



Autumn 2012

Bushcare News

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Past newsletters can be viewed in colour on Council's website www.bushcare.hornsby.nsw.gov.au

New Bushcare Signs

Hornsby Shire Bushcare PROJECT SITE

A group of volunteers from your community are working to restore and improve this bushland reserve.







Help support the wonderful work of your local Bushcare volunteers:

- Help reduce erosion and damage to plants by staying on designated tracks
- Please avoid damaging plants, logs, rocks and other natural features which provide homes for native wildlife
- Help reduce the spread of weeds by avoiding dumping garden waste and grass clippings on the site
- Please report incidents of illegal dumping to Council's Waste Hotline on 9847 4856

Do you want to get involved and find out more? Join Hornsby Shire Bushcare

Visit: www.bushcare.hornsby.nsw.gov.au
 Email: bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au
 Phone: 9847 6666




Project managed by
Hornsby Shire Council
Bushland and Biodiversity Team

You may have noticed one of these signs appearing on or near your Bushcare site in the past few months.

Council Bushland Staff are in the process of removing old Bushcare signs and replacing them with new ones, complete with updated contact details.

If you know of a old sign that is a bit hidden away, or on a site that is no longer active, can you please contact the office and leave a message.

Staff report



CONTACT DETAILS
Hornsby Shire Bushcare
Earthwise Cottage
28 Britannia St, Pennant Hills

General Bushcare enquiries
Email bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au
Fax number 9484 3588
Mail to: PO BOX 37
Hornsby NSW 1630

Environmental Scientist - Bushcare
Leanne Johnston and Meron Wilson
9847 6362

Coordinator Community Programs
Michelle Brown and Danielle Sutton
9847 6360

Nursery and guided bushwalk
information
Ross Rapmund 9847 6361

Registration cards

Since 2011, all Bushcare registration cards will be valid for **five years**. Unfortunately they only cover Bushcode workshop attendees from the beginning of that year. It is important to do the refresher bushcode to brush up on your skills and keep your accreditation current.

Do we have your current email?

Have you moved, changed jobs or just changed your email address? If so, please update your details with us.

By choosing to view you get to save trees and you will also be one of the first people to view the latest newsletter!

Your stories and news items are always very welcome

Visit us on the web
www.bushcare.hornsby.nsw.gov.au

There have been a few changes to the Council's Bushcare Team.

Danielle Sutton

With her oldest child now in Primary School Danielle is able to resume more of her duties as Community Programs Coordinator. She is working at the Earthwise Cottage three days a week - Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. In April she will go back to full time work.

Michelle Brown

Michelle continues to fill the Community Programs Coordinator role on Thursday and Friday until April. On other days Michelle works in the Bushfire Management Team at Council Chambers, as well as looking after five Bushcare groups on the weekends.

Liz Pearce

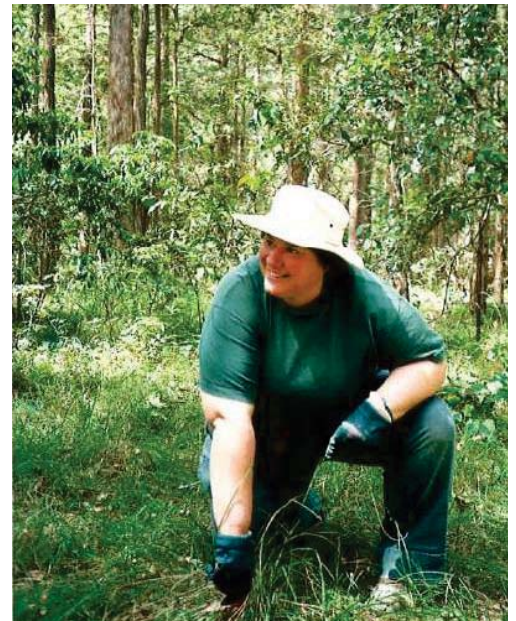
Liz is back one day a week developing promotional design materials for the Bushland teams.

Mary Ann resigns

We are sad to announce that Bushcare Trainer Mary Ann La Macchia has decided to leave Council. She has been the trainer for many groups in the Hornsby Shire, and she will be sadly missed by all.

Most recently she was working with the groups at

Appletree Drive, Cherrybrook;
Cherrybrook Technology High School,
Cherrybrook; Hampden Road, Pennant Hills;
Hopeville Park, Hornsby; Hornsby Creek, Hornsby; Katta Close, Asquith;
Lynbrae Avenue, Beecroft; Short Street, Thornleigh; Tim Brownscombe, Galston; Berowra Waters Ferry, Berowra Waters; and Castle Howard Rd, Cheltenham.



