

Landchat

Landcare in the Southern New England, No. 94 March - April 2013

Southern New England Landcare...

Our **VISION** is for a vibrant, socially and economically healthy community existing in a healthy, productive and biodiverse environment.

Our **MISSION** is to foster community participation in sustainable natural resource management.

Contact US by phone 02 6772 9123 or
email mail@snelcc.org.au



Southern
New England
Landcare



Australian Government



Regional Landcare Facilitator

Diary Dates

Christine Jones present soil carbon workshop -
Ben Lomond.....2 May
SNELCC Meeting15 May
2013 Landcare & Catchment Management
Forum, Newcastle.....3-5 Sept
More information go to www.landcarecmaforum.com.au
24th Annual QLD Landcare Conference,
Warwick27-29 Sept
More information go to www.tinyurl.com/landcare2013

UNDER THE SHADE OF THE NEW ENGLAND PEPPERMINT ON A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY

Over 100 people attended the Soils for Life Day at "Lana" on 10th April. The day was opened by Major General (ret'd) Michael Jeffery, Chair of Soils for Life.

His key message was that 60% of our agricultural landscape is degraded along with one million kilometres of our rivers and streams. The answers to the various challenges associated with regenerating a landscape under pressure, adapting to a changing climate and meeting the food security challenge are already available to us in the work of so many Australian landholders.

Farmers need to be recognised not only as the producers of food and fibre and rewarded fairly for it, but rewarded also as the primary managers of our agricultural landscape. Because agriculture involves far more than just agriculture per se, we should look to implementing a unified, national, cooperative policy approach involving farmers and land managers, agricultural policy and scientific agencies, education providers, national security, regional development and trade, indigenous affairs and health agencies. To do this properly requires leadership.

Soils for Life actively promotes the following principles: our water, soils and vegetation are regarded as our three primary, natural, national strategic assets and they need to be managed in an integrated way. The health of any one of these components relies on the good health of the other two.



Group activities in the paddock stimulated conversation

cont.

UNDER THE SHADE OF THE NEW ENGLAND PEPPERMINT ON A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY (cont.)

“Lana” is one of 19 regenerative agricultural enterprises that has been developed into a case study by Soils for Life: www.soilsforlife.org.au.

Holistic principles were highlighted with practical group activities in the paddock using “Lana” as an example. Tim Wright described the rotational grazing system he and his family have implemented for more than 20 years, leading to increased herbage mass, water use efficiency and animal production. This holistic management approach has also enabled the Wrights to manage climate variability.

Holistic Management Consultant, Judi Earl, AIMS supported these principles and said “we should be aiming for 100% groundcover, 100% of the time - no debate.”

One of the mantras of Holistic Management is to manage and make decisions toward what you want. Primary production is about capturing maximum sunlight energy and converting it into a marketable product. Species diversity is the way to maximise the capture of sunlight energy, green plants growing for the maximum time of the year. More sunlight captured means more carbon is entering the soil system. What’s above in grasslands is reflected in the root system of plants. Growing more herbage mass above means more root biomass below ground.

The only thing that can effectively cycle carbon is herbivores – any animal that consumes green leaf and processes it into body mass is cycling carbon. Graziers have the perfect tool to regenerate land, restore soil heath and humus, and by default, build carbon and positively influence the environment. The ability to control the movement of livestock across the landscape puts the power in farmers’ hands.

Critical to the process is monitoring to ensure that the stocking rate does not exceed carrying capacity ensuring maximum ground cover is maintained and minimum residual herbage mass is maintained. Maximum ground cover slows water movement across the soil surface.

Plants that have adequate recovery after grazing with longer root systems allow for an increased capacity to acquire nutrients and moisture.



Tim Wright explains how holistic management principles are used on “Lana”

More roots means more soil carbon, more soil biota and humus. Soils also have more porosity and water infiltration with 100% groundcover, leading to increased plant productivity and animal production.

Professor Nick Reid of Ecosystems Management at UNE, spoke about the diversity of plants and animals on Lana and the importance of biodiversity for production. Prof Reid’s research has shown that clean water increases livestock production while tree cover provides valuable habitat for a range of species including nature’s pest control agents. Timber also provides ecosystem services, like shade and shelter. Sustaining native biodiversity in agricultural landscapes is the topic of Nick Reid’s book “Nature and Farming”, co authored by Professor David Norton, School of Forestry, University of Canterbury. This book was launched by Major General Jeffery at the event and is available from www.publish.csiro.au.



Nick Reid, Major General Jeffery & David Norton launch “Nature and Farming”

The importance of Landcare in achieving long term practice change was highlighted by Rob Dulhunty, Chair of Landcare NSW. The Landcare model was recognised as an essential component in increasing the knowledge and skills of farmers by organising and delivering events such as the “Lana” field day. Several politicians were on hand to hear this message and this was strongly supported by the enthusiastic participants. Major General Jeffery of Soils for Life recognised that the success of the day would not have been achieved without the involvement of SNELCC and its members.



