

Bushcare News



Willoughby City Council's bushcare, wildlife & community garden newsletter



AUTUMN EDITION — April 2020

<http://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au>

Printed on 100 percent recycled paper

Dear Bushcarers and friends,

These are definitely strange and different times. We have all been slowly trying to adapt to this new way of living in isolation or at a social distance, which has presented its own set of challenges and Bushcare is no exception to this. Due to the new rules and regulations put in place, limiting gatherings to no more than 2 people we have unfortunately had to cancel Bushcare for the month of April. In the lead up to these restrictions Bushcare, with social distance measures in place, was operating quite smoothly. I was very impressed with how well everyone adapted to doing bushcare at 1.5m distance from everyone else in the group and the BYO morning tea! I'm hoping as restrictions are slowly lifted we are able to operate in this way again until everything goes back to normal.

In lighter news... We had our first Tracking Ferals workshop in February which was a hit with all who attended. Ben Stepkovitch, Simon Brown and Trinh Pham shared their in depth knowledge of ferals in Sydney, how to spot signs of their presence (tracks, scats and bones) and report them using the feral scan app. As you will notice by the lack of workshop listings on the back page, all of our workshops for the next few months have been cancelled with an effort to move those that can be to an online format so keep you eye out for that on diary dates or sign up to the Live Well in Willoughby enewsletter in the What's On section on Willoughby Council's website.



Trinh Pham explains the finer details of how spot a fox print

In the meantime while Bushcare is cancelled we have been keeping occupied and connected via the weekly Bush Bulletin which has been going out since we had to cancel Bushcare. This is a collaboration between all the bushcare volunteers, community gardeners and wildlife

watchers where we celebrate what's going on in our backyards, bushcare sites and gardens along with some delicious recipes and crafty ideas.

And now for some great news! Our plantings down at the Windellama Landcare site have weathered the drought and bushfires and are now looking amazing. All that slow and careful planting has really paid off. Can't wait to get back down there and tackle some of that serrated tussock grass!



Reserve Action Plan updates

The Coolaroo RAP is out for consultation till the 27th April. Please comment one and all. Starting with the Coolaroo RAP, all future RAP's will have a hyperlink to the appropriate fauna species list on Councils webpage.

By Nicholas Yu, Natural Assets Officer

BuShare at Coolaroo

In a time before limits on gatherings and social distancing, we had our first BushShare event of 2020 with the Coolaroo Bushcare group hosting.

It was a warm sunny day in February and we had new volunteers and visitors from other groups join us in the shade tackling the likes of trad and canna lily. We also pushed back the cunjevoi (*Alocasia brisbanensis*) a native east coast rainforest plant that has been growing exponentially and smothering other native plants.



Asha demonstrating how bushcare is the main source of exercise for a lot of our volunteers

If your bushcare group would like to host the next BuShare event please let me know, it's a great way to get some extra work done on your site, gain new members and share your special bushcare site with other volunteers.

Community Garden News

Now with the two person gathering rule (issued by NSW Health Department) to protect the community and reduce the spread of COVID –19 infection, it has meant that community garden meetings have been cancelled. However to enable all the gardeners to get out in the fresh air, for exercise and to keep their gardens thriving, most community gardeners have organised amongst themselves rosters where each gardener has a time slot possibly with one other gardener to do some gardening.

Artarmon Parklands Community Garden

Members of the Artarmon Girl Guides thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the Artarmon Parklands Community Garden on Sunday 1 March, who were very kindly hosted by garden members



Justine Acar, Sharon Parfait and Fiona Johnson. The Guides were shown the wicking bed (pictured above) and explained how it works and how to make a simple one at home using a recycled polystyrene foam box. The guides learnt about a wide range of topics including carbon capturing, composting and worm farming and the use of manure to make healthy soil needed to grow healthy strong plants. They did a seed planting activity learning about what seeds need for survival such as seedling mix, depth and how much water and sun. They also learnt how they could make their own seedling pots using empty toilet rolls or egg cartons.

By Jan Felton, Community Projects Officer

Warners Park Community Garden

We are adapting to the new conditions by establishing a roster. This has a benefit in that the time intervals are more frequent and this has meant that infestations of caterpillars are picked off every day and this has minimised damage to crops.



We have temporarily removed the site from share waste and the area has been roped off and signed with the message due to the virus we are not composting until the situation changes.

