

This edition of "WCHL News" will be emailed out as usual as well as a handout version going into local letterboxes. It is also available from our Facebook group page and on the Brunswick Valley Landcare website. To be sure you don't miss out on events and news from a broader area, please refer to the Byron Shire Landcare and Dunecare newsletter. To subscribe or to look up current and archived editions, please go to <http://brunswickvalleylandcare.org.au/newsletters/>

Wilson's Creek Huonbrook Landcare News

One year on from the devastating floods and landslides affecting all of us Valley folk to varying degrees, we are still turning our minds to reconstruction, rehabilitation, re-education and restoration. Some aspects will take longer than others, particularly roads and access ways but also weed growth and weed dispersal and landslip rehabilitation. Many Valley residents have been planting on landslips in order to stabilize and we have all seen roadside landslips turn to weeds at a rate of knots in this late summer growth phase despite the variable weather and rainfall.

Speaking of the weather, a topic that has invariably taken over many a get together, it looks like drier weather ahead thanks to an el Nino proclamation. Rather than a neutral year (and this current summer would back this up) it looks like lower rainfall this coming year and possibly the next few years. Whilst we're glad to have floods and landslides behind us (with road conditions a constant reminder), drier conditions will make planting projects more difficult and a fire threat will certainly raise its ugly head as we head to the end of the year.

Albert's Lyrebird Information and Survey Workshop



**Sunday 7th May, 1.30-5pm
Wilson's Creek Hall**

**Ecology, song and dance
How to find them**

Delicious afternoon tea

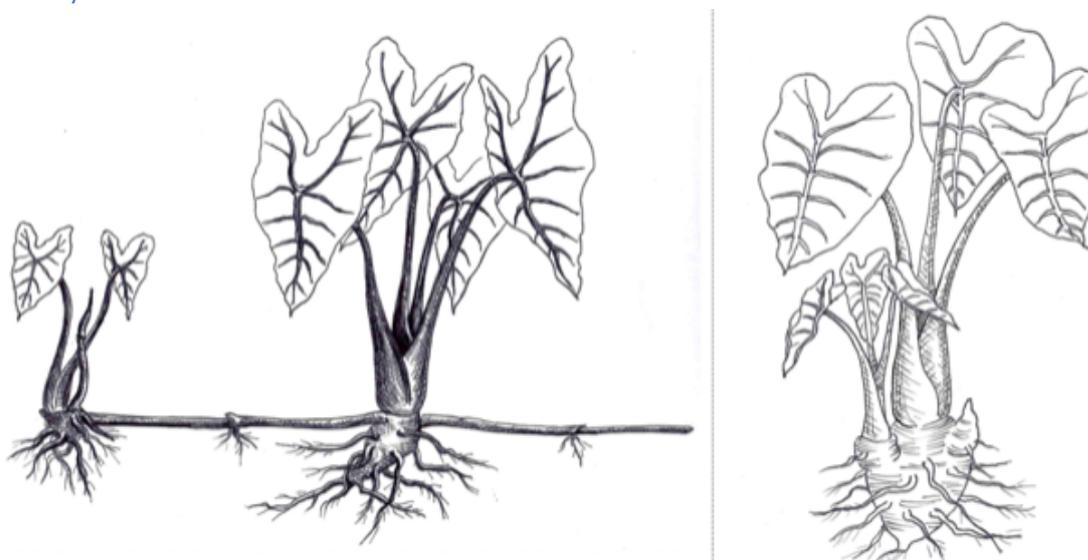
Tickets \$20 at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/alberts-lyrebird-information-survey-workshop-tickets-598779705217)

Our valleys and surrounding parks are very important habitat for Albert's Lyrebirds so it is a great privilege to be hosting this workshop. Hope to see a good crowd of locals there!

