

Bushcare news



iNaturalist – get involved!

Bushcare Bioblitz

2022 in review

Awards

2022 Photo competition winners

Hills-Hornsby Koala Talk

Volunteer profile

John Savage

An adventure with
Beecroft Cub Scouts

Duck-billed critters
and eDNA

Protecting Our Forests

Threatened geebung

Wild pollinator count

+ Staff reports | Bushcare volunteer profiles | Bushcare training | Office matters | Diary dates and events

things to
remember

A few housekeeping notes

Requesting Council help for non Bushcare matters

If you find a tree has fallen over a walking track, or someone has dumped rubbish in the bush, or something has happened that you think Council has some responsibility for, the fastest way to get assistance is to call the main phone number **9847 6666**, explain briefly what the issue is, and ask to place a Customer Service Request.

Bushland Programs Team

Coordinator- Bushland Programs Team
Jeannette Stannard

Environmental Scientist – Bushland
Reserve Management (North East)
Donna Fitton

Environmental Scientist- Bushland Reserve
Management (South)
Ty Suter

Environmental Scientist- Bushland Reserve
Management (North West)
Petra Holland

Environmental Scientist – Bushcare
Leanne Johnston

Bushcare Field Officer
Jean-Philippe Kecman

SAFEHOLD

Incident and hazard reporting
9847 4848 including outside business hours



*Sara from NPWS at our Protecting Our Forests
community event*

2023 is proving to be another year of extreme weather patterns. Sydney's record-breaking March heat, more flooding in the top end of Australia, and sadly fish kills in Menindee Lakes demonstrates our climate woes are not going away by themselves. As bushcarers we play an important role in reducing some of the negative impacts on our local bushland. Not only do we actively reverse the damage done by poor land practices of the past, we are out and about showing how a community's actions and choices help restore the local environment.

Farewells

Ross Rapmund

Regrettably, Ross Rapmund has resigned as Council's Community Nursery and Guided Bushwalks Coordinator. He is enjoying life, especially his weekends, in his new role at Harvest Seed and Native Plants Nursery. He is sure to continue to grow beautiful and healthy native plants for all. We feel quite privileged that Ross spent the last 15 years with Council, promoting and preserving local native species and bushland, and sharing his vast knowledge. Ross has watched over four successive expansion and modernisation phases of the nursery. He produced an average of 45,000 plants per year with the help of a dedicated team of volunteers.



Hornsby Community Nursery state award winner for best govt nursery in NSW & ACT

Michelle Brown

Michelle dabbled in a few positions at Council, but for us she was a Bushcare Trainer, joining the team in 2005. She then 'went bush' for a short while and returned in 2008, where she remained as a Trainer until February 2023. Michelle was also one of the Bushfire Management Officers between 2012 and 2023. She was admired for her technical skills, mapping expertise, all things creative, and her mad sense of humour. She had a strong connection to her volunteers and was always ready to advocate for their needs within our team. Michelle is now in Alice Springs working for the Northern Territory Government in the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security's Rangelands Monitoring Team. We will miss her and wish her all the best on her adventures in the Northern Territory.



Share your observation on iNaturalist

What is iNaturalist Australia

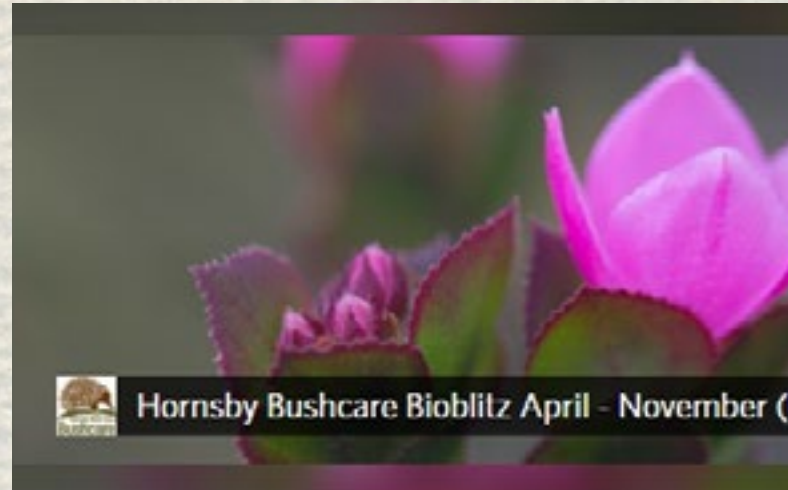
iNaturalist Australia a collaboration between iNaturalist Network and the Atlas of Living Australia. It is a crowd-sourced identification tool to help you learn more about the environment, with members of the community identifying the plants, animals, and other living things in your photos. It is available for researchers or for anyone wanting to find out more about nature. Confirmed observations become part of the Atlas of Living Australia, hosted by the CSIRO.

Why iNaturalist?

First launched in 2008, iNaturalist is one of the most globally successful nature-based digital programs (when comparing participation rates and quantity of data collected). Anyone with a computer or smartphone can be part of this online social network of people, sharing biodiversity information and helping each other learn about nature.

You can use the iNaturalist.org website or the iNaturalist app. to search the public dataset and interact with others who have submitted observations and identifications, or simply explore what they have found. There are tools for users to add, identify, and discuss observations, and detailed fact sheets about each species. iNaturalist also has an automated species identification tool, producing a drop-down list of suggested species for each observation.

Bushland Programs staff assessed the suitability of iNaturalist for our needs and can confidently say 'it's a winner!' It's very easy to use and is a great learning tool, for absolute beginners right through to experienced naturalists. It even has the capacity to identify unseen living things. For example, you can submit evidence such as photos of animal tracks, nests and scats, and audio recordings.



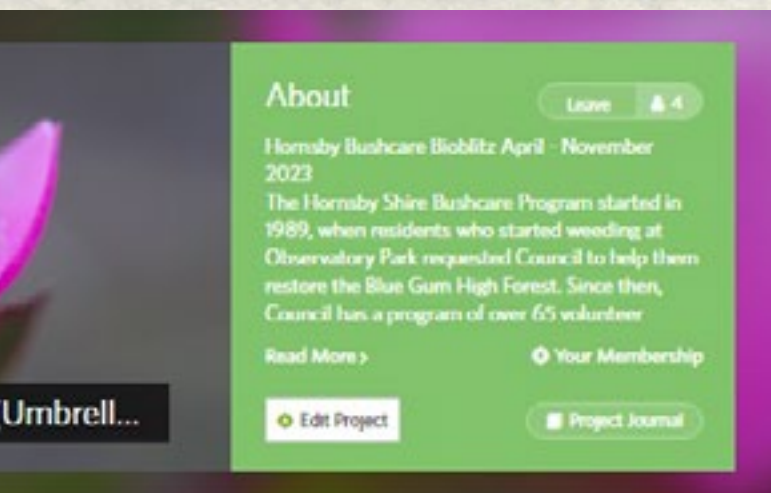
Have a go and join – ***Hornsby Bushcare Bioblitz - April to November 2023***

- A Bioblitz is a place-specific or time-bound project that aims to observe as many species as possible using iNaturalist. The place can be as small as an urban bushland pocket or as large as, say, the Southern Hemisphere. For this project, the 'place' is our 60+ Bushcare sites and the period is 1 April 2023 to 30 November 2023.
- The Hornsby Bushcare Bioblitz will help us create up-to-date species lists for all our Bushcare sites and will connect you with others in the community who love nature. Through this project, you could even connect with local scientists and contribute to scientific research. iNaturalist is also a great place to store the collection of encounters you have had, building up your own personal 'library' of species.
- Anyone with an iNaturalist account can add observations. The project rule is that observations must occur within the boundaries of a recognised Hornsby Council Bushcare site between 1 April and 30 November 2023.

Handy hints for the iNaturalists

To assist sound identification, please be sure to:

- only upload focussed photos, as blurry photos are rarely identifiable.



