



In the Valley

Rainforest News and Views



Newsletter distribution

The Byron Shire Landcare and Dunecare newsletter is sent out electronically every month by Brunswick Valley Landcare, and includes our newsletter as an (not very regular) insert. Thank you to Alison for facilitating. This particular issue has also been produced as a hard copy and is to be hand-delivered to roadside mailboxes in our valleys. We hope to do this from time to time rather than rely on the electronic copy only. "In the Valley" is also available from our Facebook group page and on the Brunswick Valley Landcare website.

President's message

Barbara Stewart

Landcare protects and enhances biodiversity. The term biodiversity is a contraction of biological diversity, refers to the variety and variability of life on Earth and is typically a measure of variation at the genetic, species, and ecosystem level. Species diversity is easiest to envisage. In addition, most species will have a better chance at an evolutionary future if they have good genetic variability. We can also recognise that many different ecosystems can be distinguished, providing habitat and functions such as carbon storage and water and nutrient cycling.

A recent emphasis on species extinction as a consequence of climate change has brought the topic of biodiversity conservation to the forefront, often without much emphasis on other threats such as land clearing, invasive species and disease. Locally, our council is in the late development stages of a new shire-wide Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. For our community, living in a recognised biodiversity hot spot in valleys wrapped by three National Parks, it is thus timely for our group to make some resources accessible as background to our land-caring. One means of doing so will be a series of talks based on ecological science, starting NOW (please see article below). We will continue to bring you stories of landcare successes and challenges, information about local native species, forests and creeks and events such as field days.

WCHL is on Facebook

To become a member of our group, go into Facebook, search for Wilson's 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



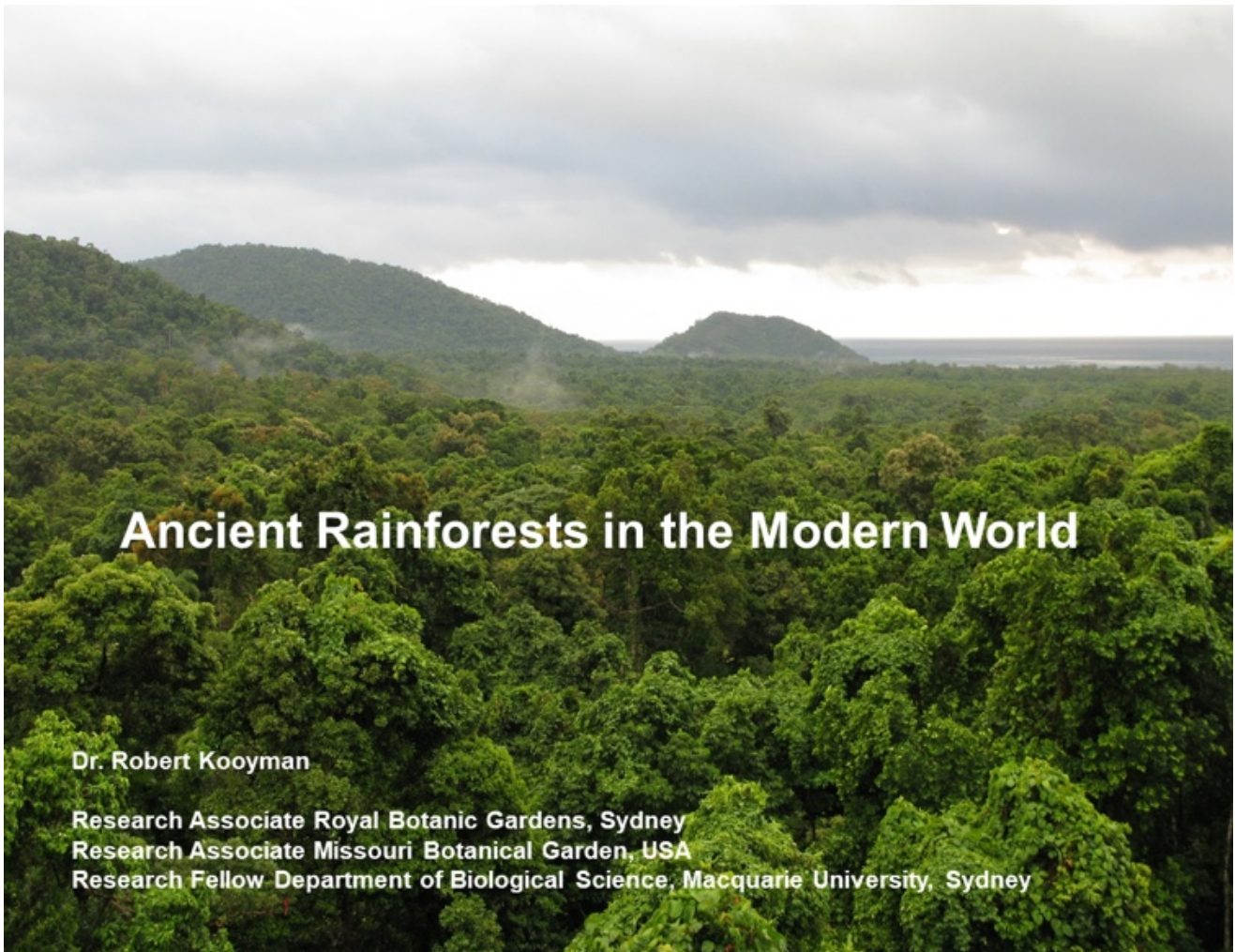
Talk and supper discussion: 'Ancient Rainforests in the Modern World'