Mary Ann says goodbye...

After 7 wonderful years as a Bushcare Trainer with Hornsby Council, due to ongoing health issues I must sadly leave Hornsby Council. I have enjoyed every minute that I have worked with my volunteers. Some of the most memorable moments would be when I would tease a new volunteer when they didn't know what to pull out I would tell them "when in doubt pull it out". The looks on their faces was priceless. Then I would show them the right way of doing the task ahead.

Other treasured experiences include watching a site go from a weed and rubbish infested area to a beautiful area of native bushland. Neal Park in Hornsby is one of these sites, where people will say what a great job you are doing.

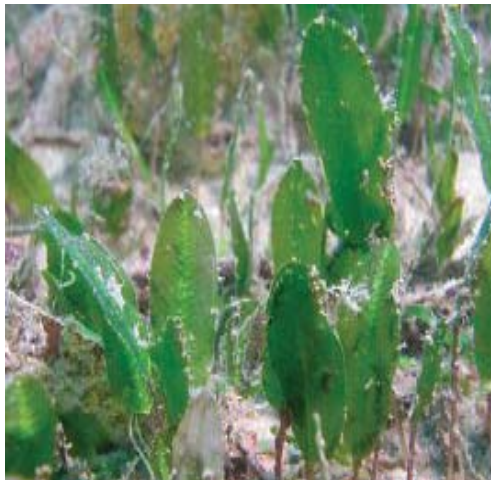
Morning Teas. If I was asked to give a prize for this one it would be to Katta Close as the four daughters of the group make a great morning tea, even Gluten free. But if you were to ask me if I had a favourite group I would say no. All my bushcare sites were special, as were the volunteers in them.

Cheers & good bye

Saving our Seagrasses



Eelgrass (*Zostera capricorni*) has narrow straplike leaves, 1-5mm wide and up to 50cm long. This is the most dominant species in this area.



Paddleweed (*Halophila ovalis*) has paired oval leaves, 5-20mm wide and 1-5cm long. Visible in the shallow waters on the southern side of Dangar Island.



Strapweed (*Posidonia australis*) is the largest of these seagrasses with strap-like leaves, 6-14mm wide and 30-60cm long.

There are three species of seagrass in the Hawkesbury River estuary.

Seagrasses are part of our fragile estuarine ecosystems and can be easily destroyed. Many major estuaries in NSW have lost as much as two-thirds of their seagrass beds in the last 30-40 years. Seagrasses are flowering plants that grow below the high tide level in the sheltered and shallow waters or our estuaries. They are generally found in soft sediments like sand and mud.

Seagrass beds are valuable fish habitats that support many coastal fisheries. They are commonly known as the nurseries of the ocean with fish using them to spawn and take refuge from predators. Many fish species including bream, luderick, leatherjackets, snapper and sea mullet live in seagrass habitats for all or part of their life cycle. As a result, there is commonly a greater diversity and abundance of fish near seagrasses than in unvegetated areas.

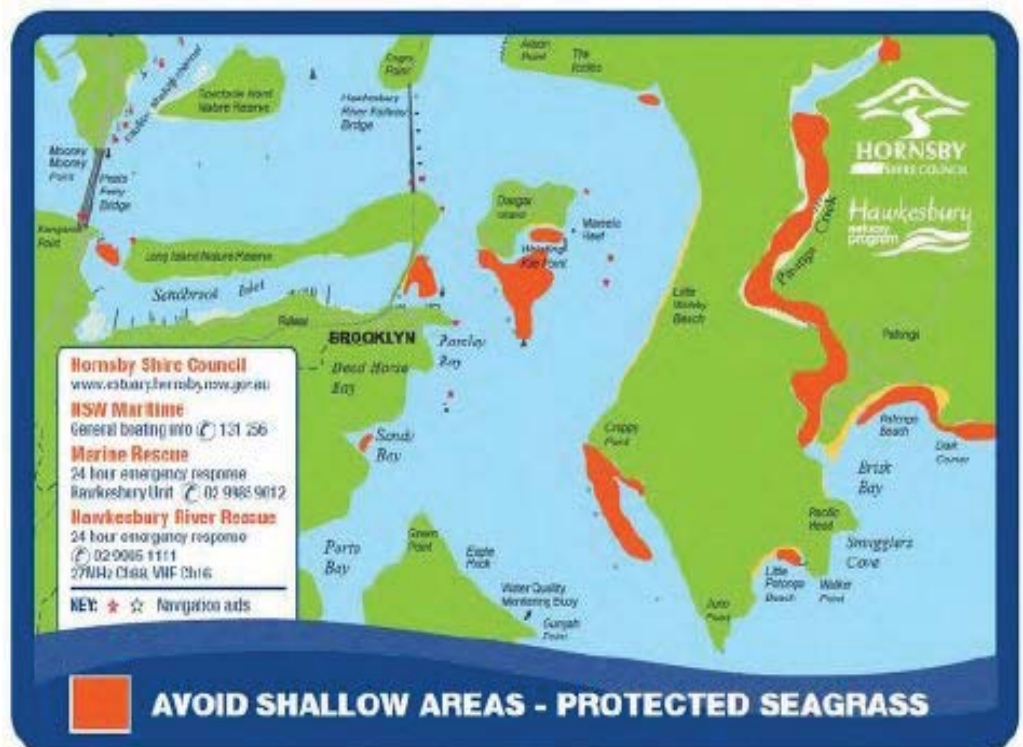
How is Council Protecting our Seagrass?