Tim Wright “Lana” & Major General Jeffery



12 April 2013

To the host, participants and organisers of the Field Day at 'Lana', Uralla NSW 10 April 2013

As Chair of the Board of the Soils for Life Program, I would like to extend my thanks to the 120 people who gave up a day to participate in the Soils for Life and Southern New England Land Care field day hosted by Tim Wright at 'Lana' on 10 April 2013. Your enthusiastic participation contributed to the great success of the event, as evidenced by the exit surveys you submitted.

In addition to the contribution to the successful event of your active participation must be added the commitment of the host, Tim Wright, to demonstrating regenerative landscape management principles and practices, the dedication of the staff of Southern New England Land Care in organising the event and, certainly, the vital part played by the event catering of the Kingstown Public School P&C. I believe that people working together in communities with common interests, across Australia, can make a real contribution to regenerating our rural landscape.

Soils for Life is the catalyst that links the people at local level who are 'fixing the paddock' with the policy and strategic levels at government that need to understand and support the paddock fixers. Soils for Life also acts as a forum for the exchange of innovative ideas between communities of paddock fixers, scientists and other stakeholders. However, fixing the paddock is in your hands. Tim Wright and the other speakers demonstrated what can be done in one type of enterprise in one region. Other options are documented on the Soils for Life web site: <http://www.soilsforlife.org.au>. The next steps are up to you.

Thank you all once again for the enthusiastic participation that made your event so successful.

Yours sincerely

(Michael Jeffery)

Chair
Soils for Life Board

LANDCARE AND LLS - AN UPDATE

Action at the State Level - Excerpts from the Landcare Soils for Life Speech Rob Dulhunty, Chair Landcare NSW.

Resourcing for natural resource management and sustainable agriculture is going through major reforms at the moment, the largest of these being the creation in NSW of Local Land Services (LLS). Landcare NSW is responding to these developments to make them as Landcare-friendly as possible.

We have already had a number of wins on behalf of landcarers including:

- Embedding Landcare as a key partner in the process,
- The establishment of the reference panel, which I am on, was a Landcare suggestion,
- Skills-based requirements for all board positions,
- The continuation of the existing Catchment Action Plans (which we have all contributed to) and the expansion of these plans to cover other LLS activities such as bio-security,
- The move to one audit body to cover all LLS activities to prevent creating silos in the new bodies,
- An internal review of the successes and failures of the CMAs in building human capital,
- Strong representation to maintain catchment boundaries (in places where the community wants this).

The challenge has been twofold. One level of uncertainty has been moving from an established relationship between Landcare and CMAs to one between Landcare and LLS that is currently without definition. The other challenge has been money.

Natural Resource Management funding in NSW has fallen into a budget vortex. The Department has been forced by Treasury to rebid for funding for NRM action. So whilst funding for some staff and administration is locked into the LLS reforms, the funding for ongoing NRM action is up in the air. This means when the state government is asked in parliament if the government is walking away from NRM action, they can't answer the question. This has made it challenging for the Federal government to lock in their investment. So right now we have two-thirds of the future NSW NRM budget unknown. The Landcare movement is the only constituency

to have mobilised to stop the loss of nearly \$65 million from rural NSW: Not farming bodies, not environment groups. In a way, this has marked the maturing of the landcare movement as a standalone constituency. Our mobilisation has made it incredibly challenging for the NSW government to withdraw from this area. Because of this, I am now confident that this will be resolved. But I would call for both the state and federal governments to speed up their negotiation and provide certainty for us all.

Every NRM policy reform transition ever undertaken in Australia has had a poor transition period that has impacted badly on Landcare communities and eroded social capital. We would like very much for this to be the first time there was not a failed transition.

I want you all to know that Landcare NSW is in there fighting to make sure that the changes are to the benefit, not the detriment, of our movement.



Rob Dulhunty delivering his speech at the Soils for Life day



SOUTHERN LANDCARERS BLITZ AWARDS

At the 15th annual Landcare Adventure dinner at Bingara last month, southern New England landcarers shone like the stars they are at the Regional Landcare and Catchment Management Awards ceremony. Held at the historic Roxy Theatre, the Awards dinner was attended by 150 people from across the tablelands, slopes, and southern Queensland, with eight categories of urban and rural environmental awards finalists and winners announced.

Michael Taylor, representing the Taylor family of “The Hill” Kentucky, took first place for innovation in sustainable farm practices for continuing to progress his grandfather’s initiative for engineered woodlands across the farming landscape, and his participation in the governance of local landcare.



Michael & Millie Taylor



HiCUB - Dave Carr

High Country Urban Biodiversity (HiCUB) project took out both the Urban Landcare and Regional Agency Landcare Partnerships awards. Represented by project manager Dave Carr, the project was lauded for its primary and ongoing contribution to southern New England urban communities and its commitment to establishing multiple partnerships across local government, state and federal agencies, research entities, and rural and urban communities.

Armidale Tree Group was named Highly Commended up in the Landcare Community Group category. Armidale Tree Group is a community-owned native tree nursery which has operated for the last 30 years to address the issues of tree decline.