- ensure key features are visible. For example, key features can include flowers, fruiting bodies, bark, the underside of leaves and more.
- upload more than one photo for each item observed, where required to confirm identity. For example, if you are photographing a plant in flower, make sure you take detailed photos of the flowers, another of the leaf arrangement, close-ups of leaf venation (front and back) and a photo showing the overall form of the plant. The same goes for fauna, fungi, and other living things, especially minibeasts.
- indicate the scale. This could be an object placed in the photo to help an identifier determine the size of the organism, or it could be a ruler. See Petra's photo, identified as a feather from a kookaburra.
- give your observation a title. The title can be as broad as 'plant' or 'insect' (for example) or go right down to genus or species. This will help experienced identifiers find your observation
- check out the video tutorials on the iNaturalist.org website.

Every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed. From iNaturalist



How to participate

Step 1:

Download the iNaturalist app to your handheld device or computer: Android or Apple

Step 2:

Create a free iNaturalist account

Step 3:

Join the Hornsby Bushcare Bioblitz project

Step 4:

Take some photos during your next nature experience and upload them to iNaturalist

BUSHCARE AND NURSERY

After too many COVID-19 years, we celebrated 33 years of the Hornsby Shire Bushcare Program with style at Pennant Hills Bowling Club on the last Saturday of November 2022. It was a sell-out event! Special guests included Mayor Philip Ruddock, Cr Sreeni Pillamarri and our guest speakers Lilly and Pat Schwartz who kindly donated their time to talk about their passion of searching for koalas in the rural areas of north-western Sydney.

Staff attending on the day were:

- Coordinator Bushland Programs – Jeannette Stannard
- Environmental Scientist Bushcare – Leanne Johnston
- Bushcare Field Officer – JP Kecman
- Acting Nursery Coordinator – Tony Gorman
- Bushcare Trainers:
 - Michelle Brown
 - Melinda Eyselshoven
 - Anita Wynne
 - Jonatan Zethner
 - Jenny Heller

Meron Wilson, our usual MC, sent her apologies from Chile, her second home.

Over 10 Years of Service Award

View Street Bushcare Group

View Street Bushcare site in Cowan has been an active site for over 13 years. It is an excellent example of Duffy's Forest and Grey Gum- Scribbly Gum Woodland vegetation communities. The site is in good condition, with plenty to do each visit. Thank you to Jane Gye and Nikki and Matteo Volonte for keeping this beautiful part of Cowan beautiful. The site has splendid views across the pristine Muogamarra Nature Reserve towards Berowra Creek and Bujwa Bay. It is an excellent way to spend a Sunday morning.



20 Years of Service Awards

Wareemba Avenue/Tyas Bushcare Group

This Thornleigh group was started by Barbara Tyas and Diane Redman in 1998 when the site was heavily infested with privet, lantana, giant reed and jasmine.



Once weeds in the original section of the Bushcare site were under control, the group expanded north where more primary works were undertaken. An ecological burn took place in 2007 and achieved impressive results. In 2010, the group secured a Landcare grant to remove the giant reed plumes dotting the site.

Today, the bushland along Larool Creek is a testament to over 20 years of thoughtful, consistent effort and advocacy for the site. The creek is lined with water gums and tree ferns, and the Peppermint- Angophora Forest is carpeted with native groundcovers and ferns. Lyrebirds call along the valley, wallabies and echidnas pass through, and many water dragons call this part of Larool Creek home. The group enjoys each other's company and Barb's prize-winning cakes at morning tea, along with a regularly visiting butcher bird. The current challenge, with this year's wet weather, has been the trad (and the leeches!), but the group continues to expand the Bushcare site into new areas, while maintaining and enjoying the beautiful bushland along the creek.

Clarinda Street Bushcare Group

Hornsby's Clarinda Street Bushcare Group started when members of the local community wanted to restore an urban edge of what is now Berowra Valley National Park between Stewart and Clarinda streets in Hornsby. The site was badly degraded by weeds, including a bamboo stand and major drainage issues within the Bloodwood- Scribbly Gum Woodland plant community.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Katta Close Bushcare Group

In 2003, Karen and Richard contacted Council to initiate a group at Katta Close Close, where Hornsby and Asquith meet. The initial focus was to improve the conditions in Grimson's Gully, gradually reducing thickets of privet, lantana, jasmine, and a huge stand of rhizomatous bamboo - a weed that became a personal challenge for Richard spanning the next two decades!!! At one point, the jasmine infestation was so thick along Grimson's Gully that this section of the Bushcare site was nicknamed 'Jasmine Valley'. The weed jasmine is no longer a problem but the name has remained in reference to one of Karen and Richard's daughters who shares the same name.



As volunteer membership increased over the years, the group was able to incorporate Wall's Gully into the site. Today, a group of 11 volunteers, including new neighbours Jared Drew and Mia Hosaka, diligently work to strengthen the creekline, which is often ravaged during high rain events – *La Nina* being the ultimate adversary. Revegetating the area with riparian and local gully species is successfully mitigating this issue, delivering a beautiful, healthy corridor to adjoining bushland.

Now, after 20 years of Bushcare, when the volunteers relax on the Bradings' veranda for morning tea, the abundance of native fauna below and the stunning array of birdsong is blissful!

Kirkham Street Bushcare Group

The following words from trainer Jonatan sum up the spirit of this group. "Tis an absolute honour and joy working with Sheila Woods and her fellow Bushcare ladies, Priscilla Leece, Anne Hadgraft and Blanche Menadier, these grand *Lady Passionadas* of Kirkham Street, Beecroft. Like all the other passionate Bushcarers out there, they're preserving important bushland with their diligent and enthusiastic efforts.'

Fearnley Park Bushcare Group

Over the last 20 years there has been a significant transformation of this Beecroft reserve from a weed-infested drainage line in a park to a restored and reconstructed Blue Gum High Forest corridor. Founding group member Richard Shields is still hard at work in the reserve, working with current volunteers Geoff Bowmaker and Maiva Smith. Past long-term volunteers included Kerry King and Hillary Butters. In the more recent past, the group has increased native vegetation in the reserve by extending the no-mow zones as the stages of regeneration allow. By following basic bush regeneration principles, they have improved the amenity of the park and protected the remnant Blue Gum High Forest.

Duneba Drive Bushcare Group

The Duneba Drive Bushcare site in Westleigh contains a large sediment basin and is part of the Berowra Valley National Park. It is affectionately named *Bob's Corner* in memory of local resident Bob Langley.

Bob contributed to this site prior to the commencement of Hornsby Shire Council's Bushcare program in 1989. Bob's neighbour, Dick Perkins, assisted him with his weeding efforts. Bob felt duty-bound to continue Bob's legacy, and the Duneba Drive Bushcare Group was officially created in 2002.

Dick often talked fondly of Bob and of how the pair of them would camp with their children on this corner of bushland across the road from their houses, and how it had given them a strong sense of connection to the area.

The group has recently reinvested effort into Bob's corner, and with extra people power has completed a fabulous planting throughout the edge under the watchful eye of the local Kookaburra family. These plantings have already flowered and, "gladdened all our hearts."

Binya Close Bushcare Group

Penny Watson started the group in 1992. It formed out of a community group who came together to stop a proposed Landcom housing development in Lyrebird Gully off Binya Close in Hornsby Heights. Threatened plants and animal species were found on site and Binya Close Bushcare Group has continued to look after them.

Frog expert Karen Thumm, the only original group member left from 1992, guides the group in protecting the habitats of red-crowned toadlets and giant burrowing frogs, both threatened species. The Bushcare site has also a big...

population of the threatened species *Persoonia mollis* subsp. *maxima*, which after the hazard reduction burn in 2012 is being monitored under a NSW Government *Saving our Species* grant.

The group has faced a range of challenges over time, from weeds to asbestos, legacy rubbish dumping, and Ausgrid trail management issues.

