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Free

Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

The Battle against Bugs: it's time to end chemical warfare

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Insects are important wildlife often overlooked in urban habitats. What we do notice are the cockroaches, ants and mosquitoes in and around our homes. All too often we reach for the insect spray.

But not all insects are pests – a wide variety of them help keep our towns healthy. They pollinate plants, feed other wildlife, recycle our rubbish, and eat other insect pests. Insects are vital to our well-being.

Australians are quick to decry the use of herbicides but use large amounts of pesticides to tackle creepy crawlies in their homes and gardens. But our fondness for fly spray has potentially serious impacts on ecosystems as it enters the food chain and effect public health.

Since becoming publicly available in the 1950s, insect sprays have been a popular way to deal with cockroaches, flies, moths, and ants around the home and backyard, and are also widely used by local councils to keep pests at bay. Unfortunately insects such as mosquitoes are becoming immune to many of these products.

Another, perhaps wider, problem is that indiscriminate use of insecticides can kill more than just pests. Many species on which we rely for keeping our backyard gardens, bushland, wetlands and parks healthy can become collateral damage. This includes predatory species that can themselves help keep pests under control.

What can I do at home?

Don't give pests opportunities. Be mindful of how we produce and dispose of waste. Flies and cockroaches thrive in our rubbish, but they can be effectively managed by ensuring that food waste is stored in insect-proof containers, recycled, or properly disposed of. Don't leave buckets of water around the backyard, as this invites mosquitoes to breed.

Don't open your door to pests. Seal cracks and crevices in the outside of your house, and ensure there are screens on your doors and windows.

Support the animals that control insect pests – they'll do the hard work for you! In particular, don't be so quick to kill spiders and wasps, because they prey on pests in your home and garden. Reaching for the fly spray might be easy, but remember you may end up killing friends as well as foes.



Landcare Working Bee

Our team of friendly volunteers work every Saturday morning, weather permitting from 8.30am to 10.30am rotating through the various sites around Bangalow. All welcome.

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What Tree is That?

By Liz Gander



This is a question I am often asked and I will admit in my early days of growing local rainforest plants often I did not know but I always made it my task to find out. This is how I became aware of a White Beech Tree - *Gmelina leichhardtii*.

The specimen I was asked about is growing on the junction of Bangalow Road and the Coopers Shoot turn off just out of Bangalow. The inquiry came as they most often do when the ground was littered with the lavender blue fruit they produce very sporadically, sometimes taking 5 years between fruiting while some never fruit at all, see photo above.

I was recently given a book written by Germaine Greer titled 'White Beech' which is the story of her work to environmentally restore a property in the Numinbah Valley, a place where the beech was once common. I was surprised to learn that this species was almost driven to extinction by over-logging as it has a very sought after timber.

It was coveted because it was durable, easily worked and non-shrinking making it valued for ship decks, verandahs and general building along with many other uses. Timber-getters sold their Red Cedar and kept the White Beech for themselves.

Sadly a lot of old giants were felled and never retrieved from the forest, which was the case with many valuable trees due to inaccessible locations. White Beech was almost logged out and the timber is no longer available.

The indigenous name Binna Burra means 'place where the beech tree grows', it is supposed to refer to the White Beech trees but I can't confirm this, it could also refer to Antarctic Beech. I don't know if the local area known as Binna Burra is named for the same tree but if it was only the White Beech grew here.

Beechmont in Lamington is also named for these trees, 'beech mountain'. The tree was once common from the Illawarra to around Maleny, QLD. Old growth trees are now very rare, it will grow to 40m with a very straight trunk becoming one very impressive canopy tree.

I learned the hard way that this species is very slow to germinate taking up to 12 months. The seedlings are then quick to grow so ever since the local tree was brought to my attention I have been growing White Beech and planting it back into the environment where it was once common.

Early last century an attempt was made to grow the beech trees in a plantation. The experiment failed as like most rainforest trees this is not ideal, rainforest is a community of trees. It is now planted as a part of cabinet timber plantations, it is not the fastest growing tree so does not feature heavily.

The Ragged Blossom Native nursery will donate a White Beech tree to anyone who has the space in a bit of forest to plant one as part of a desire to see these trees returned to their environment.

Contact Liz on 0403 720 950 if you would like to help preserve this species.



How to Keep Slave- Caught Seafood off your Plate

How would you feel if you knew that slavery had helped provide the fish on your plate?