As we move into a new season, Summer crops are being removed and winter vegetables planted. We have recently put in winter lettuce, swiss chard, garlic, leeks and new crops will be planted as the seedlings advance. We met a gentleman who has a hive in a nearby garden who gave us some honey. We probably have him and his bees to thank for some of our crop pollination. We miss the companionship but we will get through this period with the garden intact and hopefully soon resume normal operations.

By Hilary McDonald

Dougherty Wall Garden

Our 'Bushcare' garden, which started as just maintaining the Dougherty Centre green wall, now includes an edible Australian Native plant garden, a kitchen garden, a variety of citrus in pots and a vegepod garden. They each have separate issues. In the native plant garden for example, the commelina grows so profusely (see above) that we remove bundles of it each month. So if other groups would like some for your patches or to add to salads, please feel free to help yourselves. It will multiply again very quickly.



By Mary Ann Irvin

Station St - Naremburn Community Garden

The garden is growing so well, in response to abundant, unrestricted sunlight and that silvery gift that's been falling from the sky more recently.

By Marie Daley

Hub Community Garden

Our member David who is a retired doctor from China planted some Luffa seeds and this season was our first time growing them in our community garden.



Luffas are quite tasty. They are soft and silky when picked young. You need to peel off the rough skin and the insides taste like a mixture of zucchini and Lebanese cucumber. We had four nice ones growing but they were all gone one day, so not even David had a chance to try them. We used masking tape to write David and another person's name on the remaining two small luffas. They fortunately were able to be harvested and two other members including myself had a chance to try the last ones. I planned to cook for everyone, my first fusion style omelette cooked with a luffa (pictured above), but it didn't happen due to COVID-19. I also learned that old luffas can be used as natural sponges but we only had a few so there was no excess to try that.

By Sun Hae Kim

Market Garden Park Community Garden

Council organised a delivery of soil for the garden beds and slowly as gardeners have turned up on rostered days the soil has been carted and placed onto the beds. The freshly painted gnomes placed around the garden provided by Maggie are proving of great interest to the young folk as they have a wonder around the garden beds. There has been loads of cucamelons (pictured above) harvested along with broccoli and carrots. Snow peas are about to be planted. Liz one of our gardeners has kindly donated some furniture for auction to raise money for the beds.



By Janet France



Wildlife Watch News

You can contact **Simon Brown** Willoughby's Wildlife Officer on 9777 7872, or via email at simon.brown@willoughby.nsw.gov.au & **Liz Powell** Habitat Officer on 9777 7871 & send your wildlife sightings to wildlifewatch@willoughby.nsw.gov.au

Children exploring wildlife adaptation

Adaptation is the theme of this year's Wildlife Storybook competition for Year 5 students across the Willoughby LGA. We have picked ten local species that have unique biological adaptations and will explore how they have adapted to living in suburbia.

The Southern Myotis (*Myotis macropus*) is a specialist predator that is also very adaptable to the changing landscapes of Sydney. The only true species of fishing bat in South Eastern Australia, it has unusually large feet that drag through the water to catch it's prey. Feeding on very small fish and insects, it has it's own unique range of calls at different frequencies to suit it's unique environment.

Only recently discovered around Sydney Harbour (it was previously thought to be a freshwater species) it is a great example of the value of fauna surveys. It is also a great example of adaptation as it is a species that has been able to exploit structures like old wharves, bridges and stormwater culverts in which to roost and breed. However there are risks living so close to us. The greatest risks are water pollution, artificial lighting and the disturbance of roosting sites. This is a species that needs to be observed and protected.

Local students will also be looking at the cryptic Broad-tailed Gecko. These common but rarely seen lizards have a large number of adaptations that have helped it survive suburbia. This nocturnal species is a master of camouflage, being used to effectively evade detection by predators and prey. Living happily amongst brick and concrete buildings, they are known to wait in the shadows near lights to ambush insects.

However, being so effectively camouflaged at night can have it's drawbacks. So to communicate with other members of it's species, unlike most other reptiles, it uses vocalisations and regularly makes calls around their territory. Now although they seem to have a handle on urban living, the Broad-tailed Gecko is also threatened by secondary poisoning, predation by cats and foxes and habitat disturbance.



Southern Myotis. Photo by Nathan Litjens, an innovative photographer using a broken beam camera trap.

Whilst at home with children these school holidays or looking ahead at the possibility of home schooling next term, remember to help your children explore the wildlife around you. You could also look at previous wildlife storybooks that are available online through your local library.



CAMERA TRAP SNAP From a residential backyard near Northbridge Shops. The long nosed bandicoot is one of those little terrestrial marsupials that seem to turn up in the strangest of places at the strangest of times.