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/alberts-lyrebird-information-survey-workshop-tickets-598779705217>

Flood-dispersed weeds

Know your Taro



Credit: Suzi Lechner

	Black Taro (left)	Taro (right)
Can you eat it?	NOOOO!!!!	Can you eat it? Yes, with selection of good planting material and careful preparation and cooking
Height	Up to 2m	Up to 2m
Leaf	Dark green with purplish veins	Usually green
Leaf stem	Purple	Usually green
Runners (stolons)	Mainly in the growing season, purple, extend more than a meter along surface or underground	Rarely present
Corms (underground storage organ)	Small, high oxalate content DO NOT EAT	Large, worth harvesting, lower oxalate content but still require careful treatment
Cormlets (sprouts arising from corm)	Usually absent	Usually present
Dispersal	Corms, runners or fragments of both can be carried in flood water, soil, by machines or in dumped garden refuse.	Corms can be carried in flood water, soil, by machines or in dumped garden refuse.
Rate of spread	Very rapid. Energy goes into vegetative expansion rather than storage in the corm.	Slower. Energy goes into storage in the corm. Sprouting cormlets produce clumps rather than large patches.

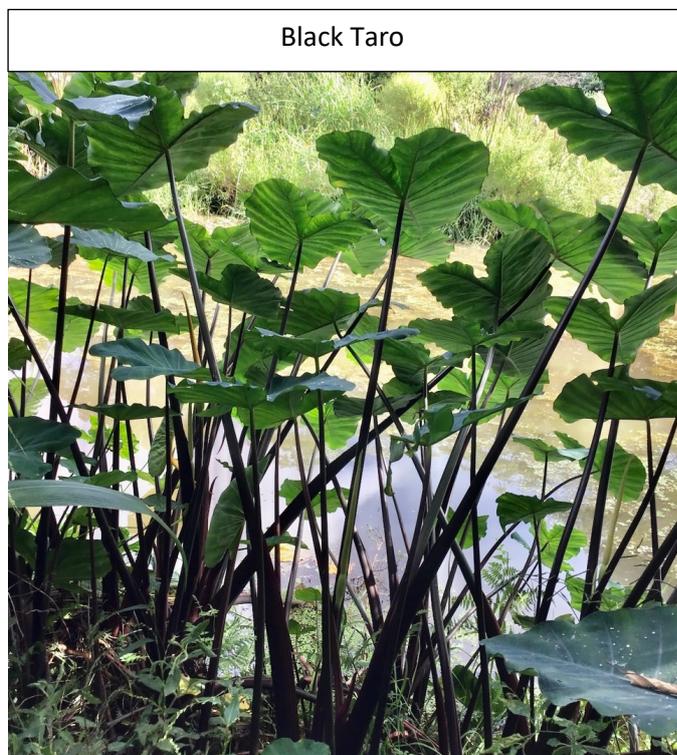
Varieties of Taro *Colocasia esculenta* and related species include edible types selected over many generations in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, large numbers of horticultural variants are grown in garden beds and ponds for their form and attractive colouring. Locally, Black Taro, sometimes known as Elephants Ears, is of concern in Wilsons Creek where it has accelerated its expansion since the floods and following wet year. (Edible Taro can also become weedy, though is slower to spread. Please keep it out of the creek and plant only if serious about managing and harvesting it).

Very little Black Taro is established in Huonbrook/Wanganui, though some infested tributaries are known. Sadly, since the floods, Black Taro has started to appear at Upper Coopers Creek after washing down through Wanganui Gorge.

Apart from competing with natives, Black Taro traps silt to form patches of toxic sludge, which are inhospitable to the invertebrates that provide food for platypus, fish and other aquatic life.

Please remove Black Taro from garden beds or ponds, as well as controlling the creek bank infestations as best we can. Picking up newly dispersed fragments before they take root is an ideal way to head off the establishment of whole new patches. Otherwise, careful hand pulling or shallow digging is required to remove all parts of the plants, perhaps starting with a leaf clump and its corm and roots. **Trace the purple stolons (runners) along or just under the surface and remove them as well as any new shoots forming at their tips.** Minimise soil disturbance to protect creek banks from erosion and wear gloves to protect against irritating sap.

Disposal is problematic. Plants are very heavy, being mostly water and must be carried without dropping fragments to a location well out of the flood zone. Stacking off the ground with good air flow and constant turning will eventually dry and kill the plants. This will work better in the forecast El Nino conditions than during the wet 2022.



Other flood dispersed weeds are White Ginger, Kahili Ginger (Toilet Brush Ginger), Barner/Bana Grass, Jumpseed and even bamboo.

Luckily, our creeks also carry seeds of native trees such as Blue Quandong, Red Lilly Pilly and Brown Tamarind. Thank you to Local Land Services who have provided funding for management of Black Taro, White Ginger and Kahili Ginger.