A seagrass identification sticker has been developed for recreational boat users. The sticker is designed to be placed in hire and drive vessels and privately owned recreational vessels to easily identify locations to avoid.

The stickers are based on local boating maps and highlight shallow areas and seagrass beds to prevent boaters from running aground or damaging fragile seagrasses with their propellers. They also provide local boating and rescue information.

The stickers were designed in consultation with NSW Maritime and local marine rescue organisations. They are available from Council and have been distributed to local hire boat companies, Marine Rescue Hawkesbury Unit, Hawkesbury River Rescue, Gosford City Council and NSW Maritime.

Stickers can be picked up at the Hornsby Council administration desk.



Platypus in Hornsby Shire?

The platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is the animal emblem of New South Wales and a well-known symbol of Australia. One of only five living species of monotreme (the other four being echidnas), these semi-aquatic animals can be found in a wide variety of streams, rivers, lakes, and manmade water bodies in coastal areas of eastern Australia. Their distribution is unpredictable and discontinuous, as they appear to be absent from some relatively healthy rivers, yet have been found in others that are quite degraded. They are adapted to life in freshwater environments, and require both a good supply of prey species, and banks where they can dig resting and nesting burrows.

Are there any platypus in Hornsby Shire?

Hornsby Shire contains many areas that appear to be suitable habitat for platypus, including the upper reaches of Berowra Creek, Cowan Creek and the Lane Cove River. Nevertheless, there are no recent confirmed sightings of platypus by Council's Bushland and Biodiversity Team, Water Catchments Team, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, or by long-term residents and bushwalkers in the Shire.

This may be due to the fact that they are a very difficult animal to observe. Being active mainly at dawn, dusk or at night, they spend the majority of their time under water or in burrows. Or, sadly, it may be that they are absent from the Shire.

Were there ever platypus in Hornsby Shire?

Platypus are thought to have the same general distribution today as they did prior to European settlement of Australia, and there is historical evidence for platypus having once occurred in this area of Sydney. In fact, the first ever record of a platypus sighting by a European colonist was near the Hawkesbury River in 1797.

They were also observed in Epping bushland in the early 1900's. In 1976 one was observed at Milson Island on the Hawkesbury River just North of Muogamarra Nature Reserve, and a year later near Kimmerikong Creek west of Cowan within the Nature Reserve itself.

In 1982, a platypus was observed on the north side of the Hawkesbury River in Dharug National Park, and in 1983 there were two sightings within Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park: along Cockle Creek, just South of Bobbin Head; and near the entrance to Cowan Creek on the northern bank.

Where have they gone?

If Hornsby Shire appears to contain suitable habitat for platypus, and there are historical records of them occurring in the area, why do they now appear to be absent?

Officially classified as "common but vulnerable", the platypus is not currently considered to be endangered. Nevertheless, populations are believed to have declined or disappeared in many catchments, particularly in urban and agricultural landscapes. In most cases, the specific underlying reasons for the reduction in numbers remain unknown. Once gone from an area, however, they have only a limited potential for re-colonisation.

Natural predators of the platypus include snakes, water rats, goannas, hawks, owls, and eagles, yet these are unlikely to have affected overall platypus numbers. Up until the early twentieth century, they were widely killed by humans for their fur, and introduced predators such as foxes, dogs and cats are presumed to have had a major impact on populations.