Hailed for her decades of work promoting the revegetation of New England landscapes through the establishment of wildlife corridors, Kath Wray was awarded the Individual Landcarer award. Kath founded the Citizens Wildlife Corridors organisation, an organisation that is still moving forward in its presence across the Tablelands, assisting and encouraging landholders to revegetate key aspects of grazing lands.

Our very own Sara Schmude – Community Support Officer for regional schools projects – accepted first place in the Junior Landcare Award for the Frog Dreaming conference held annually in the southern New England. This event aims to engage school children with natural resource management through story telling, dance, and environmental themes. In 2012, seven regional schools participated.



Sara Schmude

Our congratulations go to all finalists and winners, with thanks to the awards judging panel: David Anderson (Conservation Farmers Inc), Rob Dulhunty (Landcare NSW chairman), Jeff Lowien NSW Primary Industries agronomist, and Leanne Savage (Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA Board member).

IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY BOOSTS LANDSCAPE RESILIENCE

The “*Enhancing Connectivity of Remnant Native Veg in Walcha/Uralla District*” project has been running throughout the region over the past 2.5 years and will conclude on the 30th of June 2013. Funded through the Australian Government’s Caring for Our Country program this project has assisted in the successful delivery of a range of education and training activities over this period and has also implemented significant on-ground works.

On-ground works have occurred on a total of 22 properties and included activities such as revegetation, fencing of remnant patches and fencing of riparian areas with provision of alternative stock watering points. These works have resulted in 180ha being managed for biodiversity and shade and shelter outcomes throughout the region.

More than 1,000 individuals have attended activities delivered and supported through this project. These have included Woodlands Week activities, Frog Dreaming schools conference workshops, Landcare Adventure and many field days. We have also delivered a number of Project Planning workshops over this period, which have resulted in developed shelf-projects for individuals and groups that have been included in additional funding applications. We are currently awaiting news regarding the success of these proposals.

It is vital that we continue to support our members and the broader community to undertake on-ground works that preserve the condition and extent of our existing vegetation. It is also recognised that connectivity throughout the landscape is critical to the facilitation of wildlife movements between core habitat patches. This landscape management practice is now widely recognised and is supported through the development of documents such as the “National Wildlife Corridors Plan”, released in November 2012. At a local level landscape corridor models developed by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage are informing landholders, community groups and agencies of the potential hotspots or key areas to undertake revegetation

works for maximum connectivity throughout the landscape.

Many of our Landcare groups have their own Corridor Plans and members have been continually implementing on-ground activities that contribute to landscape wide connectivity for many years. However, there are a number of land-managers that are new to Landcare and revegetation and remnant protection activities. Landscape corridors are a great example of how the actions of one individual can contribute to the broader resilience of a landscape.

Southern New England Landcare is currently seeking funding through a number of avenues to implement further on-ground works that contribute to landscape wide connectivity. We will keep you up to date with these developments. In the meantime if you are interested in implementing activities on your property that contribute to landscape connectivity please complete an Expression of Interest form and send it into the SNEL office. Forms can be downloaded from our website www.snelandcare.org.au



Lower Apsley Landcare group members implemented a community planting as a part of the project



Revegetation corridors, remnant and riparian fencing projects have occurred throughout the region

WHAT'S HOT AROUND THE REGION

23rd April at Armidale:

NSW Farmers members and non-members are invited to attend a workshop to be held 2pm to 4pm at the Armidale Ex-Services Club as part of the NSW Farmers Mining and Coal Seam Gas Communications Project. The workshop is an opportunity to get information and to ask questions. The workshop will provide up to date and accurate information on:

- Mining and coal seam gas activity in your area,
- The NSW Government's Strategic Regional Land Use Policy package, and
- Landholder rights and land access arrangements with exploration companies.

RSVPs can be made to Scott Harlum on 0428 228 818.

2nd May at Glen Innes:

Dollars in Dirt workshop with Christine Jones, Tim Terry, Peter Norwood. The feature guest speaker, Dr Christine Jones, is an internationally renowned and highly respected groundcover and soils ecologist. She has a wealth of experience working with innovative landholders to implement regenerative land management techniques that enhance biodiversity, increase biological activity, sequester carbon, activate soil nutrient cycles, restore water balance, improve productivity and create new topsoil.

RSVP to GLENRAC on 6732 3443 or office@glenrac.org.au to attend this FREE event presented by Ben Lomond Landcare group.

Open NOW: 2013 STATE & TERRITORY LANDCARE AWARDS – Nominate now for nine categories, covering a range of environmental projects and themes, including sustainable agriculture, coastal rehabilitation and Indigenous land management. Individuals, schools, community groups and networks working to protect or restore local environments, farms, coastlines, native vegetation, bushlands, wetlands, and waterways can be nominated.

