

Bushcare News



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



SPRING / SUMMER EDITION — February 2021

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

Printed on 100 percent recycled paper

Dear Bushcarers and friends,

Its been a long time between Bushcare News editions and so there's lots to catch up on. Late last year we managed to hold two socially distanced Bushcare Training workshops which allowed 30 of our new volunteers to complete the course. Congratulations to the class of 2020!



The enthusiastic tree popping morning group (above) and the dedicated afternoon group that braved the storm! (below).



A small group of Willoughby Bushcarers ventured down to the southern highlands again to lend a hand to the Windellama Landcare Group to undertake planting across 3 properties as part of the Glossy Black Cockatoo Habitat Restoration Project. Over 3 days the enthusiastic and dedicated team (shown below, hard at work) planted over 1200 plants.



*Plant species included for the Glossy Black Cockatoo project were predominately forage trees (*Allocasuarina*) but also included habitat trees (Variety of *Eucalypts* and *Acacias*). Pictured above is what we planted out a 'Budjong Ponds'.*

This past year we had to adapt and change with the times and our annual Bushcare end of year party was no exception. Instead of our usual large gathering each group was supplied with a box of goodies to share and indulge in. These included handmade gifts made by the Bushcare Team and a special solitary bee hotel made by Liz Powell.



A sea of pink covers a burnt landscape -
By Nicholas Yu, Natural Assets Officer

I recently returned from Narrow Neck Plateau in Katoomba after witnessing the blossoming of *Actinotus forsythii* (Pink Flannel Flower). It's only found in damp areas in eucalypt forest and heath on shallow rocky soils over sandstone, in Katoomba and Newnes Plateau down to Victoria. What's unique about the species is that the seeds can lay dormant for years, waiting for a special confluence of events forming the right conditions for their emergence; that being a year or so after bushfire followed by lots of rain.



Community Garden News

The Hub Community Garden is now protected from possums and birds with bird netting (pictured below). We have done this with a grant from the Sydney Edible Garden Trail. We now look forward to sharing more food. Our membership has increased significantly in recent



months. The basil, beans and chillies are all doing well and the espaliered fig is thriving against the shed wall.

By Douglas Irvin

Nolan Cres - Naremburn Community Garden this is what the garden looks like (right). We are growing beans, zucchinis, spinach, tomatoes and lots of herbs such as tarragon, basil, sage, parsley, mint, marjoram, oregano and more.



By Ursula Zajac

Bongalong St - Naremburn Community Garden. This seasons more frequent rainfalls have been great for our raised garden beds. In spring we planted snake beans grown from seeds saved last summer and we are now rewarded with the beautiful lilac flowers (pictured right) and the long beans are forming. In the 'water ups' wicking bed we planted tomatoes, rock melon and a variety of pumpkin called Golden Nugget which is ideal for small areas, these all benefited from the continuous supply of water and the gardeners are happy to be free from watering so often. We have recently had some new gardeners join our small group, it's always great to have more help and new ideas about what to plant.



By Sarah Miller

Market Garden Park Community Garden We have had a bumper start to summer with big harvests of spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, beans, rocket, corn and cucumbers and we have now put in our second summer crop of climbing beans, radish, tigerella tomatoes, silver beet, kale and lettuce. The soil is getting lots of home grown compost from our three bins and we have topped this up with cow manure and some sheep poo. Yum!

We had a huge plant sale and lots of members sewed face masks (pictured right), aprons, door stopper chooks and we even sold bunches of fresh spinach and herbs to raise some funds for the garden. This year we are again signed up for the Sydney Edible Garden Trail on 20 March where you can visit dozens of gardens



for ideas and inspiration. Neighbours Day on 27th March is another opportunity to come along and have a garden tour and meet your neighbours.

There are always lots of jobs for everyone from watering to hoeing depending on your ability. New gardeners are always welcome to come along and learn how to grow your own fresh organic food today.