Platypus are also vulnerable to the effects of pollution and declining water quality. For the platypus to stay warm



Photo by: Matthew Temple- taken on private property at Tarana NSW

while in the water, its fur must remain completely clean and waterproof, and not be fouled by oil or other pollutants. Furthermore, they are not adept at removing objects caught around the head or body and can die after becoming ensnared in litter such as loops of nylon fishing line or plastic six-pack holders.

Platypus numbers are most often limited by the availability of food, mainly in the form of bottom-dwelling aquatic invertebrates. The misuse of chemicals (such as pesticides, herbicides, surfactants and fertilizers) near waterways can disrupt the aquatic food chain, greatly reducing the platypus food supply.

Platypus and their food species struggle to survive in areas where native vegetation has been cleared from stream and river banks. Furthermore, due to the development on the surrounding ridge tops of Hornsby, many of the deeper ponds along the creeks have been filled with sediment. The expansive hard surfaces and stormwater systems of our urban areas have also dramatically altered the hydrology of these creeks, creating fast-flowing, high energy floods whenever it rains. Such conditions may not be ideal habitat for platypus or their prey.

How can we help to encourage platypus numbers?

Don't let your dogs and cats wander unsupervised at night - this will help safeguard the welfare of your pets as well as wildlife. Obey local laws which prohibit the presence of unleashed pets near lakes, rivers and streams, particularly in Wildlife Protection Areas. Even during the day, uncontrolled dogs and cats can disrupt the natural behaviour of platypus and other native species occupying such habitats.

If you live near a river or stream, retain or regenerate the native vegetation, or plant local native species in your garden. Installing a water tank and re-using stormwater will help reduce the surge of water into the local creeks. And remember – whatever you pour into the street gutters is what the platypus will be swimming in.

If you ever think you've seen a platypus or even hear rumours of one being seen, we'd love to hear about it. Contact the Bushland and Biodiversity Team on 9847 6832.

Sources

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 2011, *Platypus*, URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platypus> (accessed 13 Oct 2011).

Strahan, R. (Editor) 2004, *The Mammals of Australia*, Australian Museum & Reed New Holland, Australia.

Australian Platypus Conservancy n.d., *The Platypus: a very special Australian*, URL: <http://www.platypus.asn.au/> (accessed 13 Oct 2011).

Hawkins, R. (7 October 2001 pers. comm.), *Dora Williams, Transcript of Interview with Septimus Medcalfe of Epping. C 1940 courtesy Alan Williams*.

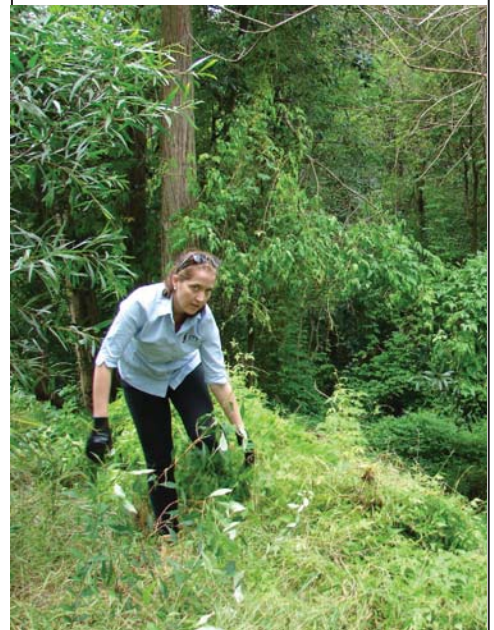
For a recent article about dangers to platypus in the Sydney Region see article in the Sydney Morning Herald. <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/platypus-death-demonstrates-danger-of-discarding-rubbish-thoughtlessly-20111211-1opmf.html>

*By Stephen Pym
Bushland Operations Field Officer
Bushland & Biodiversity Team*

Transurban Corporate Weeding Day

On the 15th December, The Bushland and Biodiversity team held a corporate weeding day for the Transurban group who are in charge of the M2 and have provided a sponsorship of some \$23,000 a year to the Bushland and Biodiversity team over the past 4 years.

This money has funded bush regeneration contracts in the Beecroft / Cheltenham area adjacent to the M2; signage and brochures for the Beecroft / Cheltenham Link Track; and professional bush regeneration contractors to assist 8 bushcare groups located in this reserve.