Closing 30th June, get nomination forms and information at: <http://www.landcareonline.com.au/2>

Funding open NOW: The Federal Government's "Action on the Ground" is a component of the *Carbon Farming Futures Program*, and round two is now open. Individual grants up to \$775,000 are available for farmers, land managers, farming groups, researchers, industry sectors and nongovernment organisations to undertake projects that address at least one of the program's three key priorities:

- reduced methane emissions from livestock production systems
- reduced nitrous oxide emissions
- increased carbon sequestration in soils.

To apply, go to: <http://www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/carbonfarmingfutures/action-on-the-ground>

Community Environment Grants: between \$5000 and \$50,000 are now available from the Australian Government to community groups working to achieve an environment that is healthier, better protected, well managed and resilient. Funding is available to established and emerging groups currently operating in the environmental sector, including Indigenous organisations. Community Environment Grants will assist community based organisations to contribute to three strategic objectives, under the Sustainable Environment Stream of Caring for our Country:

1. Maintenance of ecosystem services, including ecological and cultural values, now and into the future;
2. Protection of our conservation estate
3. Enhanced capacity of Indigenous communities to conserve and protect natural resources.

***More information is available at the Caring for our Country website:
<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/environment/ceg/index.html>.***

A QUICK HELLO FROM RUTH TREMONT

Just wanted to say a quick “Hello” to everyone – those who remember me from the first few years of SNELCC and those who’ve come on board since the year 2000.

Since January I’ve been helping out with the Malpas/sustainable Farms Project; Herbert Park’s project on Tilbuster Ponds in the Armidale Pine Forest, BOZO’s revegetation project in Blair’s Gully, Walcha; High Country Wetlands and Woodlands project and doing site visits for completion checks. It has been rewarding to visit people who’ve continued doing on-ground works since the late 1990s.

Some amazing (positive) changes have taken place and it has been great to reconnect with familiar faces and places. Likewise, it has been energising to meet new people and I’ve been humbled and inspired by the depth of knowledge and foresight I’ve found.

I’d like to thank everyone in the office, and out-and-about, for supporting me as I ‘catch up’. The sense of community I have experienced is a small example of why SNELCC must maintain its regional presence and grass roots connections beyond 30th June!!

Blair’s Gully Project Underway in Walcha

BOZO’s Blair’s Gully to Apsley River Biodiversity Corridor Project is well underway. On Tuesday 19th March, Class 5/6 from St Patricks Primary had a very successful afternoon planting understorey shrubs, grasses and forbs in an area BOZO members planted with local trees some years ago.

The children teamed up in groups and worked happily alongside each other and their accompanying parents and teachers – a lovely steady group who got everything planted and a fair amount of mulch put out. Special thanks to Caroline Street, too, for great wheelbarrowing, timely spraying and liaising with Council!

Over the next few months the Blair’s Gully area between Apsley Street and Commercial Lane will be prepared for a new large planting in spring, as well as several smaller plantings to enrich or extend previous revegetation works.

In addition, there are plans for some seats to be installed and a sign to be placed in the currently empty shelter at the end of Meridian Street near The Commercial Hotel – any ideas for a design competition?

The Blair’s Gully project is funded through the Australian Government’s Caring for Our Country program.



*BOZO CAG Blair’s Gully,
St Pats Class 5-6
planting understorey*



Herbert Park: Building On Past Efforts Along Tilbuster Ponds Creek

Herbert Park Landcare Group’s Tilbuster Ponds project, funded by the Australian Government’s Biodiversity Fund, Clean Energy Future program, is well under way. Stage 1 on the western bank of the creek just south of the

bridge on Rockvale Rd has been completed. Large Silver Poplars were felled and poisoned in late winter 2012. Since then Dan Davies of the Armidale Tree Group has poisoned polar regrowth and begun work to control additional Silver Poplars for Stage 2. The Armidale



*Felling Silver Poplars, Stage 1
Oct 2012*

Pine Forest committee generously committed some of their Dahl Trust funding to facilitate weed removal in the Stage 2 area, so supporting the development of their amphitheatre area and assisting Herbert Park’s Biodiversity Fund project. In addition, woody weeds further downstream have been felled by NSW Forests and follow up poisoning undertaken by Dan Davies. NSW Forests have also sprayed blackberry on the eastern side of the creek . . . so now it’s on to Stages 2 and 3!! While the weeds are many its not all ‘slash and poison’. Revegetation efforts began in late February when the



*Armidale Waldorf School Class
5/6 and volunteers planting
Stage 1 Feb 2013*

Armidale Waldorf School’s Year 5/6, as well as Herbert Park group members and other volunteers, planted about 400 native trees and shrubs in the Stage 1 area. Almost half of these plants were grown and donated by community members, and more are being propagated for 2013 and 2014

plantings. Overall, an ambitious project however the works have been generously supported by a number of community groups who use and care for the Armidale Pine Forest.

HIGH COUNTRY WETLANDS AND WOODLANDS PROJECT

DES ANDERSEN

As most of our readers would be aware, The High Country Wetlands and Woodlands project was initiated in 2012 and has been open for Expressions of Interest since. We are pleased to announce that, as the EOI component of the project concludes, the project has generated an encouraging amount of interest from local landholders with more than thirty applications received.