Did you know?

Bana grass is also known as the miracle grass, a hybrid variety with a scientific name, *Pennisetum Purpureum* (Babala) X *Pennisetum Americanum* (napier grass). Its name Bana is derived from the acronym 'Ba' in Babala and 'na' from napier

Coral Tree *Erythrina x sykesii* - still with us

Once our creeks, roadsides and powerline corridors were badly infested with Coral Trees, which broke into pieces during floods, storms and roadside slashing and sprouted into ever expanding clumps. Our project, which began in 2013, almost completely removed Coral Trees from the main dispersal corridors. Now the floods have smashed up a few remaining trees and sprouts have been reported at Lilly Pilly Road and Pioneer Bridge vicinity. Stems are visible from the road looking upstream from the 2nd and 5th crossings at Upper Wilsons. Doubtless there will be some more, so please check your creek banks and report locations. Treatment must be during the growing season so will now wait till spring.

WCHL has \$\$\$ aside for funding the mop up stage of this project. Coral Trees require particular stem injection techniques for effective control and we prefer to send in the professionals. Unless landholders have specific experience, well-meaning efforts can make things worse. (We hope this is OK, no offence is intended.)



Coral Tree

Getting things done – challenges

Landcare has been impacted in the same way as the whole community by the pandemic, disasters and ongoing recovery. Our funding bodies have been generous in extending project timeframes. Now, as we all know, it is difficult to find the workers we need in many aspects of our lives. This extends to bush regenerators and roles such as project management that our Landcare group rely on. Equally stressed and busy are the small pool of volunteers, mostly Committee members, who are constantly planning, coordinating, reporting, communicating, paying bills and applying for funding. And getting out and about on the ground.

We have ongoing discussions about possibilities for scaling back our activities while facing the obvious dilemma that the environment is in greater need than ever.

Expressions of Interest for future projects invited

Despite the constraints mentioned above, we are always optimistic and keen to hear from those who would like to be involved in future projects.

We already have lists of enthusiastic landholders. But please feel free to check in again and give us an update. (We hope everyone understands that not all potential projects will instantly match up with a funding opportunity, and funds are always scarce.)

For future projects, we may be looking out for:

- Forest restoration opportunities that will create large blocks of habitat and corridors (e.g. adjoining National Parks, adjacent to forest on your own or your neighbour's private land).
- Blocks of Lantana or Camphor Laurel (these can be converted to subtropical rainforest using very cost-effective techniques).
- Threatened species and their habitat
- Riparian and landslip plantings, weed management and assisted natural regeneration

If you have other ideas or would like to discuss in a general way (perhaps with a site visit), we would love to hear from you.

What assistance or information would be helpful?

Tree of the Month: Mango Bark

Graham Watson

Mango Bark (*Canarium australasicum*) is essentially a Queensland species but occurs in New South Wales only in our far north coast corner where it attains its best development in the eastern Nightcap Range district. Mango Bark is a member of the Family Burseraceæ and is the only species in the Family that is found in New South Wales. The tree was first named *Bursera australasica* by Queensland botanist F.M. Bailey (1827-1915) in 1892 but was renamed *Protium australasicum* by Scottish botanist Thomas Sprague (1877-1958) in 1912.

The taxonomists were not finished there. Other names appeared in the literature including *Bursera australiana* (1932), *Protium australianum* (also 1932), finally its current name was applied by Dutch botanist Pieter Leenhouts (1926-2004) in 1952. A subsequent name, *C. baileyianum* in 1955 has been rejected.



Close up of the stem of a 25-year-old Mango Bark tree showing a colour change from grey to brown but still the presence of leaf scars.

Mango Bark has a number of characteristics which make it quite different to most of our local rainforest trees. Firstly, its curious common name derives from the mango-like smell of the live inner bark which was very noticeable to the early timber getters. The colour and appearance of the trunk changes dramatically as the tree ages. A young sapling has a white trunk with prominent leaf scars, a medium aged tree has a grey-brown trunk on which leaf scars are still detectable but on an older tree the bark becomes much more brown than grey, no leaf scars are apparent and the bark itself is quite flaky which comes away leaving irregular depressions. The older specimens also develop some buttresses. Unfortunately, those trunk characteristics, while interesting, are usually not sufficient to make a confident identification and the crown always seems to be mixed up with other trees further contributing to the difficulty of a determination.