We had a very successful day with 18 staff from Transurban, Leighton's, M2 and the RTA.

Activities included bush regeneration works; planting adjacent to the Cheltenham oval; a tour of the nearby catchment remediation device (led by David Bolton) and a guided bushwalk (led by Ross Rapmund).

A big thanks to Ross, Sonny, Meron, and Steve for their assistance with the activities.

*Danielle Sutton
Bushland Community Programs Co-ordinator*

Vale Janne Hourigan



Janne passed away in January 2012, as a result of complications from an earlier fall. She had a strong sense of service to the community, coupled with a practical streak which meant she got things done. Janne noticed the weeds slowly taking over the bush in the Wallumeda Reserve near her home, and joined the Hornsby Shire Council Bushcare program in 1997 so she could do something about it.

Janne was joined by like-minded neighbours Louise and Jacky, and the three worked side by side for the next twelve years. They were joined by other neighbours and the New Farm Road group has met regularly every week since to do battle with the weed invaders.

The Bushcare site is home to a remnant of Blue Gum High Forest, and while the canopy and mid-storey are now free of vines and woody competitors, getting the weedy groundcovers to maintenance management level has proven tricky. Janne developed a special relationship with Trad, and would diligently trace and remove every piece.

Apart from her volunteer commitment to Bushcare, Janne was also involved in the operation of a charity organisation. She remained committed in spirit even when her body was failing.

Janne will be sorely missed by her Bushcare buddies, and by the bushland she cared for so well.

Nursery happenings

Following on from a huge rainfall of 1497mm for 2011 (nearly 500mm over the yearly average) the start to 2012 has seen continued above average rainfall. Although this has allowed the irrigation to be turned off for a large part of 2012 it has presented tricky growing conditions for some of the traditional nursery crops which prefer lower humidity and well drained growing conditions. Coupled with much reduced sunlight hours this has hindered some crops' growth. None-the-less, the nursery looks fantastic and December 2011 also saw a record amount of plants despatched due to the wet summer growing conditions.

The 2012 Nursery plant giveaways will have some new exciting plants on offer including Trigger Plants (*Stylidium productum*), Lance Beard Heath (*Leucopogon lanceolatus*), Pastel Flowers (*Pseuderanthemum variabile*) and Blackthorns (*Bursaria spinosa*). Good numbers of old favourites such as NSW Christmas Bush, Native Irises and Flannel Flowers will also be generally available. Check the council website for when your suburb is eligible for plant giveaways.



Lost Library Books

Jo Anne, our Administration Support Officer, is putting the Earthwise Cottage reference library back in order, and introducing a new cataloguing system .

She has noticed a number of books are no longer on the shelves. The books are there for everyone to use, and many have been donated for that purpose.

If you have borrowed a book recently and not returned it, can you please return it, or let someone at the Cottage know you have it.

Remember: When borrowing and returning books please update the book borrowing register.

What's on out there

Bushcare Boosters - The Birds and Bees of Bushcare

Fauna is an essential element of a healthy ecosystem, including insects, reptiles and birds. What Fauna is on your bushcare site? What fauna could be on your bushcare site?

This workshop is a pilot of one of the 'Bushcare Boosters' training modules currently being developed by the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, and is offered **free** to existing bushcare volunteers.

This workshop will cover:

- Understanding ecosystems and fauna relationships

- Elements of habitat
- Animal interactions
- Specific fauna requirement and limitations of urban fauna
- General fauna management tips
- Steps to create a fauna friendly Bushcare site
- Case studies, and a look around the nearby coast for local habitat potential!

Saturday 17 March, 9am-1pm

Earthwise cottage

See back page for booking details

Jenolan Caves Volunteer Weekends

- Sycamore war -

17 - 18 MARCH & 5 - 6 MAY

Open invitation to help tackle 50 hectares of invasive weeds invading bushland!

- All tools and equipment supplied.
- Professional supervision
- All accommodation and main meals provided
- Precinct tour, nocturnal spotlighting and/or a cave tour as an extra activity offered.

For more information or to book contact TRISH KIDD, NPWS Oberon
Ph: 6336 1972 Mob: 0423 527 740
Email: tkidd@exemail.com.au

Weed Alert: Tropical Soda Apple

Solanum viarum, or Tropical Soda Apple, is an upright, much-branching, perennial shrub 1–2 m high with cream-coloured prickles to 12 mm long scattered on most plant parts.