The wetland and woodlands project provides funding for the management and conservation of the New England's unique and endangered ecological communities. These are the Box/Gum Grassy Woodland, New England Peppermint Woodland and Upland Wetlands (Lagoons).

The small size and fragmentation of many of the remaining parts of these communities' means they are especially susceptible to physical and biological impact and ultimately extinction within our region. The communities provide a vital link for the movement and habitat requirements of a variety of birds and small mammals (such as greater gliders, pygmy possums and microbats) that are endemic to this region or use these environments as a migratory path.

The enactment of the project is made possible through the strong partnerships between SNELCC and the community. The benefits of this partnership are apparent with Landholders able to offer an abundance of local knowledge to assist in project planning. Furthermore, many individual projects can be linked in with previous property works and neighbouring property works with a "big picture" of woodland and wetland connectivity emerging across our regional landscape.

Individual projects have included fencing remnant woodlands for livestock management, planting new areas with appropriate understory and canopy species, fencing wetlands for livestock management and even restoring wetlands where the natural hydrology has been modified by drains and contour banking. Projects have also included the management of Weeds of National Significance (Blackberry, Chilean needle grass, Serrated Tussock and Willow species).

To date the High Country Wetlands and Woodlands project has proposed funding for the management of 122 hectares of remnant woodlands, 37 hectares of revegetation (planting) and 60 hectares of wetland management. These figures are above target requirements and indicate that the interest from our community is especially encouraging in light of future funding opportunities available through similar projects.

An announcement on final funding figures and an offer for Land Management Agreements is expected in late April/May with on-ground works expected to be completed by the end of December 2013. This project is funded through the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program.



New England Peppermint Woodland



Upland Wetland

Des Andersen joins the SNELCC Team

Des grew up locally and completed a degree in Natural Resources at UNE before moving to Dubbo for work opportunities. During this time Des has worked with farmers and irrigators from around western NSW to develop On Farm Water Efficiency Plans for government funding. Des has 6 years' experience in working with landholders and developers on a variety of infrastructure projects.

Since moving back to Armidale he has been fortunate in gaining an opportunity to work with the Landcare team in 2013 and is looking forward to meeting and working with SNELCC members.

FOX ON THE RUN!

Pest Animals in the southern New England region will be controlled with a variety of methods this autumn after successful Pest Animal Control and Landholder Training Day's were held at "Europambela", Walcha and Wongwibinda Hall in March.

Sixty land managers from as far away as Queensland attended the days to learn tips and tricks to maximise their pest animal control efforts. Participants took part in a series of hands on activities to increase their knowledge and skills for successful pest control on farm. A consistent theme for successful pest animal control occurred throughout the day. Control for any pest animal needs to follow four basic principles: broadscale, cooperative, integrated and coordinated. It is essential to work with your neighbours utilising a variety of control options.

Mark Lamb, Professional Trapper Tenterfield, had people engaged in identifying signs of pest animals. Footprints, scats, caches and other signs were inspected for feral cats, wild dogs, feral pigs and foxes, even deer and rabbits were covered. Mark's faithful assistant Fred the Kelpie X gave participants an insight into some of the behaviours to look out for in their own working dogs that may indicate there is wild dog activity in the area.

Local National Parks Pest Management Officers, Ken Pines and Stuart Boyd-Law showcased a range of baiting control options. These included a variety of fresh and dried meat baits and manufactured products for wild dogs and foxes. A range of bait laying techniques such as buried, tied and concealed baiting were displayed and participants were treated to a demonstration of the new M44 injector bait delivery device. The M44 is currently being trialled and will hopefully be available to landholders as another pest animal control option in the next couple of years. A series of lures also created a stir amongst the crowd, some were good enough to eat where as the odours of others were displeasing to say the least. Feral pig control options and delivery mechanisms had everyone engaged.

Feedback from participants has been very positive with comments such as "it has been great to see so many organisations working together" and "I thought I new a lot about pest animal control but I have learnt a number of new things I can try at home".

Monitoring of pest animal impacts and the effectiveness of your control program was also covered. This was supported with a 1 hour training session on the uses and benefits of camera trapping. Camera Trapping has become very popular in recent years and can be a very effective monitoring tool. Participants were introduced to the broad range of cameras available and the pro's and con's of a lot of these products. There is a camera for

every need, the main point is to do your research and make sure the camera you invest in suits your purpose. Paul Meek, Research Officer, Invasive Animals CRC explained how the cameras are triggered and the best way to set them up in the field.

Both days had everyone transfixed from start to finish. Many participants commented at the conclusion of the events that they needed to get out in the paddock to start implementing some of the methods they had learned. Coordinated Wild Dog and Fox control programs will be delivered throughout the southern New England region during May to July 2013. If you would like to join a coordinated control group in your area or are interested in starting a new group for wild dog, fox and/or feral pig control please contact SNEL on 02 6772 9123.