25 Years of Service Awards

Top of Lane Cove Bushcare Group

Hidden in a tranquil, shaded valley in Normanhurst, the Top of Lane Cove Bushcare Group derived its name from its location. The site's creek sits at the headwaters ... or TOP... of the Lane Cove River. Its acronym 'TLC' also denotes the devoted attention given to the bushland by its original carers, Chris Stanton, John Savage, John Ashley, Geoff Ironmonger and Phil Downing. Together, this band of Merry Bushcarers began the task of strategically removing the 'usual suspects' lantana and privet on the steep slope between the creek and the residential properties atop the sandstone ridge.

The group's efforts were given a boost when in 2006 an ecological burn allowed the group to maintain the beautifully emerging Blackbutt Gully Forest re-growth. Two decades on, the site now provides habitat, shade, protection and food sources for an increasing number of native birds and animals.

In October 2019, steps were installed by contractors to replace an informal track. Today, the TLC site offers a cool and inviting sojourn, regularly visited by local residents having discovered 'their bush' during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Although John Savage, the longest serving member recently retired from Bushcare, he continues to mentor the new generation of volunteers including Andrew Gowans, Trevor Whitfield and Rachel Wrigley-Smith.

Ferntree Close Bushcare Group

Located in Hornsby, the Ferntree Close neighbours requested help from Council to regenerate a section of un-made road on the north side of what is now called Hornsby Park. The Bushcare site had, and still has, many challenges with steep slopes, leeches, and ticks, but the volunteers have continued with a significant reduction of woody weeds and exotic vines, and a pocket of good bush has been established behind Dilys' home.

Neal Park Bushcare Group

There's 'something special' about this small patch of bush in the heart of Hornsby.

In 1902, Edward Swain built his house 'Coringah', leaving it

surrounded by native vegetation. Even before the built environment encroached a century later, successive owners of Coringah, including Edgeworth David, had the foresight to retain the native bush, 'preserving it for the benefit of the community'. Coringah and the surrounding grounds, were later heritage listed.

By the the 1990s, the land now known as Neal Park was purchased by Council and placed under the guardianship of natural resources staff. With Council support, local resident Michael Southam and his father-in-law established the Neal Park Bushcare Group in July 1997. This dedicated duo cared for the site until joined by Keith Robards, who is still an active member today! Their diligent Bushcare activities augmented the environmental vision initiated by Edward Swain.

Over recent years, high-rise development has supported an increase in population surrounding Neal Park. Many residents new to the area are from overseas and the Bushcare site has offered an opportunity for people to make new friends and learn about their new, natural environment. Neal Park Bushcare Group is now a vibrant, multicultural group of volunteers eager to 'give back' to their local community. They take much pride in beautifying their locality, strengthening the environmental health of the site, whilst also having fun working together.

That 'something special' about Neal Park has been the foresight through the generations to nurture this patch of land for the benefit of the community. Today, the efforts of the Bushcare volunteers endure to strengthen this legacy, making the reserve an inviting 'island of bushland in suburbia'!

Over 25 Years of Service Awards

Berry Park Bushcare Group

This Mt Colah group looks after an excellent example of Bloodwood- Scribbly Gum Woodland. The site is in excellent condition with a rich diversity of native flora, including threatened species *Darwinia biflora*.

Local resident Malcolm Hugman was a fierce advocate for the protection of this small but important bushland reserve. Malcolm was well known for making sure that neighbours and visitors alike treated the reserve with respect. He was never shy to let anyone know if they were doing anything wrong in the reserve. Malcolm moved to New Zealand in 2014 but fortunately, resident Jorgen Rasmussen took over from Malcolm at that time. Jorgen has since become the 'guardian' of Berry Park Bushland.

Here is a beaut little story about the site. In August 2016, a couple of teenagers decided it would be a wonderful idea to set the reserve on fire. The fire was eventually put out but managed to spread to about half the reserve where

our precious darwinias were growing. The odds didn't look good for the threatened species until 18 months later, a field of seedlings popped their heads up. The fire had played its part in the germination process. Council then proceeded to tag all the *Darwinia biflora* shrubs onsite with blue tape for monitoring purposes. It turned out that this tape was very popular with a resident male satin bower bird, who busily collected as much tape as possible for his bower! Unfortunately, he also managed to relocate one or two darwinia shrubs in his haste to collect the tape!

Amaroo Avenue Bushcare Group

This site, located in Mt Colah, is another beautiful example of Bloodwood- Scribbly Gum Woodland. Current volunteers are Ian Stromberg, Victor and Winfred Chan and Yvonne Yeung. The site is in pristine condition with volunteers removing mainly exotic grasses and annuals in the entrance area and perimeter of site.

In more recent months, working at this site has become very interesting as the volunteers dodge the very healthy population of leeches who are very keen to connect! The volunteers feel a little spoilt with the rich diversity of native flora at the site, including several species of orchids which are nice to look for and find at every visit.

Murray Road / Castle Howard Road Bushcare Group

Murray Road Bushcare site in Beecroft is a steep unmade road. A stormwater pipe from Murray Road empties into a natural channel that runs the length of the site. Primary weeding, under then Bushcare Trainer Jayne Clark (from 2000 to 2003), allowed native groundcovers to emerge. In 2006, a group of new neighbours, including Rosemary Walker, joined the group with Meron Wilson as the Bushcare Trainer.



With the building of the Sydney Metro rail line, where a patch of healthy bushland was removed in 2014 to make way for temporary vehicle access to build rail line. Intervention by Council resulted in some of the healthy topsoil being relocated at the site.

In 2016, the site looked sparse with only a sprinkle of regenerated native plants, that is, until some good autumn

rains brought the site to life. Three tree species are now competing for canopy dominance, while a healthy range of native shrubs and grasses are establishing in the lower layers.

The group is now busy terracing and planting the top of the slope at the end of Murray Road, with long-term volunteer Maureen Correy and Michael Horenko, Shane Wood and Fran Wang.

30 Years of Service Award

Rosemead Road Bushcare Group

The vegetation community for this Hornsby Bushcare site is Blue Gum Diatreme Forest. As you may have guessed, it is located just below the quarry. With soaring canopy trees and views up the valley, it is a very picturesque site. The area is popular with picnickers and hikers, especially since the lockdowns, often on their way to the Fishponds or up the heritage steps to Hornsby CBD.



Over 30 years of work, priorities have changed from primary clearing a dense infestation of privets near the creekline to taking care of upslope areas at the end of Rosemead Road, including post-burn work after fire in the 1990s. The group has achieved a largely self-sustaining area surrounding the picnic tables, with only occasional maintenance sweeps needed at the lawn edge and fauna-dispersed weeds in the core. Below the picnic lawn is an area with great native groundcover and canopy layers. The volunteers are currently trying to increase shrub diversity and the next generation of canopy trees. The most recent work area is along the heritage steps, inspired by the great regeneration following disturbance from conservation and repair works. The largest challenge faced is the residential edges, however the group has high hopes with the recent release of the trad bio control 'smut fungus' to help the volunteers' endeavours.

The group is lucky to have some very experienced volunteers who may be recognized from their work with other Bushcare groups, the nursery and other environmental projects. David gives a running commentary

of the bird calls across the site. He is often in contest with the hard-working Werner, as to who has the fullest bag of trad. The volunteers love hearing about the latest environmental projects Lynne is involved in and appreciate her years of experience she brings to the team as a previous bush regeneration site supervisor. Paula is probably one of the few bush regenerators happy to spot leeches, donating leeches from the site for use in research, as published in the journal *Parasitology*. Kent is the newest volunteer but is a real natural, coping with ehrharta and microlaena identification on his first day. Special mention needs to be made of Dr Dick, Richard Mason, who no longer attends work sessions. The group always enjoyed his stories of growing up in the area, his long dedication to the site and decades of work protecting and caring for the bushland in Hornsby.

