

August 2019

Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

What are native grasslands, and why do they matter?

Federal Coalition Minister Angus Taylor is under scrutiny for possibly intervening in the clearing of grasslands in the southern highlands of NSW. Leaving aside the political dimensions, it's worth asking: why do these grasslands matter?

Because the Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands, photo below, is now so rare it is classified as critically endangered and federally protected. Furthermore, many of the distinct plants and animals that still live in these grasslands are classified as vulnerable or endangered.

The current grasslands in much of eastern Australia are the result of forests and woodlands cleared to "improve" the landscape (from a grazier's point of view) to make it suitable for grazing livestock. This "improvement" typically entails cutting trees, burning the felled timber and uprooting tree stumps, followed by ploughing, fertilising and sowing introduced grasses that are more palatable to livestock than many native grasses.

Treeless native grasslands once occurred at high elevations across much of these relatively dry and cold areas, particularly in upland valleys or frost hollows where cold air descends at night.

The climate restricts tree growth and instead has encouraged grasses and herbs such as kangaroo grass and poa tussock to dominate but there are many other unique plants.

A typical undisturbed grassland area will support 10-20 species of native grasses and 40 or more non-grass species. It is estimated only 0.5% of this area that would once have been natural temperate grasslands remains.

The grassy plains are also home to unique cold-adapted reptiles such as the grassland earless dragon, little whip snake, pink-tailed worm lizard and striped legless lizards. This combination of plants and animals create a unique ecological community and show us what Australia once looked like.

Source: The Conversation



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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.



Bangalow Main Street

The Benefits of Trees

We all know that trees produce oxygen, intercept airborne particulates, and reduce smog, enhancing a community's respiratory health.

But did you know access to trees, green spaces, and parks promotes greater physical activity, and reduces stress, while improving the quality of life in our cities and towns.

- Urban landscaping, including trees, helps lower crime rates.
- Studies show that urban vegetation slows heartbeats, lowers blood pressure, and relaxes brain wave patterns.
- Children with a view of nature and trees at home score higher on tests of self-discipline.
- Communities and business districts with healthy tree-cover attract new residents, industry, and commercial activity.
- Homes landscaped with trees sell more quickly and are worth 5% to 15% more than homes without trees.
- Where the entire street is tree-lined, homes may be worth 25% more.
- Trees enhance economic stability by attracting businesses; people linger and shop longer when trees are present.
- Where a canopy of trees exists, apartments and offices rent more quickly and have a higher occupancy rate; workers report more productivity and less absenteeism.
- People walk and jog more on shaded streets, which encourages interaction with neighbors and improves the sense of community.
- Trees absorb and block sound, reducing noise pollution by as much as 40 percent.

The simple message is - Plant more trees

Source; NC State Public Research University

Tyre Recycling Plant Putting Warren NSW on the map

Tyres are a problem waste material in Australia, with just 16% currently being recycled domestically. The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has given the green light to Australia's first green tyre-recycling plant in the small town of Warren in central-northern NSW.

The project, headed by Australian tech company Green Distillation Technologies, aims to address the huge numbers of tyres disposed of in Australia at their end-of-life. This accounts for round 20 million tyres each year, the vast majority winding up in landfill. The new recycling plant will turn the old tyres into high-grade oil, steel and carbon via a process called 'destructive distillation', by using a chemical reaction to achieve these raw materials.

Once the pilot plant is running at full capacity, it is expected to process around 19,000 tonnes of material each year, around 685,000 tyres. Each passenger car tyre is estimated to contain approximately 1.5kg of steel, 0.5kg of textiles and 7kg of rubber.

The EPA has said the plant in Warren had passed all requirements from the EPA Energy from Waste Policy Statement. "The licence requires the operator to meet strict emission limits and undertake comprehensive monitoring to ensure that the environment and community are protected."

The company is also planning to introduce larger plants in six other locations around Australia, including one that has already had its development application approved in Toowoomba.

