

November

Free

Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

Welcome to Village Eco News. For more information about how you can subscribe or contribute see page 4

Camphor laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*)

We are often asked why an attractive shade tree such as the Camphor laurel is poisoned or cut down. The answer is simple, it is a restricted plant under the Biosecurity Act 2014.

The Act requires everyone, landowners and councils, to take all reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

The Camphor laurel is a destructive, invasive species producing up to 100,000 seeds a year with a tendency to form single species communities, drastically reducing native vegetation along the east coast of Australia and threatening the survival of native wildlife especially Koalas.

It is particularly common along watercourses where it destabilises stream banks and in soil types that once supported rainforests leading to the dense infestation that exists in Northern NSW. They are now spreading further up catchments and hillsides, and westward into drier areas with poorer soils.

Unfortunately they have already partly intergrated into the local ecosystem so ecologists and regenerations teams like Landcare have developed effective methods of removing the Camphors in a way to ensure that they will be replaced with native vegetation.

All parts of the plant are poisonous and can cause nausea, vomiting and respiratory distress. Allergic skin reactions can also occur.

The harvesting, milling and value adding of Camphor laurel in northern NSW is estimated to be worth more than \$1 million in annual turnover as the timber is used for a range of products and furniture.

It is also being trailed as a potential fuel biomass in a north coast cogeneration project to produce electricity at the Condong and Broadwater Sugar Mill.

For information on the methods available to remove Camphors contact your local council.

Source: BSC, DPI NSW, ABC.



Above: Camphor 'forrest', below Camphor seeds



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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.

More Australians Fear the Effects of Climate Change

Research by the *Australian Institute* has found that 73% of Australians are concerned about climate change up from 66% this time last year while public acceptance of the scientific evidence that climate change exists is up 5% to 76%

78% of people surveyed were concerned that the extreme weather predicted as a result of climate change would effect crops and threaten food supply and the same number were worried about the Great Barrier Reef and the frequency of bush fires.

The research found that 49% were in favour of imposing a moratorium on new coal mines and the expansion of existing coal mines and 70% thought the government should plan the orderly closure of coal plants and replace them with clean energy.

Why the change? Just this month, drought was declared for all of NSW and the bushfire season began two months early. The state had its earliest ever total fire ban and fires have already burned through large parts of coastal southern NSW.

The drought, played out on daily television is having a devastating effect on farmers and farming communities, stretching our resources and our ability to prepare for and respond to these catastrophes.

This Research gives hope that politicians and decision makers in this country may finally realise they are out of step with the majority of Australians and it is time to introduce a responsible climate action plan.



Australian White Ibis

Hi! I'm an Australian

Often dismissed as an introduced vagrant, the Australian White Ibis is one of three native Ibis species. With that status comes legal protection.

Many urban Australians are unhappy to learn that the Ibis is one of us. They want local authorities to remove "immigrant" Ibis from their neighbourhoods giving the birds the unflattering names of "bin chickens", "tip turkeys", "sandwich snatchers", "picnic pirates" and "dumpster divers".

Once it was rare to see an Ibis in populated areas but in just a few decades the Australian White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) has made itself at home in many of Australia's coastal and inland cities and towns.

The Ibis has migrated from interior wetlands to the coasts of east and southeast Australia and the southwest. That migration was forced on them by the declining availability of water and food in their natural wetland habitat mainly due to human activity and exacerbated by drought, both causing a huge declines in Ibis numbers.

While Australia is facing a rubbish overload of food waste and rampant materialism the much maligned Ibis is surviving the only way it knows how in this tale of ecological ruin and over consumption.

Source: The Conversation edited by Dawn Lotty

20th Anniversary Celebrations

by Liz Gander

Would it rain? The apprehension all week leading up to the Bangalow Land and Rivercare 20th Anniversary party was a bit stressful. Well it didn't rain, the sun even stuck it's head out giving us a lovely morning to celebrate.

It's been a long road and to keep going has been a bit of a miracle in a climate where less and less people want to do volunteer work. I don't think we will go another 20 years though!

It was good to be able to reflect on the projects we have done over the years and to now see many of them come to canopy closure and seeding making them self-sustaining.

We estimate that to date our group has re-vegetated 3km of Byron Creek and it's tributaries, some parts on only one bank and other parts on both banks. We have also assisted landholders along their creeks by giving advice, having working bees on their land, clearing weeds and preparing for planting.

Bangalow has virtually no seed bank from which natural regeneration can occur because the Big Scrub was cleared so completely, then followed a century of cattle grazing. Other areas can expect regeneration by just fencing off paddocks but we need to plant everything making our task very labor intensive and costly.

As we work only on creek banks (riparian zone) the area most prone to flood and frost we often lose plants. The alluvial soil is rich but if the trees don't grow fast they become engulfed by weeds and die and there is always dry weather.

It is never a picnic to start a new planting, it can be 4 or 5 years to grow a canopy and then the understory needs to be added. We can't ever hope to replicate the Big Scrub in it's original form but by putting in the foundation and bringing back the seed source we hope that natural methods of seed dispersal will help complete the picture in the future.

We would like to thank those who came on the day to help us celebrate our achievements and also all the stall holders, Big Scrub Landcare, Bangalow Parklands, Byron Bird Buddies, Friends of the Koala, Bangalow Koalas, Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers and the Mens Shed who came to share their work.

They are all amazing people doing wonderful things for our environment and they all need to be congratulated.

Bangalow Land and Rivercare works every Saturday morning on various sites around Bangalow, if you would like to join us on any project just let us know. An email is sent out each week announcing the place were we are working. Email: bangalowlandcare@gmail.com

Pictured below from top to bottom: Liz Gander and Tony Parks, part of the crowd and Liz Gander and Noelene Plummer cutting the cake.



New Solar Cells offer you the Chance to Print out Solar Panels and Stick them on your Roof

Australia's first commercial installation of printed solar cells, made using specialised semiconducting inks and printed using a conventional reel-to-reel printer, has been installed on a factory roof in Newcastle.

The 200 square metre array was installed in just one day by a team of five people. No other energy solution is as lightweight, as quick to manufacture, or as easy to install on this scale.

The research team manufactured the solar modules using standard printing techniques; in fact, the machine that was used typically makes wine labels. Each solar cell consists of several individual layers printed on top of each other, which are then connected in a series to form a bank of cells. These cells are then connected to form a solar module.

At the core of the technology are the specialised semiconducting flexible polymer-based inks replacing hard, rigid, glass-like materials such as silicon.

As a result the panels cost less than A\$10 per square metre. This means it would take only 2-3 years to become cost-competitive with other technologies.

These light weight printed solar modules could conceivably be installed onto any roof or structure using adhesive tape and connected to wires using simple press-studs.

The solar cells have brought the goal of solar roofs, walls and windows a step closer and could benefit those people who don't own or have access to roof space, people who live in apartment complexes for example and may never own the property outright.

The new installation at Newcastle is an important milestone on the path towards commercialisation of the technology.



Printed solar creator, University Of Newcastle's Professor Paul Dastoor, unveils their first solar demonstration on a factory roof in Newcastle

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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