By Janet France

Warners Park Community Garden Warners Park community garden is flourishing and abundant after much rain and heat over the last few months. The crops planted



in spring yielded generous harvest of purple beans, dill and cucumbers. Later spring plantings were of Thai basil, edamame, okra, cavolo nero, various lettuce varieties and an assortment of eggplants (pictured below).

The addition of a water feature has enhanced the attraction of the garden and the inclusion of water chestnuts will be a welcome supplement to our edibles. The mulberry cropped prolifically this year and was much visited and enjoyed by both gardeners and passers by.

Of particular delight was the discovery of a symbiotic relationship between our garden and the beehives of one of the neighbours in a nearby private property. As well as the native pollinators, their bees have been busy pollinating our plants and they most generously donated jars of honey to our gardeners. It is community working at its best.

By Hilary McDonald

Artarmon Parklands Community Garden Due to the hard work of many people, the sunflowers look sensational and there have been good harvests of tomatoes and zucchinis + beans and lettuce and chard.

There are also three sorts of cucumbers growing. One of the three types is unusual and is only ready to be eaten when it is big and brown. These have been disappearing while still small and green and we are not sure if this is because of the wildlife or the not-so wildlife. A lot of people walk through the garden!



We are also planning a series of monthly talks for members where we stop gardening for 15-20 minutes and have a chat about 'stuff'. In the near future, Fiona and Barry are going to do a chat about tomatoes (what worked and didn't work) plus things like worm farming, composting, tool maintenance and a mini tour of the herbs. We are none of us experts, but shared knowledge is knowledge gained.

By Glenda Hewitt



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

Good news— rains and warm weather are a boon for invertebrates, including spiders!

You have probably heard this summer the ear-piercing calls of the hoards of Cicada who are out in record numbers, but did you also hear that the most infamous of Australian spiders, the Sydney Funnel Web, is back too?

Whilst their bite can be lethal if untreated, there have been no fatalities from Sydney funnel-web spiders in almost 40 years since the anti-venom was discovered so there is no need to be alarmed and you definitely don't need to wage war on your local wildlife by using pesticide in your garden and around your house.

Instead you should remind yourself what a Sydney funnel web actually looks like (keep a spider chart handy around the home) and how to avoid them.



Not to be confused—A male Sydney funnel-web (left) and a very wet brown trapdoor spider (right). Note the spurs on the 2nd pair of legs on the funnel-web and the big palps (aka boxing gloves) on the trapdoor.



Sydney funnel-web hole. Usually concealed out of sight under a rock, log, old roof tile, sheet of tin, fence paling or other hard material left lying on the ground. Their entrances have very distinctive radiating trip lines the spider use to find their prey. Other spiders that have web around their holes tend to have much neater edges. Cicada, moths, beetles and other insects that emerge from the soil have no web around their hole.

The trapdoor spider can be confused with a funnel web. It is surprising how a drenched trapdoor found at the bottom of a pool (pictured) can look almost hairless and black like a funnel web. Mouse spiders are also commonly mistaken but don't have the spur or the distinctive spinnerets (if you are getting that close to see).

Holes in the ground sometimes cause concern but the Sydney funnel web has a very distinctive hole (pictured). Usually concealed you are very unlikely to encounter them unless you are moving materials in the garden or bush. So the best thing is to wear heavy shoes and gloves and watch your step. If you are worried about having their holes around your home, moving their habitat is a gentle way of getting them to move on.

Bear in mind they spend most of their time in their burrows except when males wander at night looking for a mate during breeding season. So keep shoes indoors and close doors (the Sydney funnel web is terrible at climbing).

Contact Australian Reptile park for more info or to give spiders to the anti-venom program.



CAMERA TRAP SNAP the rare and elusive Cunningham's Skink in Harold Reid Reserve. A habitat specialist, they live with their small family group among large rocky outcrops. There are only a very small number of groups left in Willoughby so we have been monitoring them with camera traps.

