



Welcome to our new-look newsletter (thanks Amma for the banner and thanks to all contributors).

Our recent newsletters have been integrated with the Byron Shire Landcare and Dunecare newsletter, which is sent out electronically every month by Brunswick Valley Landcare. This has been a valuable arrangement to allow our newsletter to concentrate on local news, while also providing our readers with notice of events and news from a broader area. But it's been technically difficult to make the subscriptions work smoothly, so our newsletter will be now be quite separate again.

"WCHL News" will be emailed out as usual and is also available from our Facebook group page and on the Brunswick Valley Landcare website. Once in a while, we hope to do a hard copy letterbox drop. To be sure you don't miss out on the Byron Shire Landcare and Dunecare newsletter, please go to <http://brunswickvalleylandcare.org.au/newsletters/> to subscribe as an individual.



At time of writing, local bushfires have calmed down and we wish everyone a green and smoke-free festive season.



## Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held on 6 November. Office bearers were elected as follows:

President: Barbara Stewart  
Vice President: Darryl Larkin  
Secretary: Julie Gardner

Treasurer: Robyn Berrington  
Public Officer: Robyn Berrington  
Newsletter editor: Paul Hudson

Committee members:

Marg East, Suzi Lechner, Saxon Ryan, John Wynberg, Graham Watson, Stephen Millard, Peter Hall, Margie Hall, David Oliver, Jess Poulsen.

Contact us: Barbara 66840378, Julie 66840242 Email [wilsonscreeklandcare@yahoo.com.au](mailto:wilsonscreeklandcare@yahoo.com.au)

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## Current projects

It was back in August when we received the exciting news of funding approval for our Linkages in the Headwaters project. \$99,700 funding has been awarded for restoration works on eight properties in our valleys. Camphor- and Lantana-dominated regrowth will be converted to species-rich subtropical rainforests, expanding and connecting habitat for native flora and fauna, including many threatened species.

We are still not quite ready to start work, with lots of paperwork to step through and baseline monitoring photos and data to collect. Thankfully, it appears all eight of our sites are unburnt and ready for weed management and regeneration. There will be updates as the project proceeds over the next three years, through our newsletters and social media, and a chance to look at one or more sites during our project field day.

Works in Wilsons Creek/Huonbrook and Goonengerry also continue on our six year Bush Connect project.

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Both the Bush Connect and Linkages in the Headwaters projects are funded by the NSW government from its NSW Environmental Trust. We are grateful for the support of the Trust, at a time when government funding for the environment has been generally cut back.



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## Ball Nut discovery

By Barbara Stewart

Great to have good news and reminders of the biodiversity values of the rainforests that we work so hard to regenerate and protect. Bush regenerators commonly make unexpected finds as they clear invasive weeds from regrowth, and one of our Bush Connect project sites was found to host several specimens of the threatened Ball Nut. It is only the second location known from our valleys.

Read more here

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedSpeciesApp/profile.aspx?id=10332>



Ball Nut *Floydia praealta* is closely related to the Macadamia. It is a threatened rainforest tree found in small numbers between Gympie and the Clarence Valley. The flowers are cream and spidery with a musky odour and are followed by woody, globular, brown fruit that are rather larger than Macadamias at 5 cm in diameter, containing one or two inedible seeds.

Photo: Many thanks to Hugh Nicholson

Web: [www.rainforestpublishing.com.au](http://www.rainforestpublishing.com.au)

Web: [www.rainforestplantsaustralia.com](http://www.rainforestplantsaustralia.com)

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## Smooth Davo

By Barbara Stewart

Way back in August, an intrepid team set out to explore one of our Bush Connect properties, with the dual aim of inspecting the regeneration and also to search for a long lost population of the threatened Smooth Davidson's Plum *Davidsonia johnsonii*. Like its better known relative, the Davidsons Plum *Davidsonia jerseyana*, the Smooth Davo has edible dark purple fruit, but curiously, no seeds. Reproduction is by way of suckers, and all patches are likely to be genetically uniform.

Read more here:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10209>

We paused at the location of an upland Coral Tree thicket, and were very impressed to see a decaying Coral Tree trunk surrounded by vigorous rainforest regeneration.



On we trudged, scouring the forest for trees which had not been relocated since a sighting 30 years ago. A combination of long-term memories of landforms, ease of access that was once restricted by dense lantana and lots of search effort produced the result we wanted – a clump of about 10 trees surrounded by suckers. A GPS waypoint will help to ensure it is not lost again.



Hairless, toothed leaflets with tiny toothed wings along the leaf axis characterise Smooth Davo. Clumps of trees can often be recognised easily from the numerous suckers growing around them. The fruits are ripe in January. There are four known locations of Smooth Davo on private land in our valleys, with two more in neighbouring National Parks. With only around 30 patches known between south east Queensland and Wardell, we are in a bit of a Smooth Davo hotspot here!

It would be fascinating to find out about the genetic relationships between our local clumps, and whether they differ dramatically from patches growing in more distant locations. Luckily one of our team botanists was licensed to collect material for scientific purposes, so specimens were sent off to Southern Cross University for analysis and comparisons. It may be some time, however, before a researcher has funding or spare time to do the work.

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## Madeira Vine

By Barbara Stewart

Madeira Vine has been spreading through our riparian and roadside environments, weighing down native trees and smothering ground layer vegetation. With little ready funding to help, we have been exploring a variety of options for management. Biological control is an excellent option for suitable sites and we hope that some recently released Madeira Vine beetles might be munching their way through the vines near the fire shed. We'll be getting advice about the tolerance of the beetles to our current hot dry conditions before planning more releases. Find out about more conventional methods (from weed authorities, bush regenerators or landcare) and be aware that unresearched and unskilled management is likely to make the problem worse.