Latest Willoughby Wildlife Sightings

- ◆ Lace Monitor, Mowbray Park, March
- ◆ Powerful Owl, Artarmon, April
- ◆ Swamp Wallaby, Middle Cove, March
- ◆ Short Beaked Echidna, Tunks Park, January
- ◆ Australian Bagmoth, Blue Gum Park, April
- ◆ Short Beaked Echidna, Castlecrag, April
- ◆ Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Northbridge, Jan.

Habitat Matters: Cabin ConFinds

Article by Liz Powell, Willoughby Council Habitat Officer

Hope this finds you happy and Covid free and enjoying our beautiful natural world.

I found myself on leave in the country in a rural cabin at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic when I had to go into quarantine with a recently returned (coldless) OS traveller. It was a relief to be in a rural setting rather than Sydney's inner western suburbs. Despite having a deliberately overgrown garden at home in Sydney providing potential habitat for a diversity of wildlife the five native bee species remains a diversity highlight. The rural cabin had far more to offer and illustrated what a healthy diversity of winged invertebrates looks like as well as what the impact of this summer's fires will have had on these populations. Unburnt areas like this are so important in enabling the restoration of our wildlife communities.



In the cabin nocturnal jigsawing with a good light attracted company. Like small helpers there were so many different shades and shapes of grey-brown moth it was difficult to pick up a piece without disturbing something. In the morning a lot of these characters sat on the white window sills and were released but there were many more in the dust that had been there before our arrival. While some had fallen prey to the healthy population of resident spiders, many small invertebrates had not and were so intact they appeared alive. After a week of working in the cabin it was a sad delight to go around and collect together a sample of this diversity seen in the image above on the wooden board.

Perhaps some look familiar to you and how many different species can you identify below? I have not yet identified them or asked our nearby naturalist Martyn Robinson, but my guess is around 54 'types' of invertebrate plus scats of a reptile and 2 mammals: 2 x Gnats, 3 x mosquitoes, 9 x flies, 9 x wasps, 4 x native bees, 19 x moths, 2 x ants, 4 x beetles, 1 x lacewing, 1 x native cockroach and various other winged sp. along with the poo of microbat, gecko and rodent sp.



On a slightly livelier note, here are some of the caterpillars I have seen munching on leaves and the resultant butterflies.



Emperor caterpillar



St. Joseph's Coat caterpillar



Grapevine moth caterpillar



Monarch caterpillar and butterfly



Caterpillar, empty chrysalis and butterfly of the Caper White Butterfly

Wildlife Watching Online:

Sunday 12 - 19 April: is Autumn Wild Pollinator Count
<https://wildpollinatorcount.com/>

Live Facebook presentations with various bird experts at BirdLife Australia's Birding at home site:
<https://www.networkbirdlife.org/birding-at-home>

Join 250 other cities and discover and record as many species as possible across the Greater Sydney Region from April 24 - 27. This is the first year Australia has participated:
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2020-sydney>



Willoughby Plant Propagation Group News What's growing on?



The Plant Propagation group have been busy propagating all the seeds that were collected on their seed collecting walk with Trinh and Phil over Summer. There has been a great success rate of these seeds germinating so we are looking to do this again in Spring.

There has also been some nice new editions to the work area including a new fold down work bench and bag rack! Many thanks to the Council metal workers Phil and Darren for tailoring the bench and rack to our needs and making them from scratch.

With all this lovely rain we have been getting over the past month now is a great time to get some plants in the ground.

For Bushcare groups that would like to put in an order we have the following plants available:

Hakea teretifolia
Eustrephus latifolius
Baeckea linifolia
Dianella sp
Callicoma serratifolia
Leptospermum squarosum
Eucalyptus piperita
Acacia linifolia
Acacia terminalis
Dodonaea triquetra



Angophora hispida seeds just germinated.



New editions to our work area

CorridorCare in Focus By Trinh Pham and Philip Sarkies

In 2017 a new type of Bushcare site was born. "CorridorCare" was the brain child of long term Willoughby Council Bush Regenerators Trinh Pham and Phil Sarkies. Their idea was to turn small pockets of unmade road reserves into bushland sanctuaries for plants and animals to inhabit and use as a 'corridor' to move into larger sections of bushland. 3 years on now and we have 3 corridor care sites that are all unique and thriving in their own way and are actually providing excellent habitat for plants and animals alike. Trinh and Phil have shared three simple steps that have made their CorridorCare sites a success:

Have you considered improving habitat diversity at your bushcare site? Here are some easy ways to do this...