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program and supported by the New England North West Landcare Networks, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Border Rivers Gwydir CMA, New England LHPA and North West LHPA.



Top - Mark Lamb shows land managers how to tell the difference between a fox & dog foot print



Middle - Practical activities such as identifying different animal tracks stimulated discussion



Bottom - Paul Meek, Invasive Animals CRC demonstrates how to set up a camera trap.

An update for our SNEELCC region: Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA commits to funding Landcare

In this time of change and uncertainty in funding, Southern New England Landcare thanks Border Rivers-Gwydir (BR-G)CMA for finding funding to cover our Community Support program for the period 1 July to 31 Dec 2013.

At present BR-G CMA have committed \$35,000, for the six month period, which is roughly 55% pro-rata of last years operating budget, and are continuing to explore further funding options as well as other ways in which the Landcare Networks can be supported. BR-G CMA has actively engaged the Landcare Networks in the implementation planning currently underway, so that in the future roll out of any projects in the Local Land Services (LLS) area of Northern Tablelands under the Catchment Action Plan, that landcare is involved in the design phase, and not just the delivery phase. In addition BR-G CMA has provided funding for Landcare Networks to undertake governance training to lift their skills – equipping them to play a larger role in the devolvement of decision making and implementation under the LLS.

Change of management across Catchment Management Authorities

During the month the Northern Rivers CMA (NRCMA) Board met with representatives from the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA (BR-G CMA) to discuss the gradual transfer of service delivery to 'eastern fall' Tablelands communities. The Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan identified the Tablelands landowners and community groups in the upper coastal catchments as one of four socio-economic landscapes in the region for which NRM implementation plans need to be developed.

In addition, regional boundaries for the new Local Land Services (LLS) are likely to transfer service delivery to eastern falls landowners to the Northern Tablelands LLS. The CMA Boards agreed that from 1 July 2013, the BR-G CMA would provide services to all Tablelands communities, under a Service Level Agreement with NRCMA. This will facilitate the subsequent transfer to the Northern Tablelands LLS.

Funding Update

The Southern New England Landcare team have been very busy in the last few months delivering programs throughout the region but also writing new funding applications to continue activities in the new financial year.

Below is a summary of the funding proposals that have been submitted. We hope to have an indication of what has been successfully funded by July 2013. We will update you on this process as soon as we have news.

13 Community Landcare Grants have been submitted. These grants were for up to \$50,000 and were targeted at the Landcare Group scale.

Group proposals have been submitted for;

- Lower Apsley Landcare Group
- BOZO Landcare Group
- Wongwibinda Landcare Group
- Harnham Landcare Group
- Balala/Brushgrove Landcare Group
- Baldersleigh/Tenterden Community Group
- Dangarsleigh Landcare Group
- Malpas Catchment Group
- Citizens Wildlife Corridors Armidale

Two school based program proposals and two Southern New England Landcare regional project proposals have also been submitted.

Many of these applications have included landholder shelf projects that were developed from the Project Planning Workshops held throughout the region in November/ December 2012.

In addition to the Community Landcare Grants the SNEEL team have also submitted two regional Biodiversity Fund applications and contributed to a number of New England North West wide project proposals.

We are also still waiting on the announcement from the NSW Environmental Trust regarding two proposals submitted in July 2012.

It is anticipated that the Australian Federal Government will open funding opportunities for their Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry portfolio in the near future. Southern New England Landcare will also be submitting applications to this program where appropriate.

We will continue to develop funding applications for programs that reflect the needs of our members. If you would like assistance in applying for funding for a project on your property and have not already submitted and Expression of Interest (EOI) form please download and complete form from www.snelandcare.org.au and send it into the office.

What's New

Free Climate app for farmers

Australian CliMate is a free iTunes app that can help farmers with better decision making about their farming operations based on recent weather and likely climate probabilities. Farmers can quickly interrogate the last 60 years of daily rainfall, temperature and radiation data for their location. Seasonal forecasts are provided based on current ENSO conditions.

The app also calculates heat sums and estimates soil water and soil nitrate accumulation. CliMate has been developed to help farmers make sense of past climate statistics and forecasts for their own location, to better manage their business.

The Project Leader Dr David Freebairn, Principal Environmental Scientist with RPS, says that the app was accepted on first submission to iTunes and is available for iPhone, iPad and iPod touch devices. A web version was available in March 2013. The question-based logic in CliMate is designed to suit anyone who uses probabilities of weather events in their decision making, whether they be a grain grower, a grazier or a grape grower.

To download the CliMate app go to the Apple App Store and search for 'Australian CliMate'.

For more information contact Dr David Freebairn

Phone: 07 3237 8820 or Email: david.freebairn@rpsgroup.com.au

LAND FOR WILDLIFE

Land for Wildlife (LFW) is a voluntary property registration scheme that aims to assist landholders in maintaining wildlife habitats on their land. It involves a good-faith agreement between the Community Environment Network (CEN) and the landholder. Registration is free and non-binding, and it does not change the legal status of the property.