Dr Rob Kooyman will tell us about our local forests. How important are they? How did they come to be here? Don't miss this, a great night has been planned. All invited and welcome.

*Wilsons Creek Hall
Thursday 13 June
6 pm for a 6.30 start*

Please bring a share supper plate. Tea/coffee provided, BYO if you would like other beverages.

Admission free, optional gold coin donation.



Ancient Rainforests in the Modern World

Dr. Robert Kooyman

Research Associate Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney

Research Associate Missouri Botanical Garden, USA

Research Fellow Department of Biological Science, Macquarie University, Sydney

Pest Animals

John Wynberg

Council has released its new five-year Pest Animal Management Plan. The plan can be located and downloaded from Council's website at www.byron.nsw.gov.au

The new plan was recently endorsed by Council following the usual consultation processes. This Plan will also contribute to Council's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (currently in preparation) to protect and restore Byron Shire's biodiversity and the Integrated Pest Management Strategy (currently in preparation) The new plan provides a framework for the management of pest animals on Council managed land but with opportunities for Council to assist with pest animal management on private land when resources allow.

"Pest animals can wreak havoc on our local biodiversity and agricultural productivity and have major economic, social and cultural impacts as well, which is why it is critical that we have a smart and adaptive strategy in place to deal with issues as they arise in the future," Council's Director of Sustainable Environment and Economy, Shannon Burt said.

"Effective management of pests requires a coordinated approach that includes clear and strong commitment from the State Government, Council and the community.

"We are striving to achieve a more collaborative approach for the future whereby Council is involved in offering technical advice and support to private land owners, and acting as a conduit between private and public land managers and agencies such as Local Land Services."

"Under the Biosecurity Act 2015 all land managers, regardless of whether on private or public land, have a shared responsibility to manage pests and their impacts. Our new Pest Animal Management Plan will guide us all in working together to achieve the best pest management practices possible in the Byron Shire," she said.

For me, being someone new to living in the Byron Shire and having little knowledge of Pest Animals and how to deal with them, all the information I can get and all the assistance that is offered is welcomed.

Target pest animals in the Byron Shire are

Wild Dog – a group that includes dingoes, feral dogs and hybrids between them. Roaming domestic dogs can be problematic too. Wild dogs have threatened humans in our valleys as well as stock and wildlife and need serious management effort.

European Red Fox – commonly sighted in our valleys.

Feral Cat – apparently multiplying at an alarming rate (and domestic cats roam too).

Indian Myna – well established on the flats towards town but only in the last year or so have they been reported in our valleys (Pioneer Bridge area, Mill Road and fourth crossing Upper Wilsons). We would like to collate records of sightings. There is a great web site <https://www.feralscan.org.au> which allows you to create new sighting of feral pests by individual category.

