline” data for changes in the local populations of key species such as woodland birds.

The Moths Magpies and Marsupials, Enhancing On Farm Biodiversity project engaged specialist ornithologist Andrew Huggett of Insight Ecology to undertake two rounds of bird survey in autumn and spring of 2015. Surveying took place on a variety of site types including current project sites, on recently completed works, in

open paddocks and in remnant woodland areas. The survey times were selected according to when migrating birds were most likely to be active in our region. A short extract from Andrew’s first report is included below.

*From the first autumn survey a total of 64 bird species and 1,127 individual birds were recorded in the survey. These were a mix of open country species, birds that fed and sheltered in existing planted strips, and birds of forest/ woodland remnants.*

*Birds most frequently recorded at sites proposed for planting were hardy common species typically associated with more open habitats such as paddocks and stockyards - Eastern Rosella, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven and the introduced Common Starling. Some of these sites had been ripped in preparation for planting and fenced off or were in the process of being fenced off from livestock.*

*Birds frequently recorded foraging and/or sheltering in existing revegetation planted 5-9 years ago included Noisy Miner, Red-rumped Parrot, Common Starling, Australian Magpie, Superb Fairy-wren, Willie Wagtail, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Yellow-faced Honeyeater.*

*Birds that require larger, more complex (including the presence of tree canopy, shrub and ground cover layers) and relatively intact habitats were recorded only in the remnant sites. These included a core of woodland/forest birds that have been confined to these important patches of bushland by earlier clearing for*

*agriculture. Examples included three threatened species – Scarlet Robin, Varied Sittella and Speckled Warbler, a group of species that have declined in abundance and have become more patchy in their distribution, primarily in response to habitat loss, alteration and fragmentation – Jacky Winter, Flame Robin (winter disperser/ visitor), Eastern Yellow Robin and possibly White-browed Scrubwren, and other significant species such as Superb Lyrebird, Wonga Pigeon, Australasian Pipit, Red-browed Treecreeper, Double-barred Finch and Wedge-tailed Eagle.*

A complete report will be made available for our community in 2016. There will also be events and field days that offer a range of activities for people interested and/or with experience in bird identification and surveying and restoring natural ecology and increasing biodiversity in farmlands.



The male Flame Robin.  
Photo courtesy Andrew Huggett.



The Scarlet Robin.  
Photo courtesy Andrew Huggett.

# Success building for Indian Myna Control

Indian Mynas have been declared as a Noxious Pest in many coastal council areas and a growing number of inland council areas. As they are yet to establish large colonies on the Northern Tablelands, they have not reached noxious status in all our Local Government Areas. However with increasing sightings the declaration might not be far off. The challenge is to minimize or eradicate Indian Myna numbers before they form the large colonies with hundreds of individuals, similar to the colonies that have become prevalent through coastal and metropolitan areas.

SNELCC has seen a growing interest with the control of Indian Mynas from within our local community and has currently leased 3 traps to volunteer trappers. SNELCC has 5 remaining Indian Myna traps available for hire (\$30 refundable deposit). We currently have two volunteers in the Guyra district who have sighted Indian Mynas and one from Invergowrie who reports results for Indian Myna trapping in spring 2015 in the table below.'

SNELCC welcomes more volunteers to assist with this program as these birds are a genuine threat to native fauna including birds and small mammals. Indian Mynas compete successfully for habitat by flocking in numbers, eventually driving out native species. Indian Mynas can also kill native birds and fauna by removing eggs and young from nests and hollows.

The trapping program will allow people to become involved with nine available traps to be placed on properties through the district. Trappers are not asked to euthanize the birds, this can be done by SNELCC staff in accordance with the NSW Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1979.

You can also assist by reporting sightings of the birds which will enable SNELCC to map and monitor their distribution, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the control program. Anyone who would like to assist is welcome with all efforts greatly appreciated. For more information please call SNELCC on 6772 9123 or email [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au).

Date	Number of Birds Trapped	Bait/lure used (e.g. dog biscuits, caller bird)	Comments (e.g. any non targets released from trap, trap site details etc)
20-8-15	6	Puppy Biscuits	One Thrush released.
25-8-15	2	Puppy Biscuits	
2-9-15	3	Puppy Biscuits	
15-9-15	2	Puppy Biscuits	We have three left to get. Need to change the bait.



Above - the introduced pest  
The Indian Myna.



Above - SNELCC has traps for hire  
(\$30 refundable deposit).



Above - the Australian native  
Noisy Miner.

# Counting Critters for Conservation

As readers may be aware, SNELCC is working in partnership with CWC Armidale to help landholders, local organisations and community raise the profile of our native, iconic species. The Quollity Koala Corridors and Questions project has commenced with funding from the NSW Environmental Trust and over the next 18 months will be engaging our community to help build a picture of our local Koala and Quoll populations and more importantly how community members can help their conservation through active or passive management.

Active management might include practical assistance such as planting key habitat species on farms or large blocks, building structures in back yards that allow animal movements and minimising hazards such as steel fencing that prevents movement or leaving dogs unleashed. Passive assistance includes reporting sightings or suspected movements to Armidale Dumaresq Council at <http://www.armidale.nsw.gov.au/environment/koalas-armidale> or on web based platforms such as the "Atlas of Living Australia" found at <http://www.ala.org.au/species-by-location/>.