The benefits of joining LFW are:

- a) a free property assessment which includes an individual consultation to determine the environmental sustainability of a property and
- b) advice on how to manage environmental issues such as remnant wildlife habitat, the creation of wildlife corridors and how to integrate wildlife conservation into the property's management practices.

In addition, Land for Wildlife offers landholders the opportunity to participate in workshops, meet like-minded people, and receive up-to-date information via fact sheets and regular newsletters.

Land for Wildlife is a nation-wide scheme. In NSW, CEN (located on the central coast) is the State Coordinator. On the Northern Tablelands, Citizens Wildlife Corridors Armidale Inc. (CWC) is the Regional Provider for Land for Wildlife. Landholders who would like more information about the Land for Wildlife scheme can contact Citizens Wildlife Corridors Armidale Inc. on phone (02) 8004 8402, or email office@cwcc-armidale.org.au.

A VARIETY OF AGRICULTURAL TOURS IN 2013

RUSSIA & FINLAND

22 Day Escorted Tour - May / June 2013

See the diverse range of agricultural production in Russia and Finland and learn about the recent developments in the beef cattle industry. Soak up amazing history and culture of Tsars in Moscow and St Petersburg and experience the traditions of Finland in Turku and Helsinki.



SOUTH AMERICA BEEF & AGRICULTURE

24 Day Escorted Tour - November 2013

Enjoy spectacular scenery and immerse yourself in the vibrant Latin cultures of South America. At the same time come to grips with the size, scope and diversity of agricultural production and the beef cattle industries in Chile, Argentina and Brazil.



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WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME?

Tom Barrett, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

Our amazing native wildlife has needs that are not very different from our own, after all we're animals too, something we often forget! Just like us our native wildlife also require a house to live in. But just having shelter is not enough, a point made by Darryl Kerrigan in the iconic Australian comedy *The Castle* when he exclaimed 'It's not a house, it's a home'. But what makes a house a home? It's not enough to have four walls and a roof, we also need furniture, heating and of course food.

We also have social needs such as finding a mate and a supportive network of friends and relatives. But to access all these things we need connectivity in the form of a road network to get us from our home to the shops, schools, restaurants and pubs. Our native wildlife don't have cars, but they do need the opportunity to move across the landscape to find food, socialise with their friends and family, find a mate and raise a family.

Using our native birds as an example, the trees of our forests and woodlands provide their 'four walls and a roof' but that alone isn't enough to provide a home, referred to by ecologists as 'habitat'. They also need furniture in the form of shrubs, native grasses and forbs (little flowering plants that grow amongst the grasses) and a good supply of food, often in the form of nectar from blossoms and bugs that live and feed on live and dead vegetation as well as in the soil. Many small native birds can't fly over large distances without a network of bird roads, or connectivity, between habitat patches to gain access to this food and to socialise. A bird road may take the form of a thin corridor or many small patches of vegetation, such as paddock trees, used as stepping stones to move between larger habitat patches.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) have been utilising satellite mapping and other tools to develop a greater understanding of 'how' and 'where' to create new habitat and help our native wildlife survive in an increasingly uncertain future. Landowners in the New England Tablelands can participate in the implementation of habitat corridors and can access assistance from organisations such as Southern New England Landcare and Citizens Wildlife Corridors.

Southern New England Landcare are currently developing funding applications for natural resource management projects including wildlife corridors. If you do not have a current expression of interest with us or would like to update your project details contact the office.

To find out more visit www.snelandcare.org.au or contact the Landcare office on 02 6772 9123.



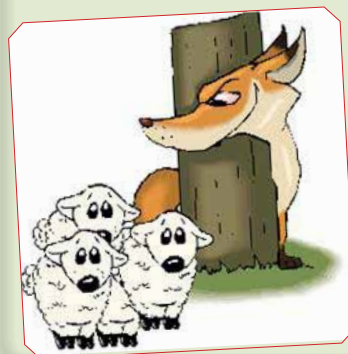
The decline of the Diamond Firetail Finch has been linked to habitat fragmentation, with the species becoming extinct within Imbota Nature Reserve and surrounds

AUTUMN FOX BAITING

By combining an autumn and a winter control program fox densities can be kept low all year round.

Fox numbers are at their peak in autumn and they are mobile and hungry. Young, inexperienced foxes are leaving their dens and dispersing.

If you or your local coordinated fox control group would like to take part in Autumn baiting contact the New England Livestock Health and Pest Authority on 02 6772 2366.



FARMING AT URALLA TO WITHSTAND EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

South African born Richard Daugherty has brought a fresh perspective on life and land management to his family farming business at Uralla on the Northern Tablelands. Working in partnership with the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA, Southern New England Landcare, and the Balala Brushgrove Landcare group, Richard plans to create a more resilient landscape that can cope with climate change and still generate an income to support his family.

His goal is to build a profitable business based on rotational grazing, using sheep and cattle as implements for environmental rehabilitation through strategic grazing management. The property is being fenced into smaller paddocks, and work is underway to increase vegetation and tree cover.