Latest Willoughby Wildlife Sightings

- ◆ White-bellied Sea-eagle (Juv), Northbridge, Dec '20
- ◆ Olive-backed Oriole, Castlecrag, Dec'20
- ◆ Superb Lyrebird, Northbridge, Dec '20
- ◆ Sacred Kingfisher, Chatswood West, Jan
- ◆ Channel-billed Cuckoo, Chatswood West, Jan
- ◆ Echidna, Lane Cove North, Jan
- ◆ Swamp Wallaby, Northbridge, February

Habitat Matters: Foxes in Willoughby

Article by Philip Sarkies , Bushcare Ecological Burn Team Leader

There has been an influx in reported fox sightings around Willoughby in the past 3 months; a fox tucking into someone's discarded fish and chips meal in Castlecrag; two young pups moving from the golf course in Castle Cove down into the bushland every night in the middle of January; a resident's chickens being taken by a fox in the middle of the day in Middle Cove; two young foxes running into a den in Blue Gum Park (Chatswood West).

As you probably are aware the European Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was introduced to Australia in the 1850's and within 20 years it was declared a pest. It is a significant pest in agriculture and one of the major cause in the loss and decline of native fauna populations. In fact, predation by foxes is listed as a key threatening process under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999.

But did you know foxes are present in nearly every suburb in Sydney? Foxes are highly mobile and have been drawn to urban areas for easy access to food. Foxes that inhabit city landscapes are called Urban Foxes. It is believed that these foxes are 2 or 3 times the density of those in rural areas. For foxes in the Sydney region, it looks like they are doing quite well. Recent studies show the urban environment favours an increase in size, meaning the urban foxes are larger than their rural counterparts (Stepkovitch et al, 2019). In addition to this, foxes display more confidence in the urban areas (Gil-Fernandez et al, 2020) For example: Foxes are considered nocturnal. GPS tracking shows they constantly patrol their territory for food. This means they know where every chook pen is and because they are always checking, will strike if the opportunity arises, even in broad daylight.

Although foxes are an opportunistic predator and scavenger, studies show they are also generalists. Scat analysis of urban foxes in Sydney show their varied diet also include insects, fruit and seeds. In South Western Sydney, fox scats have been found full of African Olive seed. Due to their wide range and ability to disperse the weed seed, the fox has been implicated in the decline of vegetation communities like the Cumberland Plain Woodland.

Willoughby Council runs two fox baiting programs a year in conjunction with other Northern Sydney Councils and state government agencies with the assistance of Local Land Services (Sydney North Vertebrate Pest Committee). The timing of these programs is an important factor in the effectiveness of the baiting program. They aim to disrupt important stages of the foxes lifecycle; their migration stage (late summer/early autumn when the young are finding new territories) and breeding stage (late winter/

early spring when foxes are expanding their range and looking to mate). These baiting programs are supplemented with other control measures like targeted shooting and trapping programs in response to sightings and evidence of fox presence.

So what can you do to help control fox numbers in Willoughby? The biggest factor in helping us properly target our controls is to report any signs of foxes, this can be fox prints, scats, fox calls, fox kills or an actual sighting. You can do this in under 10 seconds on the feral scan website: <https://www.feralscan.org.au/>

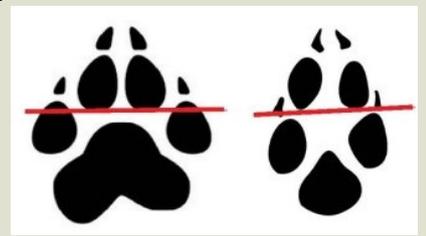
By doing this you help us get an overall view of how many foxes are moving around Willoughby. You can also see how many other fox sightings have been reported and where as well!



Mapped foxes in Willoughby reported in the past 12 months from FeralScan.

Other than actually spotting a fox how do you know if there are foxes around and how can you tell that track, scat or noise is a fox and not something else?

