

“WCHL News” will be emailed out as usual and 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/>

Wilsons Creek Huonbrook Landcare News

As the Covid pandemic appears to be easing (well, certainly the restrictions), life may take on a sense of normality at last. A wet few months over summer has shown substantial growth of plants although we may well be focussed on the weeds as we go to print!

WCHL members and in particular our project teams have been busy over the summer period as our projects continue to make a difference in our beautiful valley. You can read our local Landcare project updates below as well as our ‘Tree of the Month’, advice for ‘newbies’ in the Valley, some ‘Before and After’ shots and developments with our Glossy Black-Cockatoo project.

Wilsons Creek Huonbrook Landcare’s projects

Our Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery project (Stage 2) has been building on works in the fire scar during Stage 1. Change has been rapid as waves of native vines and weeds have been replaced with native regeneration with variable success. We have much to learn about recovery after fire in our environments. Removing fire hazards, another aspect of the project, has begun with a start on a large infestation of highly flammable bamboo. More news to come about fire ecology and cultural burning, with an actual face-to-face event coming up. Landcare NSW and Landcare Australia have provided funds. The Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery project has been supported by the Australian Government’s Bushfire Recovery Program for Wildlife and their Habitat.





Running Bamboo, like all plants good and bad, has been raging in the great growing season we are experiencing. Please, never consider planting it.

We have three NSW Environmental Trust-funded projects running. **Bush Connect*** is conducted in conjunction with Goonengerry Landcare and the Byranger Reserve Trust while **Linkages in the Headwaters*** and **Rainforest Restoration in Times of Change*** are confined to our valleys. All projects operate on a landscape scale to convert Camphor Laurel and Lantana to biodiverse subtropical rainforest, connecting and enlarging habitat for the many native flora and fauna species found in our valleys and neighbouring National Parks. Progress has been excellent, despite the pandemic and long rainy periods.

***These projects have been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust**



We thank Rainforest 4 Foundation for supporting the “Times of Change” project

WCHL Glossy Black-Cockatoo 'Food for the Future' Habitat Extension Project



A female Glossy Black-Cockatoo eating *Allocasuarina torulosa* cones at one of our artificial hollow sites. Photo by Jo Green

It is often said that one good idea leads to another.

Whilst undoubtedly a very good idea, installing and monitoring artificial breeding hollows will only help Glossy Black-Cockatoos of NE NSW so far. A substantial increase in the year-round availability of their preferred *Allocasuarina* food trees is vital to their ongoing survival and success.

Climate change is driving increasing pressure on Glossies, through a combination of increasing risk of extreme fire events, decreasing nutritional quality of food resources and increased risk of extreme weather events (heat waves, drought). In addition, the rapid human population expansion of NE NSW and SE Qld, coupled with the changes to population dynamics escalated by the Covid-19 regional shift, is creating ever increasing pressure on habitat within the coastal hinterland, potentially worsening habitat fragmentation.

The Glossy Black-Cockatoo 'Food for the Future' extension project was born.

Over the next several months, we will use a combination of spatial mapping data to develop a comprehensive picture of the current distribution of *Allocasuarina* species [ie. Glossy Black-Cockatoo habitat] across the north-east coast of NSW.

Our aim is to produce guidance for revegetation plantings across the area, so that high-quality habitat for the Glossy Black-Cockatoo increases, fragmentation of food resources is reduced and the resilience of this vulnerable species to future fires is enhanced.

Our particular thanks to **Brunswick Valley Landcare** who have provided the upfront funds to get us underway. Thanks for your faith in us BVL.

Joining Brunswick Valley Landcare and ourselves are Conservation Volunteers Australia, Byron Shire Council, Tweed Shire Council and the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Conservancy as collaborators in the development of this extension project.

Once the map and accompanying guidelines are complete, we hope to find and plant a 'showcase' site – where we demonstrate and monitor the application of the principles developed and thereby raise awareness of the needs of Glossy Black-Cockatoos in the NE NSW region.