It invades open to semi-shaded areas including pastures, forests, riparian zones, roadsides, recreational areas, horticulture and cropping areas. Its foliage is unpalatable to livestock, and its prickles to grazing by native animals. It forms thickets that act as physical barriers preventing animals access to shade and water.

Tropical soda apple is a native of north eastern Argentina, south eastern Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. It was first recorded in Florida in 1987 and by 1995, it covered half a million hectares.

Tropical soda apple reproduces via seed and can regenerate from root material. Seed can be spread by feral animals and birds that feed on the fruit, and via water and contaminated produce, soil and equipment. In NSW cattle movement is currently the major vector of spread.



Young Tropical Soda Apple plant

In Australia it was first identified in the upper Macleay Valley in NSW in August 2010. It has the potential to spread inland, and along the coastal regions of NSW and Queensland.

Scattered plants have recently been found behind two private properties adjoining Lincoln Reserve, Collaroy in Warringah LGA, Sydney.

If you find this plant please contact Rosanna Luca at the Sydney Weeds Committee Inc. on (02) 9895 7488.

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds/profiles/tropical-soda-apple>



Underside of leaf showing pale thorns



Fruit split open revealing mass of seeds

Diary dates and events

Please note you need to book into most events, and numbers are limited. If you don't book the event may be cancelled.

Bushcode Refresher

For existing volunteers who need to renew their registration. Valid for five years.

When? Thursday 22 March
Tuesday 05 June
Time? 5:30pm-8:00pm
Where? Hornsby Council Chambers
Book: 9847 6362
Email: bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au

The Birds and Bees of Bushcare - Bushcare Boosters

A fantastic opportunity to learn what fauna is using your bushcare site and how to make sure your site is providing quality habitat. This pilot of one of the 'Bushcare Boosters' training modules offered by the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority is free to existing bushcare volunteers.

When? Saturday 17 March
Time? 9:00am-1:00pm
Where? Earthwise Cottage
28 Britannia St, Pennant Hills
Book: 9847 6832
Email: bushland@hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Nursery Plant Give-aways

Ratepayers from selected suburbs can pick up four free plants. Conditions apply. See Council website for details.

When? Saturday 24 March
Saturday 21 April

CMA Community Volunteers Forum

Join fellow environment volunteers to celebrate successes and share ideas for facing future challenges and enter in the Best Volunteer Group photo competition. This event was advertised for 17 March.

When? Saturday 31 March
Time? 9:00am—3:00pm
Where? Waterview, Bicentennial Park
Book: 9895 6207
Email: nicola.dixon@cma.nsw.gov.au

Volunteer Photo Exhibition

Take your family and friends to admire the winning photos from the 2011 Bushcare Volunteers Photo competition.

When? 26 March-23 April
Time? Library opening hours
Where? Pennant Hills Library
Cnr. Ramsay & Yarrara Roads
Inquiries: 9847 6100

Pool to Pond conversion site visit

Learn how you can transform your backyard pool into a wildlife haven, and visit a site where it has been done.

When? Tuesday 03 April
Time? 10:00am-12:00pm
Where? TBC when booking
Roseville area
Book: 9424 0179
Email: bushcare@kmc.nsw.gov.au

Bushcode

Essential for all new Bushcare volunteers. Existing volunteers can attend the morning session to renew their registration.

When? Friday 20 April
Saturday 26 May
Time? 8:45am-3:00pm
Where? Earthwise Cottage
28 Britannia St, Pennant Hills
Book: 9847 6362
Email: bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Beecroft Park burn site walk

Discover what plants are emerging in a Blackbutt Gully Forest community after a prescribed burn in 2010 followed by good rains.

When? Wednesday 16 May
Time? 2:00pm-4:00pm
Where? Castle Howard Rd, Beecroft
Book: 9847 6832
Email: bushland@hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Dangar Island Site Tour

Celebrate National Volunteer Week with a tour of the Dangar Island Bushcare site. More details when booking.

When? Saturday 19 May
When? 9:30am-3:00pm
Where? Ferry Terminal
End of Brooklyn Rd, Brooklyn
Book: 9847 6832

Almost every week there is a free guided walk through a part of the Hornsby Shire bushland. Brochures at libraries and Council offices.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS NEWSLETTER

You can send your stories or letters to the Editor in for the next edition by 1 MAY 2012
Fax: : 9847 6362 **Mail:** PO Box 37, Hornsby 1630 or **Email:** bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au
This newsletter has been compiled by the Bushcare Team and Bushcare volunteers



THE BUSHLAND SHIRE
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