You'll be happy to hear that there are some other fauna on the site apart from leeches. The compost piles are popular with frankfurter squirter worms *Didymogaster sylvaticus*. The group's seen an adult southern boobook owl with a pair of chicks just above the heritage steps. Over the years, swamp wallabies have enjoyed grazing the plantings. With plenty of hollows, there's often a great number of birds jostling for the best real estate. With the current wet climatic conditions, there's been a great flush of native passionflower, but it's been munched on by something. The prime suspects are possums, perhaps even the brushtail seen in the possum box by the creek.

Rosemead Road Bushcare is a terrific site with an even better bunch of volunteers. Congratulations on 30 years and here's to many more!

Over 30 Years of Service Award

Chilworth Reserve Bushcare Group

Chilworth Reserve is remnant Blue Gum High Forest, snuggled between the M2 Hills Motorway and a residential area of Beecroft. The team are incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic in their objective of improving the bushland at Chilworth Reserve and extending their care to other areas of bushland in the surrounding areas of Beecroft and Cheltenham.

Each work session, the group meets at a special spot for morning tea and discusses the issues or successes encountered during their endeavours. They also discuss the history of the area, local affairs and different perspectives on current affairs.

The group started in 1991 at the request of John Noble, who along with Esme Blackmore, Pat Hersey, John Single and Sheila Woods joined Jenny Lewis in an area of Chilworth Reserve that Jenny had been working in since 1987, before the Hornsby Bushcare Program commenced.

Past long-serving volunteers include Michael Hummell and Masako Piper. Other members who have made a big contribution in the past include Christine Austin, who continues to help when she can, Paulette DeMartin, Ken Laycock, John Edwards and Eva Jones. The group fondly remembers the contributions of those that have passed away- Doug Unmack, Ramsay Underwood, John Single, Pat Hersey and Donald Bartho.



Nursery volunteer of the year

Pat Houlcroft

2022 was a very interesting year for Warada Ngurang Community Nursery, with volunteering restarting in February and many changes along the way. The 2022 winner of the coveted Nursery Volunteer of the Year award was Pat Houlcroft. Pat was integral in creating the cottage garden and the raised planter boxes which were a feature of the nursery renaming ceremony. Pat has not only used his horticultural knowledge to assist the nursery coordinator in keeping plants looking great, he is also a loyal friend to other volunteers during health and life challenges. Congratulations Pat.

Golden Trowel Winner

The 2022 winner of the Golden Trowel Award was a person who is gentle and patient, yet their achievements over two decades of Bushcare are resounding!

Observing a highly degraded patch of bushland, this individual recognised the potential of the native flora hidden beneath the invading weeds. They also came to recognise the importance of a remaining patch of critically endangered bushland in a suburb being rapidly developed. Galvanising support from colleagues and Council, Bushcare commenced at this site in 2001.

This person has always been passionate about involving school students in the Bushcare program, allowing them to discover their local natives and to feel empowered by contributing towards the protection of their environment.

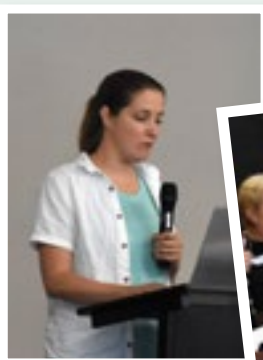
Over the years, this individual has been the linchpin for Bushcare at this site. They have been the central, cohesive

source of support and stability. Having vision for opportunities and ideas, they have strongly advocated to ensure a successful outcome for significant projects.

Along the way, they have been there to remind every school principal of the importance of the Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest plant community within Hornsby Shire, and each school's responsibility to contribute towards its protection. It is entirely due to the tenacity and galvanising efforts of Sandra Kalnins-Cole that a patch of critically endangered Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest at Cherrybrook remains!



Congratulations Sandra Kalnins-Cole!



Volunteers voting for their favourite photos



The 2022 Bushcare Photo



Metallic carpenter bee – see July in the Bushcare calendar

The annual Bushcare Photo Competition was as spectacular as ever. It had two categories; the traditional category *Hornsby: Our Beautiful Bushland Shire* and the category of the year, which for 2022 was *Relationships with Nature*. Bushcare and community nursery volunteers are encouraged to enter three photographs per category per year, and photos are judged at the volunteer Christmas party by popular vote.

We had 53 awe-inspiring entries. The 2022 winner of both categories,



Silveryeye on wattle – see February in the Bushcare calendar



Marie accepting her photography award



Common bronzewing – see April in the Bushcare calendar

Competition winners

Hornsby: Our Beautiful Bushland Shire and relationships with nature was Marie Kobler. Her photo *Metallic carpenter bee* is the July image in the 2023 Bushcare calendar and *Silvereye on wattle* is the February image. A big congratulations to Helen Curry for her photo of an echidna titled *Out of my way*, which came second in the main competition. Marie's *Common bronzewing* was second in the *Relationships with Nature* competition. Third place was David Hooper's *Romeo*, the lyrebird singing his song. Finally, a big congratulations to Denise Hooper for her photo *Fight club*, a raucous pic of parrots duking it out.



Romeo – see May in the Bushcare calendar



Fight club by Denise Hooper

Out of my way – see September in the Bushcare calendar



The 2023 Bushcare Photo Competition

The Annual Bushcare Photo Competition is open to Hornsby Bushcare and Community Nursery volunteers and Natural Resources Branch staff. Submissions close Tuesday 3 October 2023.

There are two categories in the 2023 competition, with a maximum of three entries per person per category:

- **Hornsby - Our Beautiful Bushland Shire** – the celebration of our environment. Photos must be taken between 1 October 2022 and 3 October 2023 on location within Hornsby Shire and be related to locally native plants and animals.
- **My Secret Space** – to celebrate how we connect with our landscape.

Submissions are to include the photographer's name, title of the photo and volunteer group name. Photos are to be at least 300dpi (resolution) or 1200 pixels width/height.

- By entering the competition, you agree for Council to use your photo to promote the local natural environment, including for social media posts.
- Winners will be awarded by popular vote and announced at the volunteer Christmas party. The judge's decision is final.
- A selection of the photos will be published in the 2024 Bushcare calendar.
- All entries will be used to promote Bushcare and natural areas management, including social media.
- Should a child be clearly identifiable within a photo, consent of the parent or guardian via a photo release form is required. Photo release forms are available upon request.

Please direct any questions to Leanne Johnston on 9847 6362 or bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Guest speakers Pat and Lilly Schwartz from Hills-Hornsby Rural Koala Project

The Hills-Hornsby Rural Koala Project is a local koala research group. It is fully volunteer run with the aim of gaining the knowledge required to protect local koalas. Our volunteers have been recording evidence of koalas, mapping observations and educating landholders and the community about how they can improve koala habitat. We want to collect good data on koala distribution, health and population density in the Hornsby and Hills local government areas, as this area is overlooked as important habitat.

People involved in the project have set up cameras and audio recorders in areas where they have heard or think

they have seen a koala. There have been some recent confirmed sightings of koalas in Hornsby Shire, including at Cowan near Pie in the Sky and on Arcadia Road in Hornsby Shire's rural area. Their calls have been heard in Hornsby Heights. Many of the sightings occur on the richer clay soils of Glenorie and the Hills Shire. However, there appears to be koalas using the vegetation corridor linking Brooklyn to the national parks and nature reserves located within Hornsby Shire.

Please report any koala observations or calls to the Hills-Hornsby Koala Project. Even if you aren't sure, it never hurts to let them know of any possible sightings. Please message the volunteers at Hills- Hornsby Rural Koala Project | Facebook

Book Review

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover but when browsing along the library shelves recently, I chanced upon a book cover and title that I was sure would offer both entertainment and information within. I wasn't disappointed!

The Ferals that Ate Australia by Guy Hull and published by ABC Books in 2021, is available at Hornsby Library. (Call number: 632.6 / HUL).