Many institutions use this data to get a 'big picture' of vulnerable and threatened species populations and to develop a strategic approach for their conservation. The Koala Count website below is

hosted by the National Parks Association who value public assistance when determining how threatened and endangered animal populations are progressing. The Koala count is open each year around the end of November so if you miss this year's count, mark it on your calendar for next year. You can find the link web site <http://www.koalacount.org.au>.

Also don't forget that any sighting at any time of year can be reported, every bit of information helps.

*The Eastern Spotted Tailed Quoll.*



*Community members can help by registering sightings at the Koala Count website.*



## PARTNERSHIP PROJECT IMPROVES WATER QUALITY AND VEGETATION LINKS ON THE GUYRA PLATEAU

During 2014-2015 Northern Tablelands Local Land Services partnered with Southern New England Landcare and Armidale Dumaresq Council in the "Improving upland water quality and creating protected links across the greater Malpas catchment of the Guyra Plateau" Partnership Project. NTLLS funding supported on-ground works, project officer input and local events to improve riparian health and vegetation links across the Malpas Dam catchment and adjacent lands.

Seven landholders were involved in this project. Some of these landholders participated by protecting a combined total of 17.2 ha of riparian land and 1.15 km of stream by constructing 1.87 km of fencing and installing off-stream watering for livestock. Other landholders have constructed an overall total of

3.5 km of fence and planted nearly 7 ha of corridors with 6,080 native tree and shrub seedlings, and protected 0.5 ha of remnant vegetation with 0.35 km of fencing.

This project also helped support three field events in the Guyra area. An afternoon looking at native vegetation management for woodland birds had land managers looking at works on a local property and then talking in small groups to develop revegetation plans for that property. A tour of local TSRs encouraged discussion around riparian and water quality management, involving public and private land managers. And public and private land managers teamed up to consider weeds of the Guyra area and develop summary sheets for the management of four key weeds in the area. cont.



As an ongoing outcome of this partnership project, a number of farm visits by SNELCC staff were initiated and several project Expressions of Interest were submitted to SNELCC and the NTLLS for project funding.



*A patch of Black Salles is fenced to protect remaining trees and allow natural regeneration and enrichment planting.*



*A dam and intermittent watercourse of an upper catchment area is protected from livestock.*



## Farm Fire Safety with NSW RFS

If you live on a farm or small acreage, ensure you have a plan for what you, your family, employees and workmates will do if there is a fire. You can download your Bush Fire Survival Plan or the MyFirePlan smartphone application from our website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

Bush fire danger ratings are from 1st August through to 31st March each year on the Northern Tablelands, during which time Fire Permits are required for all burning in the open. A Total Fire Ban (TOBAN) prohibits lighting, maintaining or using a fire in the open, or carrying out any activity in the open that causes, or is likely to cause, a fire.

No general purpose hot works such as using tractors, slashers and/or welding, grinding or gas cutting can be done in the open either, and this includes incinerators and barbecues which burn solid fuel. Fire Danger Ratings and Total Fire Ban information is updated daily during the bushfire season and is available from our website.

### Hot Spots Program helps with fire management plans

The NSW RFS offers the Hotspots Program providing landholders with the skills and knowledge to actively participate in fire management for the protection of life and property, while at the same time ensuring biodiversity is protected and maintained. Landholders gain a better understanding of risk management and fire ecology and they develop their own fire management plans in cooperation with neighbours. The end result is a map-based fire management action plan. Participants receive hands-on experience in preparing a burn site,

estimating fuel loads, considering weather factors, reviewing fire behaviour and undertaking a risk assessment. Landholders then observe a demonstration burn. If you would like to organize a Hot Spots Program in your local area, give the RFS a call, or let us know at the SNELCC office and we can **help you** organize it.

### More information

For more information on any of the above or to arrange a free property hazard identification inspection please contact the New England Fire Control Centre on 6771 2400.



*Southern New England Landcare enjoys a good working relationship with a number of reputable local businesses.*

*If you would like to include your business in our publications, please contact us on 6772 9123 or [mail@snelcc.org.au](mailto:mail@snelcc.org.au)*

Southern New England Landcare Ltd

ACN 099 357 454

*Resourcing Landcare in our region*

If undeliverable return to Southern New England Landcare  
Level 1, 3/119 Beardy Street, PO Box 85, Armidale 2350.  
Tel 02 6772 9123, mail@snelcc.org.au, www.snelandcare.org.au

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# Landchat

*Landcare in the Southern New England, No. 106, October - December 2015*

SNELCC is supported by the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services through funding from the NSW Government's Catchment Action NSW and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Landchat presents a forum for the expression of a range of opinions.

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of Southern New England Landcare or its employees.

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.



## SNELCC Inc Meeting

**Wednesday 17th February 2016**  
**at**  
**Armidale (venue to be confirmed)**  
**4pm to 7pm**

**Please RSVP by**  
**Friday 12th February 2016**  
**for catering purposes**  
**Tel 6772 9123,**  
**mail@snelcc.org.au**  
**www.snelandcare.org.au**