Source: Planet Ark





What does a Koala's nose know?

The Koala's nose is distinctive – it's a big black leathery rectangle and surprisingly soft to the touch and every nose is unique. A study of 108 wild Koalas found a distinctive patterns of pigmentation around the nostrils allowing observers on the ground to reliably recognise individual animals high in the trees.

But more importantly for the Koala, the nose is an important connection between this iconic marsupial and the world it lives in. The tiny newborn Koala, despite weighing only half a gram, already has the ability to smell and feel its way towards the milky scent of the pouch and its mother's teats and they always smell their food carefully before eating particularly to sniff out natural plant toxins and other unpleasant chemicals in gum leaves.

Koalas are generally solitary creatures, but that's not to say they don't know their neighbours. Koalas of both sexes often spend considerable time smelling the base and trunk of a tree before they decide whether to climb up or move on elsewhere. They commonly dribble a stream of urine down the trunk, leaving a trail of chemicals that reveal information about the Koala's sex, identity, dominance, relatedness to other Koalas, readiness to mate, disease status and even what they've been eating.

When wild Koalas are brought into captivity, they continue to rely on their nose to learn about the strange new world around them not only their food but also the scientists and carers moving around them. They will pull anything of interest into smelling range, making them one of the few wild animals that will rub noses to say hello with humans and fellow Koalas, even when barely acquainted!

Source: *Animal Science*, Western Sydney University

Weed of the Month

Jacaranda

by Liz Gander

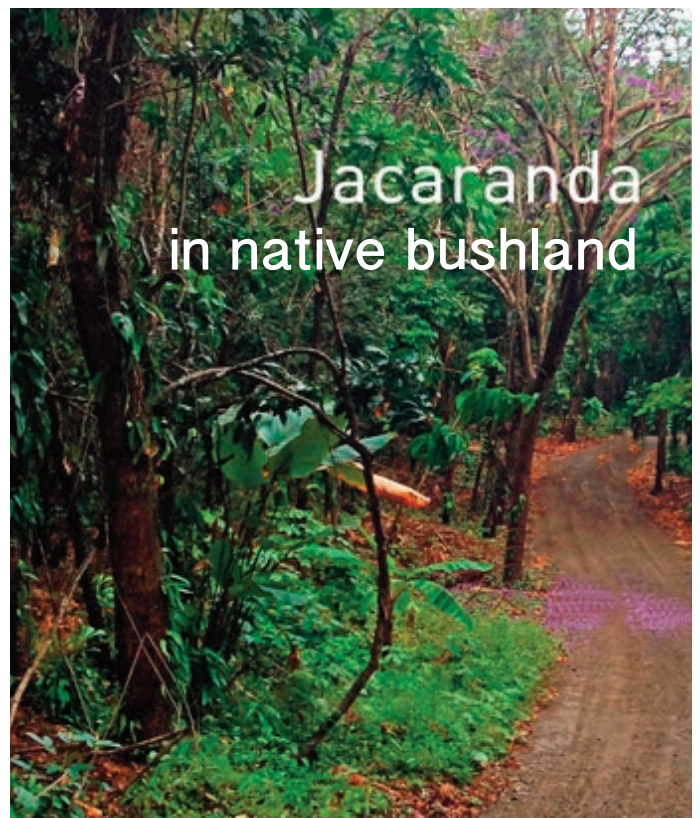
Jacaranda mimosifolia can grow in bushland, grassland, wooded ravines and riverbanks. The spreading growth habit and the dense foliage shade prevents native plants regenerating. It can form thickets of seedlings beneath planted trees from which the species may expand and exclude other vegetation.

Jacaranda mimosifolia is fast growing and resprouts easily if damaged and is regarded as an invasive species in parts of South Africa and in Queensland.

A deciduous or evergreen tree, 5-15 m tall. Its main distinguishing feature is its spectacular lavender blue blooms which has led to its popularity as an ornamental tree.