The author candidly considers ALL animals introduced into Australia as feral, describing 'The animals that feral-bombed Australia are like the uninvited visitors who saw the light on, dropped in, made themselves at home, cleaned out the fridge and never left. That's the way bio-invasion works...' (p.2).

Previously protected by its isolation, Australia's 'feral-bombs' began in earnest, with the consignment of animals brought out on the First Fleet. Cattle, sheep, hogs, goats and horses arrived with their hard hooves impacting the country's fragile soil. Alongside this was the terrible and continuing devastation caused by the furry but not-so-cute feral rabbits, as well as dogs, cats, pigs, foxes and later, the cane toad (...oh dear – by 1935, we really should have learnt our lesson). The feral list goes on.... and this is the crux of the book! Guy Hull illuminates the infiltration and speed of destruction to Australian ecosystems from introduced animals, within little more than **a mere 200 years!**

Throughout the nineteenth century, fashionable acclimatisation societies introduced feral pests into Australia with fervour. They believed Australia would be a better place if it looked and felt more like their

homelands. With no foresight or understanding of the impacts of their actions, the effects on the Australian ecosystem are truly appalling but sagely, Guy Hull points out, it could have been worse. Thankfully, attempts to introduce exotic species like monkeys and boa constrictors were unsuccessful! (p.72).

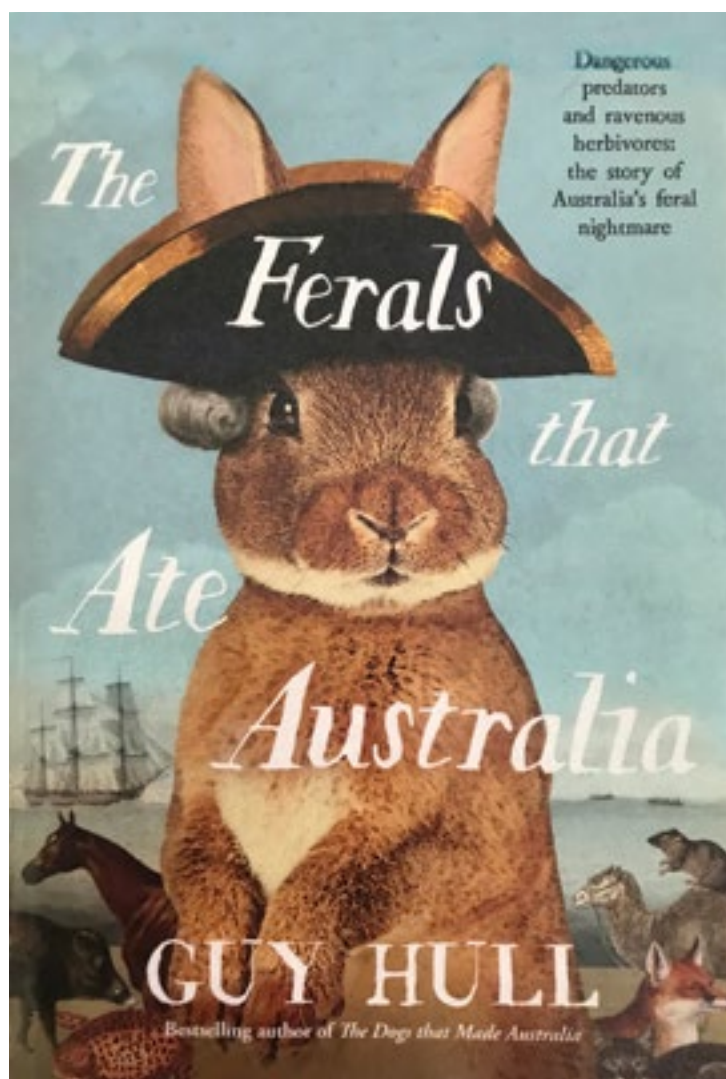
Do I recommend this book? Most certainly! It is an easy read, and I enjoyed the author's satirical quips regarding

the illogical and arrogant attitudes of our forebears. In hindsight, their behaviour is cringe-worthy and eye-rollingly embarrassing. Overall, however, *The Ferals that Ate Australia* helped me appreciate just how important modern Australia's strict quarantine laws are in conjunction with the role of today's scientists and organisations such as the CSIRO who vigorously assess feral impacts and the effects of potential bio-controls. Because, as history unashamedly illustrates, it doesn't take much to upset the status quo of Australia's precious and unique environment.

As individuals, we can become citizen scientists and play an important role in helping scientists reclaim our natural environment. By participating in one or more citizen science projects, the plethora of data

collected and submitted enables the scientists to more accurately model and map the distribution of disruptive species, and evaluate the quality of the infiltrated environments. (See the iNaturalist article in this publication). And finally, don't disregard the important role we play as bush regenerators in restoring our bushland, offering our native animals safe habitats and healthy food sources! *The Ferals that Ate Australia* is a motivating read!

Anita Wynne
Bushcare Trainer



Volunteer profile

John Savage of Top of Lane Cove Bushcare Group, Normanhurst

The Top of Lane Cove Bushcare Group officially started in 1997. The Bushcare site is part of the larger Pine Street Bushland Reserve, in Normanhurst. Early on, the group decided that there couldn't be a more appropriate name for the Bushcare site due to the presence of a creek dissecting the site and forming the headwaters of the Lane Cove River.

As far as urban bushland reserves go, Pine Street Bushland is in an excellent conservation condition. The reserve is a textbook example of the importance and the need for well-preserved bushland in our urban areas. Pine Street Bushland reserve not only acts as a 'stepping stone' for local wildlife moving to and from nearby Lane Cove National Park, it also provides an iconic and popular setting for bushwalkers.

The Bushcare site contains different plant associations. Sandstone species are located on the higher ridges. Lower down in the landscape, the creekline gets narrower and makes its way through imposing sandstone outcrops towards Lane Cove National Park, under the Comenarra Parkway. This is the domain of coachwoods (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*), black wattles (*Callicoma serratifolia*), and grass trigger plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*). There is no better place to do Bushcare on a hot summer's morning!

For the past 26 years, the Bushcare group has relentlessly worked towards the improvement and the rehabilitation of weed-affected areas, traditionally along the creekline and behind neighbouring properties.

Local resident John Savage has played a tremendous part in the success story of the Top of Lane Cove Bushcare site. John still lives in the family home that he and his soon-to-be wife Margaret bought in 1961, on nearby Blue Gum Street.

John was born in Lismore in 1931 and moved to Campsie with his Mum as a two-year-old, following the sudden death of his father after a work accident in the sawmill he part-owned. John remembers that his grandparents' house



was so close to the railway line that the house used to shake every time a freight train would come past.

John attended Canterbury Boys High School and then went on to study mechanical engineering at Sydney's University of Technology. After graduating, John enjoyed a long and rich career as a mechanical engineer until his retirement in 2000.

By the time John had retired, privet and tradescantia had become abundant behind his property. John took it upon himself to remove the weeds. Soon after and following an encounter with Council staff, he became aware that a Bushcare volunteer group was already working in the reserve. John signed up for Bushcare straight away. This was the beginning of a collaboration that lasted for an admirable 21 years! At the end of 2021, John decided it was time to call it quits as it became physically too challenging to continue with Bushcare.



25 years of Bushcare Certificate – John (centre stage) with from left to right Andrew Gowans, Trevor Whitfield, Ingrid Liermann, Anita Wynne (Bushcare Trainer), Rachel Wrigley-Smith



Even though John is no longer working with the group, he still attends morning tea and catches up with the group's progress. John never tires of looking out his back windows towards the familiar canopy of turpentines and blackbutts that he helped preserve. His wonderful legacy will be transmitted to the next generation of Bushcare volunteers, local residents and bushwalkers.