Fox prints are able to be distinguished from dog prints by looking at the overall shape and placement of pads. Fox prints tend to be more of a diamond shape whilst dogs will be rounder. You will also be able to draw a line across a fox print without cutting any of the pads as shown right by the red line.



Dog print (left) and fox print (right)

Fox scats are also quite distinctive; they will usually be full of hair, bones, feathers and fur. They also have a tell tail - a sharply tapered end. They can vary in colour and as foxes



tend to use tracks and paths you are more than likely to find them on or near bush tracks and paths.

You may not know it but its highly likely you may have heard a fox in the night. They have a strange 'bark' that is unlike any other animal. Have a listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPFTEuT3d4I> and next time you hear that strange call in the night log it in FeralScan so we can get better picture of fox movements and numbers in Willoughby.

What's in a scribble? - By Trinh Pham, Ecological Burn Team

One of the easiest trees to recognise in Willoughby's bushland is the Scribbly Gum, *Eucalyptus haemastoma*. It is a small tree to 15m high with smooth white limbs. The trunk is also white or yellowish with grey mottling but what makes this gum a curiosity is the zig-zags and scribbles that is found all over the bark. What do the 'scribbles' mean and how did they get there?



The answer lies in a mysterious and rarely seen creature, The Scribbly Gum Moth (*Ogmograptis sp.* Pictured left). The scribble this insect produces reveals a fascinating stage of the moth's life cycle. As a larva, it bores into the growth layer of the trees bark and creates meandering tunnels, first in irregular loops and later in more regular zig-zags. In response to the feeding and tunnelling, the tree produces scar tissue composed of nutrient-rich cells.

When the larva moults into its next life stage with legs, it turns around and eats its way back along the way it has come. Development is rapid at this point and it leaves the tree to pupate.

Not long after the larva leaves the tree, the bark cracks off and exposes the scribbles for us to see. Entomologists believe the moths have lived off their eucalypt hosts for millions of years.

So the next time you stop by a Scribbly Gum don't forget to trace a few squiggly lines with your finger and marvel at the significance of the loop that ends every scribble.



Burning at Bushcare Update - By Trinh Pham, Ecological Bushcare Burn Team

Our bushcare ecological burns are now 6 months old and it has been an exciting wait to see what has germinated. We expected to see a few coloniser species at this stage, often from the Poaceae (grasses) and Fabaceae (acacia and peas) families.

Coloniser plants play an important role on a site after a disturbance such as fire. They are often numerous, fast growing but short-lived and help to create a suitable environment for the other species that follow. One such example on our two sites is the Acacia and it was a delight to see many seedlings emerge with their distinctive juvenile leaves, but what Acacia species did we have here?

A fascinating feature in Acacias is the juvenile leaves. After germination the first leaves to develop are bi-pinnate leaves which are small leaves growing opposite each other along a central spine. This gives these leaves a feather-like appearance. See photo right:



Acacia longifolia seedling with adult and juvenile leaves.

As the adult leaves become more apparent, we were able to use it to identify the young plants to the species level. A total of 6 different species of Acacia were observed across the two burn sites. They include *Acacia longifolia*, *A. myrtilifolia*, *A. parametensis*, *A. suaveolens*, *A. terminalis* and *A. ulicifolia*

It is worthwhile to note that the adult leaves in this genus are not actually leaves. They are in fact modified stems called phyllodes and are the result of the plants' adaptation to a dry climate. Acacias are important colonisers after a burn because of its nitrogen-fixing ability. Bacteria in the plant's root nodules are able to convert nitrogen from the atmosphere into a form that is available to all plants on the site.

Other coloniser plants we have sited after the burn include shrubs like *Omalanthus populifolius*, *Dodonea triquetra* and grasses such as *Entolasia*, *oplismenus* and *microleana*. The presence of these special plants is an exciting indicator that the post fire regeneration process has begun.



Omalanthus seedling.