1. The recent storms in the area have provided us with a lot of debris including interesting logs with decent habitat value. If your site lacks hollows, think about collecting some. Hollows on the ground are used by a variety of animals and insects including snakes, lizards, possums and even the odd lorikeet.



2. At one of our CorridorCare sites we have added an ephemeral pond. The aim was to attract the small ground dwelling Eastern Common Froglet (*Crinia signifera*). They

are found in a variety of habitats but shelter under logs and other debris, usually in moist depressions near water.

You can use a variety of inorganic items like this hand basin to create a similar pond on your site (try and find something that's been thrown out and reuse it). If there are frogs nearby they will seek out the sufficient habitat for breeding. Make sure you provide plenty of habitat by using logs, rocks, bark and plants in and around the pond. To fill and top up your pond when levels get low you can use town water (but let it sit in the sun for a while before you add it) or you can let nature take its course and let the pond fill up when it rains.



Your pond will act as habitat for not just frogs but a variety of aquatic life like dragonflies and damselflies. It will also attract other fauna to your site which predate on these animals i.e. birds and reptiles. It will also produce a lovely sound day and night!

3. Encourage areas of grassland. Introduce a variety of native grasses which produce seed to attract birds that prefer grass seed such as Finches.



Walking with Kids in the Bush

By Emma Hayes

Bushland Community Officer

Kids love to walk with other kids, its a sure-fire way to make a bush walk fun and reduce complaints. It isn't always possible to include other families, especially now, so I've jotted down some reminders on how to make a bush walk with kids more harmonious and fun.

Preparation: Know the track, is it too steep or long? Are there lots of jumping ants or mosquitoes? Take some first aid, even if its just a mobile phone and bandaids for a short walk. I also recommend always having a sting soothing cream in case of nasty insect bites, Take snacks and include a treat (bribe) if you are planning on doing a tougher walk. Don't underestimate the need for kids to have decent shoes, if you are planning longer walks on rough slippery, wet ground. Remember little feet get wet quickly too.

Walk with purpose: it can be as basic as 'we are going to make it to the waterfall' or 'we are going to look for tadpoles or the Kingfisher that lives by the creek'. Possibly a bird or insect count. Or it might be looking for clues or a particular colour, following a map, choose a kid as the leader and guide.



Be creative: Kids love making natural artworks, i don't recommend you aim for Andy Goldworthy masterpieces, just find a space in the bush to grind rocks, arrange gum nuts or even draw in art books. Kids may only like to concentrate for a minute or two, that's fine. A photography walk is also a great way to get kids to focus on details in the bush, aim to print one for a gift.

Include fantasy: Make up a story or use a well known story to make the walk come alive. My girls go into a magical world of their own creation, they need to be rescued from invisible ground Goblins who grab their feet. Go on a 'Bear Hunt' or dress up and go to a Butterfly Ball or just take a special toy on the walk.

Real adventure: If you are interested in doing over night walks with your kids, my husband has created this blog that you might like to check out:

<https://www.randomfootprints.com/>

Its a lot of packing and preparation but our kids love it. They aim to do a different hike every season.

Sustainability Tips: during home isolation

By Barbara Jenkins

Sustainability Education Officer

Why not make the most of this new found free time being stuck at home to work on a few sustainability projects? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Set up a compost bin or worm farm to compost your food waste and create some nutrient - rich compost for your garden. Willoughby residents are eligible to purchase subsidised composting systems and worm farms through Compost Revolution



<https://compostrevolution.com.au/>

- Grow your own food, veggies and herbs in a veggie patch - grow from seeds, seedlings or even from your own veggie scraps.
- Sort out your wardrobe - for items that you aren't wearing anymore, look into mending or upcycling them, or if you would like to dispose of them, keep them in a box to swap with your friends or donate to your local charity shop when the isolation is over.
- Learn how to cook - bake your own snacks, use your leftovers creatively to save a trip to the shops, or try out some plant-based recipes, there are lots of delicious recipes online.
- Start some upcycling DIY projects around the house - there are endless tutorials online, just have a browse on Google, Youtube or Pinterest.

Compost Week 2020

Compost Week is coming up, from 3rd May to 9th May. Its the perfect time to set up a compost bin or worm farm in your backyard to turn your food scraps into nutrient rich soil for your garden.

Follow @ICAWAustralia on Facebook to learn tips on how to be successful at composting at home. Participate in the #CelebrateICAW Photo Competition by sending them a photo of your compost for your chance to win 1 of 3 Composta Australia kits! (worth \$119 each). Just send your photos to info@core.asn.au