The best form of invasive species management is prevention. If prevention is no longer possible, it is best to treat the weed infestations when they are small to prevent them from establishing. *Jacaranda mimosifolia* is very difficult to control once established. Large trees must be ring-barked or cut down below ground level and any regrowth treated with herbicide.

When using any herbicide always read the label first and follow all instructions and safety requirements. If in doubt consult an expert.



Plastic in our Diet

The average person could be ingesting 2000 tiny pieces of plastic every week - the equivalent of a credit card - with drinking water the largest source.

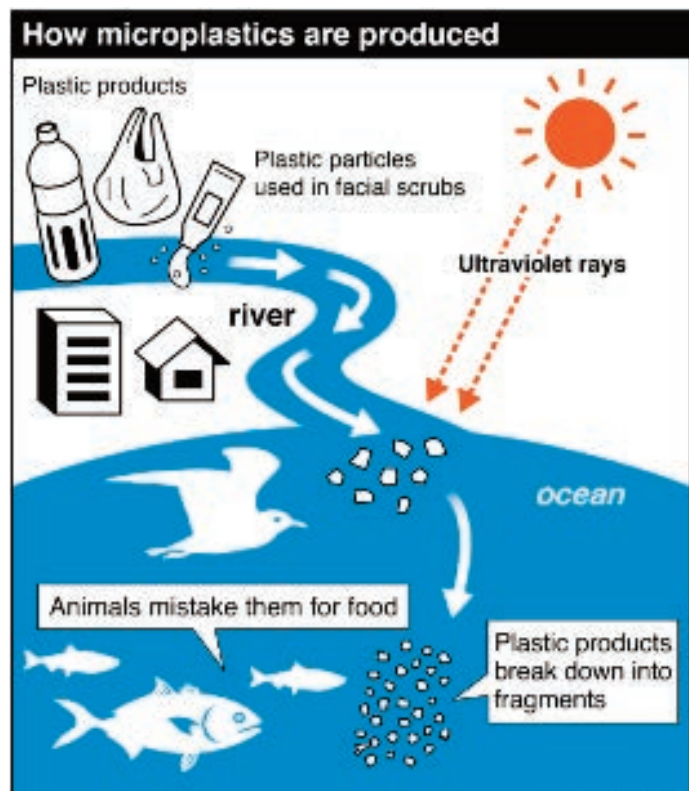
The 'No Plastic in Nature' report from the University of Newcastle commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund suggests people are consuming about 5 grams of microplastics a week or just over 250 grams a year.

The study combines data from more than 50 studies on the ingestion of microplastics which are plastics under 5 millimeters in size.

Drinking water is the largest contributor with the plastic particles found in bottled, tap, surface and ground water all over the world.

Shell fish, beer and salt are the consumables with the highest recorded levels of plastic. WWF International Director General Marco Lambertini says "these findings should serve as a wake up call to all governments".

Source: SMH, Uni of Newcastle



The Year Ahead

by Dawn Lotty

At our well attended Annual General Meeting on 6 June plans were put in place for Bangalow Land and Rivercare to continue with its current programme of maintenance and planting through all our sites for at least the next 12 months.

Although we have 26 names on our contact list for our Saturday morning working group the number of people attending has not increased beyond the few regulars which is very disappointing.

There is one bright prospect on the horizon with a group of local residents led by Paul Glennie and Imelda Johnson, who live either side of Paddy's Creek in Bangalow that are interested in organising a subgroup to take over the future maintenance of the Creek.

Thanks to the generosity of our Patrons for the Environment and donations we receive from the Bangalow Farmers Market raffles we are now able to have our website professionally redesigned which will finally include our monthly Newsletters which unfortunately will no longer be printed because of distribution problems.

The Office bearers have remained unchanged.
Noelene Plummer, President
Anne Martin, Vice President
Liz Gander, Secretary
Robert Lotty, Treasurer

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.

editor, design and layout, Dawn Lotty

July raffle winner was Wendy