What's On in Willoughby February – June 2021

Bookings essential on 9777 1000 or via our event listings:

<https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Events>

Activity	Date
Join the Sydney Edible Garden Trail is a celebration of the myriad ways that residents create food security, save money and help the environment, while enjoying the health benefits of home grown fruit and vegetables. A number of our very own community gardens are taking part and will open their gardens, share their passion and knowledge to inspire self reliance. For more details visit: www.sydneyediblegardentrail.com	Virtual 27 & 28 Feb
Grow you Own Mushrooms Join the 'Mother of Mushrooms', Alicia Dudek to learn everything you need to know about growing your own mushrooms.	Physical 20 & 21 Mar
Back on Your Bike Dust off your bike and gain confidence in bike handling, using gears and sharing space with other traffic. 9am - 11am.	Tue 23 Feb 6.30pm - 8pm
Climate Action in the Garden - webinar The garden can be a place of climate action where you can connect with the environment and implement changes to reduce your impact and help build climate resilience. In this interactive webinar we will use the Climate 7 framework to explore how gardening can be a part of your climate action plan.	Sat 13 Mar & 29 May
How to Save Water in your Garden - webinar Celebrate World Water Day and learn simple steps to manage your garden to save water and money. Find out about water harvesting and how to select the best drought-tolerant plants.	Wed 17 Mar 7pm - 8.30pm
Nocturnal Spotlight Walk This reserve has open spaces and closed bushland spaces, perfect for spotting nocturnal animals. Warners Park Northbridge. Bring a torch.	Mon 22 Mar 6pm - 7pm
What Happens to my Recycling? - webinar Join this webinar to hear from IQ Renew about the way the Materials Recycling Facility operates and get an update on their glass processing plant.	Fri 26 Mar 7.30pm - 9pm
Living with Tall Trees Trees are a significant natural asset for your property and neighbourhood, but some people worry they might be dangerous. Discover how they grow and cope with different environments, why they shed branches and more.	Tue 30 Mar 12pm - 1pm

Activity	Date
Fashion Revolution Week Movie Screening: Minimalism free moving screening of MINIMALISM: a documentary about the important things.	Tue 27 Apr 7pm - 8.30pm
Family Spotlight Walk Join us on this easy walk suitable for adults and children over 5yrs at Harold Reid Reserve. Find out what creatures are out and about in the cool of the night.	Fri 30 Apr 7pm - 8.30pm
Share the Path Walkers, riders, wheelers and scooters are invited to enjoy a cup of coffee (BYO cup!), get a bike tune up and discuss safe	Wed 12 May 7am - 9am
Bicycle Maintenance Made Easy - webinar All the basics of fixing your bike so you can save money and ride safely.	Wed 12 May 6.30pm - 7.30pm
Castlecrag Meander & Poetry Reading Wander through some lovely Walter Burley Griffin Reserves and streets in Castlecrag. The sit down to enjoy some bush poetry.	Thur 20 May 10am - 12pm
Saving Energy in your Apartment - webinar Do you want to cut down on your apartment's energy bills? This information session will provide tips on making your apartment more energy efficient without sacrificing comfort.	Wed 26 May 6.30pm - 8pm
Coastal Spotlight Walk Tune in your night time sense and discover the nocturnal creatures who call this beautiful coastal reserve home. Clive Park Reserve, bring a torch.	Fri 28 May 7pm - 8.30pm
Reconciliation Week - Cultural Bushwalk Karen Smith from the local Aboriginal Heritage Office will join us on this beautiful 4.5km loop walk around Harold	Wed 2 Jun 10am - 12.30pm
Plant-Based Eating Essentials - webinar Gain valuable information and practical tips to make healthy, plant-based eating easy.	Wed 16 Jun 7pm - 8pm
Raising Green Kids - webinar If you are keen to raise kids that are connected to nature, and are involved in the planet's health, this workshop is for you.	Tue 22 Jun 7.30pm - 8.30pm