

May 2017

# 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

## Mould...the silent health risk

If you live in the northern rivers you are familiar with the problem of mould as most of us find it growing in and around our homes.

The wettest March in 42 years has only added to this problem. Extended periods of rain and humidity can reactivate dormant spores of black mould that is not only ugly but can make some people seriously ill, causing allergic reactions and asthma.

When there is high humidity outside there will be high humidity inside and damp areas in your house will speed up the growth and the longer you leave mould, the harder it will be to get rid of it effectively.

Mould grows in poorly ventilated areas such as kitchen cupboards, wardrobes, and bathrooms, especially on tile grout. Leaking roofs can lead to mould around cornices, rising damp can be the cause of mould around skirting boards and under carpets and it's important to remember that mould comes not only in black or grey but pink, green and blue.

Mould does not need to be seen or smelt for it to be a health hazard. Dead mould spores can also make people sick.

### Tips to remove mould

- \*De clutter. Mould feeds on organic material and dust.
- \*Allow as much natural light into your house as possible.
- \*Open windows and doors to keep air circulating.

- \*Make sure your bathroom has an effective and efficient exhaust fan.
- \*Purchase a dehumidifier.
- \*Check for leaks and rising damp.
- \*Wipe down damp surfaces even on outside railings and furniture.
- \*Always use a cloth to physically remove mould from a surface – do not use a broom.
- \*Use a face mask if you have allergies or asthma.
- \*Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter.
- \*Make sure spills and overflows are completely dry within 48 hours.

**DO NOT USE BLEACH.** It can feed the mould not kill it and just bleaches out the colour. Remove mould using four parts white vinegar to one part water and 10 drops of 100% Clove Oil. Tea Tree Oil also works well.

Alternatively half a teaspoon of Clove Oil or Tea Tree Oil mixed with a litre of water in a spray bottle and shake well. Spray over the affected area and leave it on, repeat these steps if needed.

*Dawn Lotty*



### 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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## Biodiversity

by Noelene Plummer

**Definition:** “the variety of plant and animal life in the world or a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable”

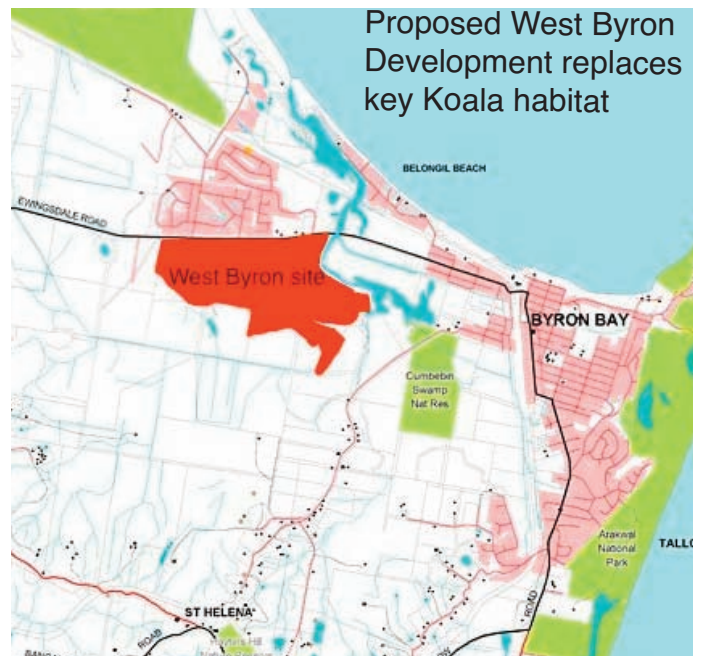
### Why is biodiversity Important?

Biodiversity is the basis of human existence; our life support system. Ecosystems regulate climatic processes, breakdown waste and recycle nutrients, filter and purify water, buffer against flooding, maintain soil fertility and purify our air. All agriculture depends on biodiversity as do marine and freshwater food resources. Greater species diversity means a greater variety of crops. **Loss of biodiversity = loss of a healthy environment.**

Byron Shire is recognised as a biodiverse hotspot. Byron Shire is at the centre of the wet subtropics, the regions mild climate and high rainfall provide a year round growing season which provides a constant food supply for local animals and birds. Unfortunately almost 70 threatened flora species and over 90 threatened fauna species have been recorded in the Shire which makes it one of the most threatened communities in the state.

### Threats to Biodiversity:

- habitat destruction e.g. draining and infilling wetlands
- invasive weeds and species
- pollution; excessive use of fertiliser, factory farming
- land use change
- unsustainable and excessive consumption
- climate change
- increased urbanisation particularly in coastal areas
- domestic pets and feral cats



### How can you help?

- plant native plants and trees in your gardens that provide food and habitat for our native wildlife.
- preserve old habitat trees they provide hollows and produce nectar
- erect bird boxes
- never dump garden waste in bush lands or waterways
- control noxious weeds
- join local Landcare and Dunecare groups who actively work restoring the ecology of Byron Shire
- don't allow cats and dogs to wander unrestrained in areas of wildlife habitats; keep your pets inside at night time when many of our wildlife are out on the ground looking for food. We all love seeing a Koala but not when it has been mauled by domestic animals.







## How to Love Your Bush Turkey

Have Brush Turkeys taken over your garden?

The Australian Brush Turkey (*Alectura lathami*), also known as the Bush or Scrub Turkey, has a bad reputation. Brush Turkeys are blamed for damaging gardens and darting across roads.

The characteristic nature of the Brush Turkey is to lurk in gardens making an awful mess as it digs up leaf litter, twigs and dirt.