“We want to build resilience into the country, so that it recovers more quickly from whatever wild weather might unfold, whether that’s a heatwave or cyclonic storms and floods,” explained Richard.

When the Daughertys decided to leave South Africa and make the move to Australia, concerns about climate change were an important factor in selecting the right location for their new home. The search was on for a region where rainfall is not predicted to decline and where extreme heat is less likely to be a problem even if the global trend towards warmer average temperatures continues. The Northern Tablelands fit the Daughertys’ criteria and in 2011 Richard and his wife Sarah purchased “Balala”, a 1251 hectare property at Uralla.

Not long after settling in, Richard participated in a Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA Farm Planning course. “The course was incredibly beneficial. It really helped me put into perspective how to view the environmental factors affecting our property,” explained Richard.

“Balala” sits at the top of the local water catchment, and in 2012 the Daughertys began working with the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA on a Sustainable Farming Practices project, funded through the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country initiative. Through the project, seven kilometres of the property’s frontage to the Roumalla Creek will be fenced off to protect the fragile riparian zone and ensure better water quality downstream.

Better grazing management is another key aspect of

Richard Daugherty’s philosophy. His plan is to move into rotational grazing with high density, short term stocking, followed by long recovery breaks.

“If we can maintain the grass cover through grazing smaller areas for a short term, then removing stock before the ground cover is eroded, we can promote faster pasture growth when rainfall arrives,” Richard believes. “I want to move away from huge open areas with only a lone tree that all the stock stand under. When you have more trees it creates a micro climate that encourages better pasture growth and more comfortable conditions for stock.”

His ultimate aim is to have 30 percent of his land under open woodland vegetation, creating shade and other environmental benefits. As a member of the Balala Brushgrove Landcare group, Richard successfully applied for a Landcare grant to revegetate the property’s creek frontage. He has begun the process of planting 2500 Lomandra grass plugs (a thick native grass that binds soil together, creating a matting effect to reduce erosion), and 2,500 eucalypt trees.

“It’s really important to me to get the environmental balance right on this place. The property is part of our family life, and I know it’s not a profound concept, but I’m doing this for my kids and for the generations to come,” said Richard.

Richard Daugherty’s plan is to create a sustainable grazing operation, managing his business in a way that is in balance with a healthy environment. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA commends Mr Daugherty on his vision and commitment to sustainable farming.



Richard Daugherty and his daughter Neve plant Hakea seedlings

DUNG DELIGHTS: WHO'S THE NEW BEETLE IN TOWN

Participants in the Landcare Dung Beetle trapping project are breaking new ground, finding species of native dung beetles and other families of beetles that have not been recorded on the Tablelands before.

Sponsored by Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA and managed by Southern New England Landcare, the project sparked the interest of 6 landholders in the Southern Tablelands last year with the last trapping date to conclude the project happening this month. Project manager, Mahri Koch, feels the best part of the project has been watching this growing landholder interest and enthusiasm in all creatures found during trapping.

"Participants have caught many different kinds of beetles, and everyone has been really keen to find out what they are and how they live. The latest find was a type of beetle that belongs to the Geotrupine family and it is a new distribution record for the Tablelands."

Adjunct Professor Graham Hall (Zoology, UNE) has volunteered his experience and time to identify new beetle finds during this project. After many years working with these little creatures, he is still seeing species that are new to him. Last month's special beetle is a native dung beetle with the interesting name of *Onthophagus neostenocerus*. "This is a good find," said A/Prof Hall. "It is (also) a species that I have not seen before, and another new record for the Tablelands."

The results of the 12 month program have clearly demonstrated that the Tablelands lacks winter active dung beetle species for the continuous dispersal of stock dung across paddocks. It is hoped that this information will lend support to a future funding application to assist landholders to purchase dung beetle species that are able to tolerate our cold winters and actively move dung into the deep soil layers.

"A/Prof Hall's assistance with the identification of unusual and new beetles, and his giving freely of his time to talk with participants has been greatly appreciated by everyone. It is rare to be able to access such long term knowledge and experience here," said Mahri.

"All of our participating landholders have been enthusiastic and diligent with their trapping endeavours and without their consistent efforts, these new species records would not have been established."



Onthophagus neostenocerus
Meet the new native dung beetle
find for March.



Participants attract dung beetles
using dung placed on top of a
collection trap.





Southern New England Landcare Ltd
ACN 099 357 454

Resourcing Landcare in our region

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

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Catchment Management
Authority
Border Rivers-Gwydir



Catchment Management
Authority
Northern Rivers



Catchment Management
Authority
Namoi

General Meeting

6.30pm Wednesday 15th May 2013.

Uralla Community Centre (cnr Hill & Maitland St)

All members are invited.

Please contact your group's SNELCC Representative if you wish to accompany them to the meeting.

Dinner will be provided for a small charge.

Please RSVP by

Tuesday 14th May 2013

for catering purposes.

Tel 6772 9123 • mail@snelcc.org.au

www.snelandcare.org.au



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