New research reveals that imported seafood raises the risk of Australians consuming fish caught or processed by workers under slave labour conditions.

Recent cases record the abuse of Indonesian, Cambodian, and Myanmar nationals subjected to forced labour on vessels from countries including South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand, in waters as far afield as New Zealand, Western Africa, Hawaii and the UK.

Forced labour in fisheries is tied to the ongoing depletion of our oceans. Compared with 1950, fishing fleets now travel twice the distance to catch a third of the fish and with rising fuel costs, unscrupulous operators reduce costs by exploiting labour.

Enslaved fishers might not see land for years, with the inability of regulators to oversee labour practices in offshore conditions providing fertile ground for labour abuses.

A globalised seafood industry with opaque supply chains makes it hard for consumers to avoid slave-caught seafood. The lack of “net-to-table” traceability compounds the challenge of assessing how prevalent slave-caught seafood might be in our grocery stores and restaurants.

Eliminating slavery from your plate

We suggest the following ways in which we can contribute to eliminating slave-caught seafood

- Buy your seafood from local fish co-ops and support our national fishing fleet.
- Ask restaurants and cafes where their fish, prawns etc comes from and only order if it is local or Australian caught.
- Read the labels on canned fish and reject anything that comes from South Korea, Taiwan, and particularly Thailand. Source: The Conversation



KOALA TREE PLANTING WORKING BEE

Saturday 13 April 2019

NO Weeding, **NO** Digging, **NO** Whipper Snipping, just planting trees in pre-dug holes and mulching – *EASY!*

There are 500 koala and rainforest trees to plant so Bangalow Koalas is having another Working Bee. If you want to volunteer a couple of hours of your time then please see below for details.

PLUS as a thank you for your time and hard work there is a sausage sizzle and sandwiches thanks to Bangalow Lions and Julie Frankham.

What you need to bring and wear:

Trowels, drinking water, sunscreen. Long sleeves, long pants, gloves, fully enclosed footwear, hat.

RSVP: Linda Sparrow on twodogsmedia@optusnet.com.au

Thank you for the help and support

Bangalow Land and Rivercare



Volunteers Needed
Liz Gander 0403420950

Make a Difference

Can We 'rewild' Swathes of Australia?

Since colonisation, a dizzying array of Australia's native species and ecosystems have been altered or removed altogether. It therefore seems natural to consider the idea of restoring-what's been lost – a process termed 'rewilding'.

Now a global trend, rewilding projects aim to restore functional ecosystems. The rationale is that by reactivating the often complex relationships between species such as apex predators and their prey, for example, these ecosystems once again become able to sustain themselves.

Rewilding has successfully captured the public interest, particularly overseas. Conservation group 'Rewilding Europe' has a network of eight rewilding areas and a further 59 related projects, covering 6 million hectares in total.

People can benefit from rewilding either directly, through wildlife tourism income or reduced kangaroo grazing on farmland, introducing plant diversity and minimise soil degradation.

In Australia Aboriginal owned and managed land offers huge opportunities in this regard because it covers 52% of the country and is home to many threatened species. Peninsulas also make good locations for rewilding in Australia because their geography allows the impacts of introduced predators to be minimised.

With the current successful breeding programme at 'Devils Ark' in the Barrington Tops in NSW there is now a serious and broad-based proposal to release Tasmanian Devils into the wild at Wilsons Promontory in Victoria, saving the Devil from extinction in Tasmania from contagious facial tumors and restoring damaged ecosystems on the mainland.

Tasmanian Devils used to inhabit mainland Australia. Fossils found in caves in Victoria are identical to living Devils in Tasmania. How long they lived on the mainland is uncertain. The current conditions at Wilson's Promontory closely resemble those in Tasmania, and have

likely remained unchanged for thousands of years, with no dingoes and plenty of prey. So we can be sure that the Devils would fit in. One of the biggest benefits Devils could offer is in the control of feral animals.

Currently we spend a lot of money managing foxes through baiting programs. Devils may provide a 24-7 predator control service, free of charge and have proven in Tasmania an effective control of probably Australia's most damaging feral animal, cats.

Source: The Conversation



Tasmanian Devil

Village Eco News

Our aim is to inform, interest, amuse and educate our readers on all things environmental. We welcome you to submit your contributions or to subscribe to this free Newsletter send your name and email address to:

bangalowlandcare@gmail.com

Please pass this publication on to your family and friends. Receiving our Newsletter online will help to save the environment we work to preserve.

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