The results of an unintended experiment will be watched carefully, as a recent bushfire spread through a Madeira Vine management site. We do not recommend burning for Madeira management!



Madeira Vine beetles ready for release. The beetles need large patches to establish, and can reduce the infestation to a level that is more manageable. They do not completely remove all the vines and tubers.

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## Black Taro, Coral Trees and other weeds of our creeks



The spread of Black Taro has been alarming residents and observers of Wilsons Creek. We don't have funding to deal with this and have been tossing around ideas while intrepid individuals do their best to pull it out. (Take care to remove all material and don't leave pulled plants in the flood zone – disposal is one of the issues.) Huonbrook and Wanganui have appeared to be free of this pest, but now a couple of clumps have been located at the end of Wanganui Road. The plants will shortly be carefully, and hopefully permanently, removed but we need to find out where it came from. Does anyone have some in a pond or a dam upstream? Please let us know.

With the creek so low at present, it's a good time to do a patrol of our creek banks, looking out for flood-dispersed weeds such as Black Taro, White Ginger, Balloon Vine, Jumpseed and, of course, Coral Tree. Let us know about Coral Tree in particular so it can be followed up this season. And be in touch if you need help with identification.

## Water saves lives

By Margaret Hall

Whilst we have all been consumed with the fires, our drought conditions continue and our wildlife are struggling to survive.

This little fellow was rescued from half way along Wilsons Creek Road last Friday. We named him Sean ..... Thanks Sean and Deena for your assistance.

Malnourished and extremely dehydrated, he is now in the caring hands of Friends of the Koala in Lismore, but his chances aren't good.



**Leaving out bowls of fresh water for our precious wildlife is easy and may save a life. Animals and birds escaping fires will be seeking water. Use shallow bowls with a few sticks or stones on one side to allow smaller animals to escape if they fall in.**

**For wildlife rescue and assistance in our area, please contact WIRES Northern Rivers on 6628 1898**

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## Fire, regeneration and weeds

By Justin Mallee

The recent bush fires have affected our community, our landscape and the diversity of plants and animals that we share this region with. Many local native species that inhabit dryer eucalypt forests, heath, rock outcrops and coastal swamps have adaptations to regrow after fire, either from reshooting or seed. In wetter forests including wet eucalypt forest and rainforest there is generally less fire adaptation and some species will be killed by fire. Much is unknown about the fire response for many species in these wetter forests.

From a land management perspective, fire presents both opportunities and challenges. In many areas there will be more light getting to the ground, no mulch layer and less competition in the mid and understorey. This provides a perfect germination bed for seeds that are stored in the soil that survived the fire, seeds dispersed by birds and wind blown seeds. Exactly what seeds and how many will come up is complex, but some general rules will apply.

On sites that were not too weedy before the fire, and sites that are close to intact native forests, the majority of what germinates is likely to be native species. Sites that were weedy before the fire or are separated from native forests are likely to have a greater proportion of weeds coming up. Areas that experienced high intensity fire are more likely to have had plants killed (including weeds), whereas areas of low intensity are more likely to have plants reshoot from trunks and roots, especially in fire adapted plant communities.

In any case, the combination of increased light and decreased competition provides fertile germination bed that will be coming alive in the coming weeks and months. This presents a great opportunity to remove weeds while they are small and easily manageable. Being proactive while sites are in the early stages of regenerating will save a lot of work in the future.

While some species will take days or weeks to germinate and reshoot, others may take many months. Weeds are generally quick off the mark and are worth monitoring. Some common ones to lookout for include tobacco bush, giant devils fig, lantana, passionfruit (white or corky), exotic grasses and whatever else might have been there before the fire.

There is a lot of local resources to help you work out what is regenerating on your land and different methods for managing it. These include knowledgeable people, print and web resources from landcare groups, local government, state government, local nurseries, bush regenerators and on social media. If in doubt ask around, post a question or picture or send some enquires by email. Help is out there.

While there is always a lot to do on rural properties, spending some time in your regenerating forests will be both productive and rewarding. You will get to learn how your property and its unique species respond to fire and with a bit of assistance from you, improve the habitat for the rich diversity of plants and critters in your back yard.

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WCHL is on Facebook



To become a member of our Facebook group, go into Facebook, search for Wilsons Creek Huonbrook Landcare and request to join. Any member can approve you. Alternatively you can go to the URL below: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/551428364915585/?ref=ts> Once accepted as a member, feel free to post photos and stories, ask and answer questions and check in regularly.

## Cane toad control

By Peter and Margaret Hall

Given that the recent 'renovation' of our dam earlier in the year was an open invitation for cane toads, we invested in a Toadinator, a specifically designed trap for cane toads field tested extensively by leading research staff at James Cook Uni. This was installed in the middle of the year which gave us plenty of time to prepare for the cane toad season.

The Toadinator has a simple one-way door trapping system coupled with a UV light and sound lures, specifically designed to lure breeding females. We work ours off a solar panel which stores enough power on most days to run the sound and light during the night.

We have had great success with the trap and have only seen one toad apart from the unfortunates who have ventured into the trap. One of these was a large female and we may well have stopped 40,000 eggs being laid in the dam! All the toads have then been disposed of humanely. More (and normal) wetter weather will see the Toadinator come into its own. It has certainly been a fabulous tool for us in cane toad control.