At a personal level, it was always a pleasure to work with John and the Top of Lane Cove Bushcare Group. The bonhomie and the sense of camaraderie that developed over the years between John and other long-term regular members of the group (John Ashley, Geoff Ironmonger and Phil Downing) was inspiring. Many conversations around politics and sport, and witty jokes were shared during Bushcare all whilst giving weeds a tough time!

Despite his quiet and gentle manner, John has continuously displayed a steely determination working towards the conservation of his beloved Top of Lane Cove Bushcare site. His caring yet determined approach to Bushcare has always been an inspiration to other volunteers and Bushcare Trainers.

By Jean-Philippe Kecman
Bushcare Field Officer



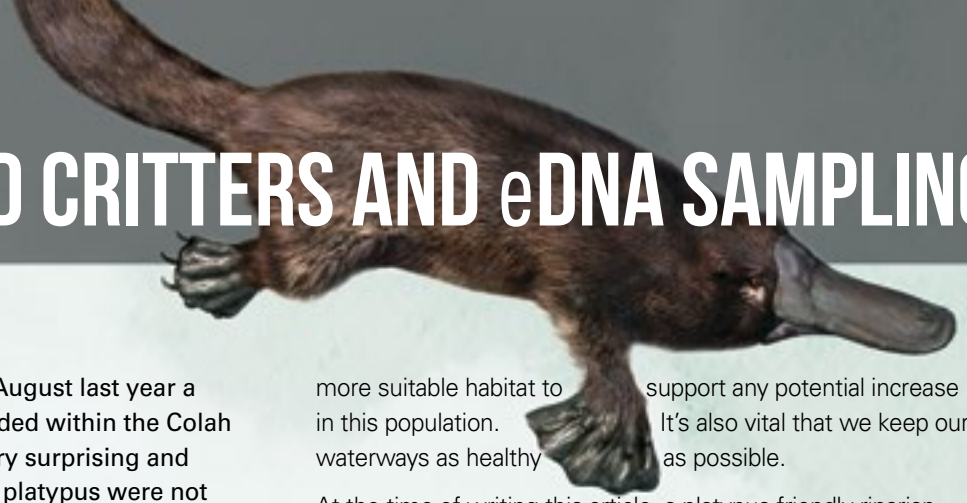
Leanne and Petra joined the Beecroft Cub Scouts for an evening of exploring the plants around their scout hall in Beecroft Reserve. A hunt for plants along tracks around the scout hall was organised, with the cubs having to categorise the plants into weeds and natives.

It wasn't that easy to find good examples of weeds around the scout hall because the Chilworth Reserve Bushcare Group is very good at swiftly dispatching all weeds. They were a bit too efficient with a patch of paddy's lucerne, privets and spider plants that were earmarked for the demonstration, being all gone a week later when the cubs plant treasure hunt was on. It did serve as a good show-and-tell for the cubs of how the Chilworth Reserve Bushcare Group is looking after the bush around their hall- they are saying a big THANK YOU to the Bushcare volunteers.

By Petra Holland
Environmental Scientist – Bushland Programs



DUCK-BILLED CRITTERS AND eDNA SAMPLING



If you haven't heard already, in August last year a platypus was sighted and recorded within the Colah Creek catchment. This was a very surprising and exciting 'discovery' as previously platypus were not known to inhabit any waterway within Hornsby Shire.

Colah Creek is one of our major rural creeklines – it rises in Dural (near Swane's Nursery) flowing more than 20kms northwards through Middle Dural, Galston, Arcadia, and Glenorie before draining into Marramarra Creek below Forest Glen. Galston township is perched on one of its headwater tributary creeks.

As a result of this platypus revelation, a project idea – *Using Hornsby Platypus eDNA as a Healthy Waterways Catalyst* – was born and Council in partnership with Streamwatch, Still Creek Catchment Landcare Group and Friends of Berowra Valley applied for and were successful in gaining a \$10,000 community grant through Sydney Water's Healthy Waterways program.

Because so little is known about the distribution and population of platypus in our local catchments, most of this funding was spent on eDNA monitoring (during November 2022) within the Still Creek, Glenorie Creek, and Colah Creek catchments.



Twenty-three (23) sampling sites were strategically selected to give the best possible coverage of the catchments. Most sites were located deep in bushland and required volunteers experienced in bushwalking and navigation to wend their way through thick bush in seldom-visited valleys.

The collection of eDNA is relatively simple but requires several protocols to be followed to ensure the sample will not be contaminated and is transported safely to keep viable. The samples were processed by Sydney Water's laboratories and compared to their DNA library for a match.

Unfortunately, no fragments of platypus DNA were detected- this was disappointing!

Based on the platypus sighting made several months earlier, this result shows that we likely have platypus in low density in Colah Creek and potentially low densities in the other creeks. A negative result does not necessarily mean they are not there, it just means that they were not around that sample location at that time.

The project's University of Western Sydney platypus expert highlighted that it is important to focus on protecting this small population and hopefully, over time, providing and/or creating

more suitable habitat to support any potential increase in this population. It's also vital that we keep our waterways as healthy as possible.

At the time of writing this article, a platypus-friendly riparian planting and local landholder information event was being planned at a site along Colah Creek. Additionally, Council was successful in obtaining further grant funding to undertake eDNA Metabarcoding throughout Hornsby Shire.

Regardless of the platypus eDNA results, this project brought together a disparate group of passionate volunteers, it created a real buzz at the project gatherings, helped raise awareness of platypus and creeks, and enabled expert training of participants in eDNA sampling.

If you have any local knowledge of platypus or have sighted one over the last few years, please report it by sending an email to platypus@hornsby.nsw.gov.au For more information visit www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/platypus

By David Bolton

Catchment Remediation Education Officer

What is eDNA?

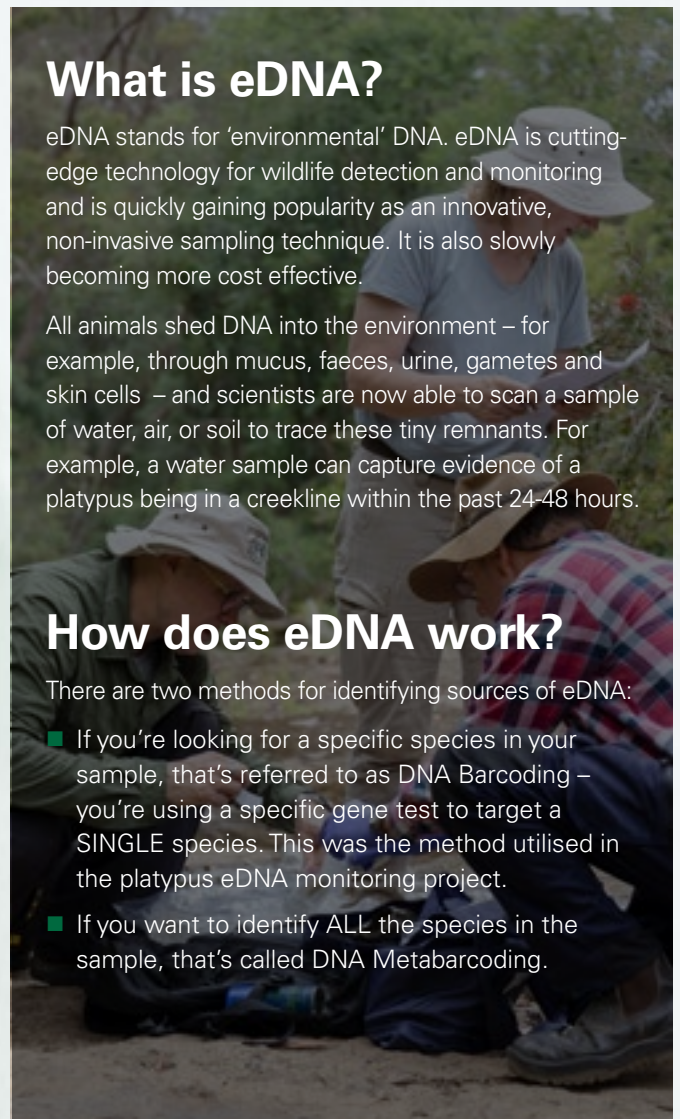
eDNA stands for 'environmental' DNA. eDNA is cutting-edge technology for wildlife detection and monitoring and is quickly gaining popularity as an innovative, non-invasive sampling technique. It is also slowly becoming more cost effective.