Cane Toad – have moved slowly up our valleys over the last thirty years or so.

European Rabbit - well established on the flats towards town, but not known from our valleys.

Emerging pest species in the Byron Shire are:

Feral Goat Feral Pig Feral Deer

Cane toad attack - take care

Steve Millard

On the steepest, rocky ridge imaginable, a 400m scramble above Midginbil, the biggest cane toad I have ever seen appeared in front of my face. Seven of us from the Northern Rivers Bushwalkers had another 300m vertical to climb through bands of cliffs to Mt Neville. Wanting to do the right thing for the environment I attacked the ugly toad with the sharp end of my walking stick, only to be squirted in the eye with some of its bodily fluid. I immediately rinsed the eye with water in case some of the fluid was the toad's deadly poison. Luckily there was phone reception so we called the poison hotline to get the advice that it should be in an eye bath of water for fifteen minutes, followed by a trip to hospital! One of the group happened to have an eye bath, part of the kit since a walker had had a leech behind her eyeball the previous week and the only thing that got it to show itself was a rinse in saline solution. The cane toad passed away, and the group split up, one intrepid trio finding a cliff-free route up towards the track to Mt Neville. As there was some mild pain and discomfort, the patient and supporters slowly descended. I didn't bother with a hospital visit. After 36 hours of blurry vision the eye was back to normal.



The story below is an inspiring example of what hard work and diligence can achieve on one's property. Re-creating some of the former glory. Thanks for sharing it!

WAYILAHR

Margie Hall

When we moved to Wilsons Creek 18 months ago, we 'inherited' an unsightly weed infested boggy ditch, that only a real estate agent would seriously call a 'dam'. So, during winter last year we called in some local help and had it dug out and reconstructed.

Early arrivals - well before it came close to filling - were of course the cane toads! We blitzed it manually for weeks, removing thousands of eggs; thousands and thousands of toadpoles; thousands more little metamorphs that got away, as well as nightly adult toad patrols. We literally became the angels of death.

It was hugely successful, for now, but very time consuming. We were happy to spend the time, but quickly realised that trips away will be a huge problem at the height of summer, it was a mere two weeks from eggs to tiny toads!

After trawling the internet and discussion with an ecologist friend [who was familiar with the trap's development and testing], we have purchased a Toadinator cane toad trap - it targets the females by luring them with light and sound. It is only just set up, but we will let you know how it goes.



JULY 2018



APRIL 2019

Apart from the toads, we're very happy to report that our already abundant wildlife has simply exploded since the dam was redone – not just in numbers, but also variety. Azure Kingfishers, White-faced Heron, Australian Wood Ducks, Pacific Baza, Masked Lapwing have become regular visitors. This does make perfect sense to us, as we have cleared the weeds and started regenerating the rainforest, echoes of the previous landscape with its many gullies, pools and intermittent creeks, reveals that water was originally a major feature of this piece of land before it was all bulldozed and rearranged for the house and macadamia plantation.

By fixing the dam we've simply put water back into the landscape where it belongs.

Caring for our National Park neighbours

Barbara Stewart

We share much of our local biodiversity with our neighbouring parks – boundaries can be irrelevant and impacts can work both ways. Wildlife delights us by sharing habitat and spilling into our backyards. Pest animals become difficult to manage when ranging widely. Also, environmental weeds, including garden plants gone feral, can spread into reserved native habitats.

Wanganui Gorge

A recent survey through Wanganui Gorge, part of Nightcap and Goonengerry National Parks, found many garden plants in the creek bed. These are likely to have washed down from gardens and dumped garden refuse in the Huonbrook and Wanganui communities.



Singapore Daisy *Sphagneticola trilobata*



White Ginger *Hedychium coronarium*



Jumpseed *Persicaria virginiana*



Coral Berry *Ardisia crenata*

Of additional concern is the known presence of Madeira Vine *Anredera cordifolia* and Balloon Vine *Cardiospermum grandiflorum* in the Coopers Creek catchment. It was great to get a small amount of funding to commence management of the Madeira Vine patch that poses the greatest threat to the gorge. Primary works have now been completed and follow up is in the planning stages. Thank you Richmond Landcare Inc for one of your 20th anniversary grants. And stay tuned for news of our plans to continue biocontrol trials in the badly infested Wilsons Creek.