Typical 7-leaflet leaf. Note the long distance of the first pair of leaflets from the base of the petiole where there is a pulvinus.



Close up of the pulvinules on both ends of the petiolule

The key identifying characteristic, however, is the distinctive leaf structure. The tree has compound leaves with 5 or 7 leaflets to each leaf. The leaf stalk (petiole) joins the branchlet with a swollen joint called a pulvinus. The first pair of leaflets occur up to 20 cm beyond that pulvinus. The opposite leaflets themselves join their leaflet stalk (petiolule) with a swollen joint and the petiolule joins the petiole with another swollen joint called a pulvinule. Hopefully the photos illustrate this arrangement.

Mango Bark is unquestionably a rainforest tree, but it is also a classical rainforest edge tree species. Statistical modelling of the spatial distribution of rainforest trees has found it to have a greater association with the ecotone, that is, the transition zone between rainforest and eucalypt forest, than any other of the local rainforest trees. It also has a strong association with the transition zone between subtropical rainforest and warm temperate rainforest. It even appears to have an association with microclimatic transition zones as it is often found on the edge of rainforest gullies where a microclimatic transition is strong.

Finally, Mango Barks can be very handsome trees – particularly when they are young and are therefore strongly recommended for planting in local rainforest plots.

Endangered Greater Gliders found in Glossy Cockatoo-Hollows on Koonyum Range

As our Glossy Black-Cockatoo Nest Hollow project enters its second year, you can imagine our delight at finding some unexpected locals taking advantage of some of the nest boxes.



The first detection of Greater Gliders occurred in November 2021, soon after initial installation. As of the end of January 2023, Greater Gliders have been detected at six nest boxes, located within a 1km stretch of ecotone of rainforest and eucalypt forest, near the top of Koonyum Range. Given the home range size of Greater Gliders is usually smaller than this (1-4 ha), it is likely that the detections are of multiple individuals. Moreover, detections of Greater Gliders were made on two boxes about 1 km apart on the same night, one hour apart; these must be different individuals.



WCHL Glossy Black-Cockatoo Nest Hollow Project is funded by the WIRES National Grants Program

Is this a Feral Cat? John Wynberg



Remember this shot?

We took this photo through our bedroom window 16th of October, 2022. It's the first sighting we have had of a cat on our property and certainly one so close to our home.

I have made some progress in searching down the best feral cat traps to buy and I've also watched some very informative Youtube videos on how to set a feral cat trap from an effective yet humane point of view. I also am comfortable with setting a trap where I can easily check it. I have also been in touch with Council and will pop in over the next week to talk Feral Pests. I still haven't spoken to any of the vets in town however I have made some progress in researching the broader questions about pest animals.

I've also been reading good news stories on how best to protect our native wildlife from feral pests. Maybe even more importantly is protecting our native animals from domestic pets and specifically cats. Many more councils are passing curfews and containment by-laws for domestic cats and in the process are educating cat owners about their responsibilities of cat ownership.

At this point I must confess to being a cat lover. Growing up in the Fifties and on a bush block we generally always had a dog and one or two cats as pets. Our cats weren't kept indoors; in fact, the learning at that time was that you put the cat out at night.

As an adult I still had a pet cat in suburban Sydney, the learning then was the cat stayed inside but could use the purpose-built cat flap door to go in and out as needed. There weren't too many rules at the time, however things are slowly changing including having a pet cat microchipped, registered and (hopefully) desexed at an early age. With more and more Councils joining the push with curfew and containment laws surrounding cat ownership a new breed of responsible cat owners will hopefully emerge and not before time. A study in 2020 by Sydney University suggested roaming pet cats kill 390 million animals per year in Australia, including reptiles, birds and mammals. That's an average of 186 animals, mostly native species, per roaming domestic cat each year. I will have made more progress by the next newsletter.

As for feral cats well that's an enormous problem for wildlife – across Australia, feral cats collectively kill more than three billion animals per year.

Contact us: Barbara 66840378, Mary 0421701949 Email wilsonscreeklandcare@yahoo.com.au

WCHL is on Facebook

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a dark blue rectangular background.

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.