All animals shed DNA into the environment – for example, through mucus, faeces, urine, gametes and skin cells – and scientists are now able to scan a sample of water, air, or soil to trace these tiny remnants. For example, a water sample can capture evidence of a platypus being in a creekline within the past 24-48 hours.

How does eDNA work?

There are two methods for identifying sources of eDNA:

- If you're looking for a specific species in your sample, that's referred to as DNA Barcoding – you're using a specific gene test to target a SINGLE species. This was the method utilised in the platypus eDNA monitoring project.
- If you want to identify ALL the species in the sample, that's called DNA Metabarcoding.



Protecting Our Forests campaign



Last newsletter we told you about the community event we held in September at Ginger Meggs Park, Hornsby to raise awareness of our precious Blue Gum High Forest.

This time we want to let you know about a very similar community event we provided in November at Jane Starkey Park, Thornleigh. There were three main differences though. We:

- raised awareness about Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest
- partnered with staff from Lane Cove National Park in a community planting activity
- had the talented Anthony Stimson from Australian Wildlife Displays educating and fascinating the public, instead of the equally talented Tom Covell from Hooked on Nature

To find out more about Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest in Hornsby Shire, use the QR code on this page

or go to <https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/environment/flora-and-fauna/bushland-management/threatened-forests-and-fauna>



PROTECTING OUR FORESTS

So what's been happening in the Protecting Our Forests campaign since? In March and April 2023, a stall was held in Hornsby Mall on a Thursday market day followed by a week-long display in Hornsby Library's Discovery Space. The campaign continued with a stall at the 5 native plant giveaways and a guided bushwalk at the Lakes of Cherrybrook / Greenway Park, featuring both Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest. At the Reddy Park Bushcare Group's May work session, a community planting and Bushcare recruitment event took place and our Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest display took pride of place. For upcoming Protecting Our Forests activities, see the Events section of this newsletter.



Here are some photos of the Jane Starkey Park event

Threatened geebung



Some of you may recall that Binya Close Bushcare site at Hornsby Heights is home to a significant population of *Persoonia mollis* subsp. *maxima*. The plant is listed as Endangered under both NSW and Commonwealth legislation.

Persoonia mollis subsp. *maxima* is a large shrub (around 4m to 5m in height) with a smooth, mottled grey trunk and soft, copper-tinged hairy new growth. Between January and March, the plant bears the very distinctive yellow tubular flowers of the *Persoonia* genus, more commonly known as geebungs.

Sheltered gullies and steep upper hillsides of the Hornsby Plateau on Hawkesbury Sandstone soils are favoured growing grounds for the *Persoonia mollis* subsp. *maxima* in our Shire. The local population has a very limited range. It is only known to grow in 4 suburbs: Mount Colah, Mount Kuring-Gai, Hornsby Heights and Galston. It is estimated that its current distribution covers an area of only 6km by 7.5km.

Anecdotally, historical records dating back to 1913 confirm that the plant's area of distribution was more widespread just over a century ago. That year, *Persoonia mollis* subsp. *maxima* individuals were growing at the end of Baldwin Avenue (Asquith) in what was then still remnant bushland, near the site of the old clay quarry.

Persoonia mollis subsp. *maxima* is a rather secretive subspecies. It would appear that the plants are only pollinated by certain species of native bees. Fire also plays an important role in the survival and the recruitment of the species. *Persoonia mollis* subsp. *maxima* is an obligate seeder, meaning that it gets killed by fire as it doesn't produce suckers. Regeneration will happen through seed stored in the soil, germinating after fire disturbance.

The Shire's population of this subspecies is disconnected from other populations located to the south and the south-west of the greater Sydney Basin.

As a geographically isolated population, the local persoonias might potentially be affected by a genetic bottleneck, which could result in the collapse of the population as we know it. A genetically weaker and less diverse population would

potentially display lower resilience levels and be less resistant to pests and 'predators' (grazing wallabies). It could also prove difficult to withstand more frequent storms, higher intensity bushfires and longer periods of dry and wet conditions.

This is the reason why collecting regular and consistent data about the population over a continuous period of time will hopefully help us better understand the behaviours and the requirements of the subspecies in regard to seed viability, degrees of genetic variation and pollination vectors.

We are fortunate that the presence of *Persoonia mollis* subsp. *maxima* was recorded for the first time at Binya Close in 1993. Pat Pike, Jenny Lewis, Noel Rosten, Barry Lees and other members of the Hornsby Herbarium group were instrumental in the recording and the mapping of the species at this site.

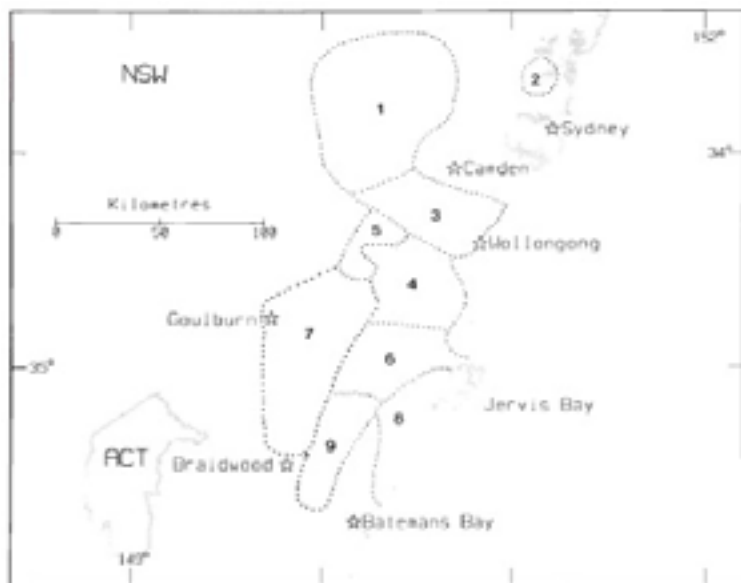
Binya Close Bushcare Group was established in 2004. Maintaining a healthy population of persoonias has always been the primary work focus for volunteers working at Binya Close.

Local resident and founding member of the group Penny Watson was the driving force behind organising a hazard reduction burn across the site in 2012, triggering the germination of new plants.

In 2018, the Bushcare team secured funding as part of the NSW Government's Saving Our Species (SoS) program. The brief was to improve the habitat of the population by reducing weed presence and density across the site.

Between 2019 and 2022, bush regeneration contractors were employed to control weeds and to make sure that the persoonias would not be impacted by weed growth. This proved to be a successful way of reducing both presence and regrowth of weed species across the Bushcare site.

Unfortunately, we were told in June 2022 that the funding could not be renewed due to budget cuts. However, Bushcare will continue to fund a small but important weed control program to support the work of the Bushcare group. The group is instrumental in controlling weed species that would otherwise establish across the site and impact the health and the future of the persoonia population.



Persoonia mollis subspecies distribution (from S. Krauss) – Zone 2 is the Hornsby Shire population

We are hoping that funding from the SoS program will become available again in the future.

Where are we at in early 2023?

Out of the 78 individuals recorded on site in 2019, 55 are still alive and growing healthily. Additionally:

- All individuals are tagged and GPS mapped
- Plants are assessed and measured twice a year
- The large majority of the current Binya Close population germinated after the 2012 burn
- Most losses were located in the more exposed, drier areas with shallow soils or were over-mature individuals.
- One healthily growing plant was lost after local residents decided to clear vegetation to make way for an unauthorised bike track during the first COVID-19 lockdown.
- Most individuals have experienced significant growth between mid-2020 and late-2022 (thanks to the wetter conditions).