Before works, this Madeira Vine infestation at Wanganui crawled over lantana, native trees and old banana plants.

Blackbutt Plateau

A little further afield, some of us venture into our parks beyond the formed roads, using flagged tracks to the rock platform on Blackbutt Plateau in the Mount Jerusalem National Park. The last bit of the track leading onto the rocks and snow lichen has been flagged by previous walkers to traverse a lovely grove of the endangered Peach Myrtle *Uromyrtus australis*. As a result, bushwalkers unknowingly traipse around and through the population. Sadly, Myrtle Rust now poses an additional disease threat to the species, so extra measures to divert traffic away from the plants are warranted. Please follow the newly flagged track, which avoids the plants.

By all means take a look if you have the skills and interest to find the plants, but avoiding general traffic would be great. They are very special (beautiful though a bit nondescript as rainforest trees go) with a highly restricted distribution confined to our local National Parks.

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/.../peach-myrtle-uromyrtus...

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/.../insect-pests-and-p.../myrtle-rust



Flowers and fruit of the endangered Peach Myrtle. Photo Hugh Nicholson

[www.https://rainforestpublishing.com.au](https://rainforestpublishing.com.au)

Bush Connect project

This landscape scale and long term project, in conjunction with Goonengerry Landcare, is continuing steadily. Recently, some of the project management group and our committee were treated to a preview of the progress of the camphor conversion across the valley from the school. This starkly beautiful patch of dead timber catches the light and arouses much curiosity, but from the road, we cannot, yet, see the fast developing greenery. It's very exciting close up. We hope to hold a field day at this location next year.



Close up, the pace of regeneration of rainforest species is very impressive.

Coral Tree project update

We have done some minor follow up on the remains of our infestations and plan something more comprehensive next growing season. Please let us know of any re-sprouts or overlooked plants that might not have been recorded to date.



This is NOT our roadside. Passing this intersection, it is worth a close look at the tangled mass of fallen and re-sprouting Coral Trees. Those days are gone from our valleys.

On-going and proposed projects

Please propose new projects for our list. Some of these are in motion or stalled, some are pie-in-the-sky but worth keeping in mind as opportunities arise. Offers of help VERY welcome. Could you come to a working bee? Or organise one?

Pioneer Bridge (Council Reserve)

This site has been worked by Council, WCHL and the wider community cooperatively over a number of years, transforming it from a solid mass of Morning Glory to a well-developed rainforest planting. It now needs ground story weed management. Further work is needed.

Quarry site, Koonyum Range turn off

There is a similar problem in the little reserve near the Koonyum Range turnoff. Historical works are now threatened by regrowth of Morning Glory.

Swing Bridge site (just upstream from the school)

This area was part of a historical landcare site and is now heavily infested with Madeira Vine and Morning Glory, blanketing large trees. The site was always difficult to manage, but works were also disrupted by the major landslip at the location. A neighbour works hard to contain Giant Devil's Fig, especially on the landslip itself.

First crossing, Upper Wilsons Creek

Council took out some Coral Trees at this location, just ahead of our main Coral Tree project. WCHL has conducted plantings and weed management with reasonable success at a difficult site within the flood zone. Further works are now due.

Black Taro in Wilsons Creek



We would like to start at the top of the creek and work down, systematically removing it with a strategy similar to that used for Coral Tree eradication. Hand removal only, with follow up, requiring a LOT of person power and coordination. Once completely removed, it will not return upstream, so it will definitely be worth the effort. (We believe Coopers Creek is free of this plant, please never consider planting it.)

Black Taro – poisonous and invasive

Local Contacts

Landcare: Barbara 6684 0378, Julie 6684 0242

Fire Brigade: David 66840093, Bob 66840181

Wilsons Creek Hall: Robyn 6684 0299

WIRES: 6628 1898