These birds have a pretty tough start to life — after hatching from their egg they spend the first two days of their life scrambling vertically through a metre of dirt and compost to reach the surface.

Their parents have little to do with them and the chicks grow up without adults to protect them or teach them the ropes. Luckily they can fly straight away, but they have to use their instincts to quickly learn how to forage and stay safe from predators.

Brush Turkeys are the most ancient member of a family that dates back 30 million years and includes chickens, quails, peacocks and pheasants.

The birds were nearly wiped out during the 1930s because they are so easy to hunt. During the Great Depression when jobs and food was scarce the birds became a reliable source of meat and eggs.

Their nests or 'mounds' are made up of soil and plant material. Built by the males to attract a mate, they're essentially large compost heaps.

So large, in fact, that they take the hard working male about a month to create.

Just like a good compost heap, these mounds generate a huge amount of heat and that's what incubates the eggs — which is lucky because once the eggs are laid the mother is off, and the father only sticks around to defend the mound.

When the chicks have left the nest the leftover mound is a perfect bit of compost for humans to spread out over the garden. The mounds are generally in use between August and February and you can be sure it's abandoned once you see seedlings growing on top.

Brush Turkeys were actively hunted for a century and have been pushed out of much of their habitat by human settlement. But since the protection of native animals in 1972 the birds have been slowly growing in number and returning to native gardens and parks

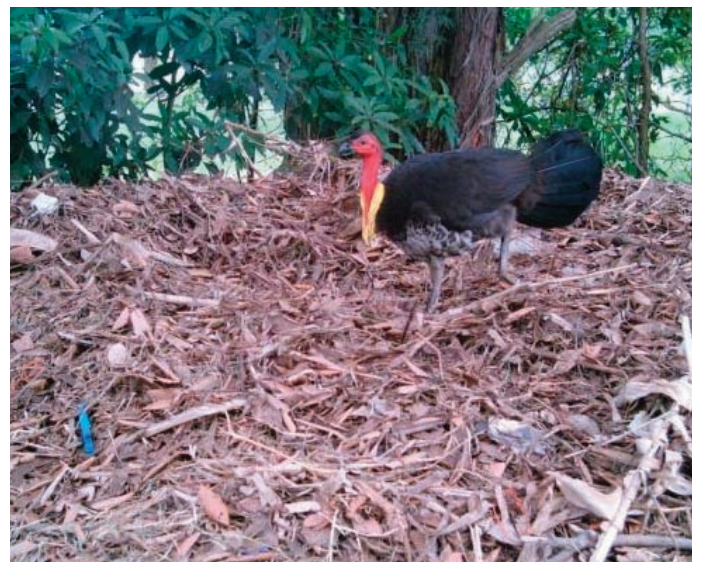
They have managed to survive living with cats and cars, against all expectations that these would decimate them. Obviously, enough of the estimated 20 eggs laid a year by females survive to keep numbers growing.

And while they may be annoying to have in your veggie patch, they are a really unusual bit of nature and some experts are staggered to find them in our suburban backyards.

A few quick tips on living with Brush Turkeys

1. To discourage the bird in places you don't want them, dismantle any sign of a nest before it gets established.
2. Don't feed the birds.
3. Build fences around your garden beds.
4. Keep your yard clear of any thick vegetation and leaf litter.

Dawn Lotty



## Weed of the Month Cockspur Coral Tree



Although it's a stunning plant, the Cockspur Coral Tree is also a noxious weed and a real threat to the waterways of the Northern Rivers.

Originally from South America, the deciduous *Erythrina crista-galli*, has been grown as an ornamental in Australia for obvious reasons. However, it has now become invasive in north-eastern NSW and south-east Queensland. It reproduces through both seeds and pieces of broken branch that easily take root in moist soil.

Cockspur Coral Tree has already become widespread in the Richmond and Wilson River catchments. It has also been found along the Clarence River between Grafton and Maclean. Local authorities are working hard to control it in these areas and to prevent it spreading anywhere else.

Because of its rapid spread and its ability to completely choke out other plants, Cockspur Coral Tree has been declared a noxious weed in New South Wales. This means it cannot be sold or distributed, and all landholders have a legal obligation to control it on their properties.

For more information on this noxious weed, contact your local council or weed control authority, or the NSW Department of Primary Industries or go to <http://www.looklearnact.com> or <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au>.

## Essential Oils for a Healthy Lifestyle Clove Oil

by Noelene Plummer

Clove Oil has many uses because of its ant-fungal, antiseptic, antimicrobial and anaesthetic qualities. Clove Oil is extracted from the flower buds of *Syzygium aromaticum*, it has been used extensively throughout China and India for hundreds of years for its fragrance and spice.

Caution: because Clove Oil is strong and can burn the skin, it must always be used diluted. If using on your skin dilute with a carrier oil eg. coconut oil, jojoba, honey or olive oil. When used for cleaning wear gloves. Keep out of the reach of children and do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding.

### Some Uses:

- Removing mould from tiles, grout, walls, shower curtains etc, see front page for directions.
- Toothaches; the analgesic properties give temporary relief to toothaches, dilute with olive oil on a cotton ball and apply to tooth or cavity.
- Mouth ulcers and strep throat; gargle 3 drops of Clove Oil with a glass of warm salty water.
- Due to its antiseptic properties Clove Oil is useful for insect bites and stings.
- Fungal infections; such as athletes foot.

### *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](mailto:bangalowlandcare@gmail.com)

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

*Photos: Landcare members*

*Layout & Design: Dawn Lotty*

*Printed by: DiGi PRINT PRO, Bangalow*

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