Thank you again to all our past and current Binya Close volunteers for their dedication and hard work over the years.

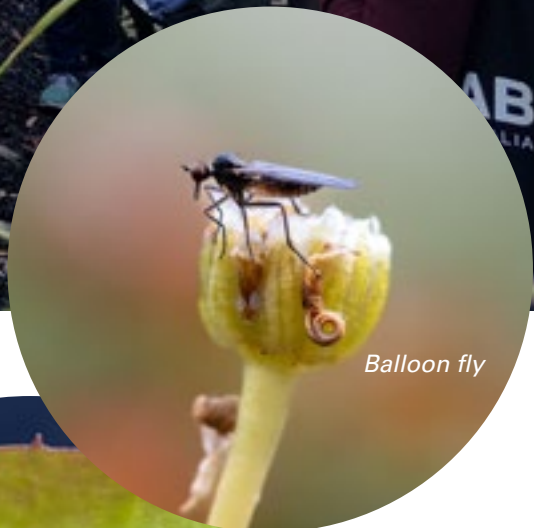


Tagged *persoonia*

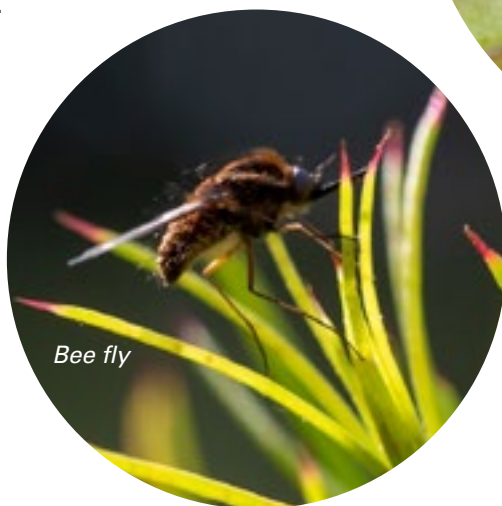


Volunteers improving *persoonia* habitat by planting indigenous canopy species

Wild pollinator count

*Balloon fly*

We held our first pollinator survey on one of the coolest mornings in early November 2022. Pollinators do not like cool, cloudy weather and sadly our count was scheduled before the sun shone on the flowering plants in the nursery. We did get some amazing shots of minibeasts, courtesy of Cara, but this year we will hold the workshop later in the day. It was interesting to see that the spider was waiting patiently for the pollinators too. One of our much-loved pollinators, the bee fly, was still asleep and not visiting any of the nursery's beautiful flowers.

*Blue-green long legged fly**Bee fly**Beetle*

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 Workshops

When: Friday 19 May, 9am-1pm

Where: Warada Ngurang Community Nursery,
28 Britannia Street Pennant Hills

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/CEZSV>

When: Saturday 17 June, 9am-1pm

Where: Warada Ngurang Community Nursery,
28 Britannia Street Pennant Hills

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/CEZTI>

When: Friday 11 August, 9am-1pm

Where: Warada Ngurang Community Nursery,
28 Britannia Street Pennant Hills

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/CEZUF>

When: Saturday 4 November, 9am-1pm

Where: Warada Ngurang Community Nursery,
28 Britannia Street Pennant Hills

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/CEZUQ>

This workshop is compulsory training for Hornsby Shire Bushcare volunteers. It covers the work health and safety training component of the program. This is a great opportunity for you to visit the community nursery and learn how our volunteer program works within Hornsby Council's Natural Areas Management Team.

iNaturalist Hornsby Bushcare Bioblitz – How to webinar

When: Wednesday 3 May, 7pm

Where: Zoom meeting, link to be sent out 1 May

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/CHBJW>

Join our Zoom session to learn more about the iNaturalist platform. Tom will demonstrate how to get more people looking at your photos to help you identify your local plants and animals.

Trees of Hornsby walk and talk

When: Rescheduled to Saturday 26 August
10:30am-12:30pm

Where: meet at Warada Ngurang Community Nursery

Bookings: hornsby.nsw.gov.au/bushcare

Presented by Jean-Philippe Kecman

Join us as we wander through the forest along the

Mambara Track and beside Pennant Hills Oval. We will learn how to identify local gum trees, why some species grow tall while others rarely reach 4m tall, and some simple tricks to identify the three genera of eucalypts.

Protecting Our Forests community plantings

When: Saturday 3 June, 1pm-3pm

Where: Kenley Park, Normanhurst

Bookings: No booking is required and all are welcome

This is your chance to work with the local Bushcare group and members of the community. Lend a helping hand and learn more about your local environment in this patch of critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest.

For more information scan the QR code.



Comfortable Homes in Summer and Winter

When: 23 May, 7pm-9pm

Where: Online event

Bookings: Comfortable Homes in Summer and Winter Tickets | TryBooking Australia

How to improve home comfort and save on your energy bill.

For more information on ways to save energy visit Household energy saving upgrades | NSW Climate and Energy Action.

National Tree Day – Beecroft

When: Sunday 30 July, 10am-12pm

Where: Beecroft Village Green

Join us at the village green for National Tree Day. Please wear suitable clothing including a hat, long-sleeved shirt, trousers, sturdy shoes, and gloves. Please wear sunscreen and bring plenty of water to drink. Tools and plants will be provided on the day. For more information visit National Tree Day (planetark.org).

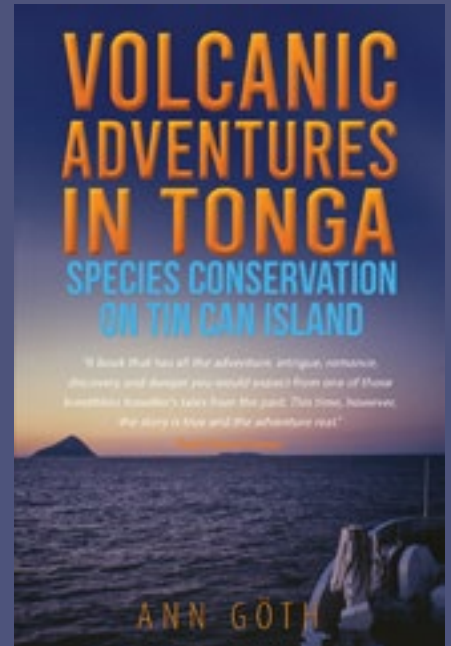
New Book

Volcanic Adventures in Tonga – Species Conservation on Tin Can Island

Did you know that the Australian Brush-turkey has some fascinating relatives, not only in other parts of Australia, but also on various islands in the Indo-Pacific region? One of those, on a particular remote volcanic island in Tonga, is now becoming more known through the newly published book *Volcanic Adventures in Tonga – Species Conservation on Tin Can Island*. The author is Dr Ann Goeth (German name Göth), who has given presentations about brush-turkeys for Council before.

In this travel memoir, Ann takes you on a rollicking adventure to experience authentic Polynesian culture and the unique adaptations of a volcano-breeding bird on one of the most remote Pacific islands imaginable. She quenches the thirst of travelling with a wanderlust for faraway islands and takes you to volcanoes overdue to erupt and coral cays rarely visited by tourists. This book is also for you if you want to know what it may be like to live a simple existence on a remote island and to hang out in Tongan Time. The narrative is underpinned by letters Ann wrote during a 17-month conservation project for the endangered Polynesian Megapode on Niuafo'ou (Tin Can Island) in Tonga, 30 years ago.

If you are interested in finding out more about this book, including where to buy it, head to Ann's facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yc35c8fp>



PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS NEWSLETTER

You can send your stories or letters to the Editor for the next edition by 1 JANUARY 2024

Mail: PO Box 37, Hornsby 1630
or **Email:** bushcare@hornsby.nsw.gov.au

**This newsletter has been compiled
by Hornsby Shire Council.**



THE BUSHLAND SHIRE

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