In combination, our two Glossy Black-Cockatoo projects – Top of the Range Glossy Black-Cockatoo Nest Hollow Project and the 'Food for the Future' Extension - will potentially form a template for habitat supplementation and regeneration activities for other landscape species, nationally.

The Glossy Black Conservancy, in partnership with Birdlife Australia is holding Australia's first Great Glossy Count on Saturday 26 March, 2022.

The South-eastern Glossy Black-Cockatoo is at risk of population decline after losing many of its feed trees in the devastating bushfires of 2019-2020.

Data collected during the Great Glossy Count will inform bushfire recovery work by collecting information on Glossy Black-Cockatoo flocks and feed trees, so they can be protected and managed appropriately.

But we need your help! We're seeking volunteer citizen scientists to help survey the South-eastern Glossy Black-Cockatoo on Saturday 26 March 2022.

As a citizen scientist, you'll have the opportunity to hone your bird ID skills, participate in training and collect critical data to ensure the bird's survival. Workshops will cover: how to identify Glossy Black-Cockatoos; what they eat; how to recognise feed trees and signs of feeding; and Glossy Black-Cockatoo ecology and behaviour. You'll also learn how to capture and share data via Birdlife Australia's BirdData app.

Register now as a volunteer citizen scientist. More information at:

<https://glossyblack.org.au/great-glossy-count/>



Problem species in the Valley

Funeral Flowers and Toilet Brush plants

It's a challenge to convince some folk that the beautiful garden plants festooning our valleys are actually weeds that pose serious threats to our native vegetation. We can draw negative attention to them by using unattractive names. Try them out on your friends! "Why are you growing toilet brushes?"

Funeral Flowers are spreading along roadsides, and doubtless adjoining lands, in Wanganui and Huonbrook. Toilet Brushes are everywhere and are a very serious weed in Queensland, New Zealand and other Pacific islands.

It's the time of year when, if you are not going to remove these plants right away, the responsible thing will be to cut the spent flowers before seed develops. Please get expert advice so that removal methods are effective. Excavation can work if all plant parts are removed.



Funeral flowers *Lilium formosanum* have dry capsules that split to release wind-dispersed seeds.



Toilet Brushes *Hedychium gardnerianum* produce orange fleshy fruit with seeds that are bird dispersed.

What would you have liked to have been told?

For all the newcomers to Wilsons Creek/Huonbrook/Wanganui, a few of our Valley mainstays have offered a few words of practical advice! To start us off, these were five key areas that were outlined in the last newsletter:

- Landholders having a clear plan
- Scale of project can be small – effect is cumulative and over time
- Getting better at plant ID (weeds and natives)
- Implementing quality monitoring sites
- Getting professional advice at key times

To add, here are some quotable quotes (you'll notice there are some slightly conflicting pieces of advice so establishing what works for you is the key!):

“I think to start small and manage that well before taking on too much. I didn't even know what a camphor was!”

“Start from the centre and work out”



Nature always wins!

“Foster what you want to grow more than weed removal. It is such a joy to work from the most beautiful part of your property and help it expand. More useful to than removing weeds with a majority of weed species to recolonise”

“There are wonderful resources of people, courses, books. Enjoy them all. When you employ people if possible work with them to learn the new skills you need for this area”

“Observe the area before acting. Dawn, midday and dusk for a few days. Schedule time for observation and to just enjoy the environment. If an ecosystem is working, leave it alone”



“When weeding a patch eg of jasmine, weed from the outside of the patch so it doesn't get any bigger. Then you can throw the weeded plants back onto itself”

"Work in small, mapped out or easily identified sections. Follow up on a regular basis. Documenting your activities helps heaps. Over time the job will be done. The other option is to do it once with no follow up and in a few year's time it's even worse then it was. I've learnt this the hard way."

"The importance of good machinery to deal with the grass and the weeds and the overwhelming feeling most people experience in the sub-tropical growing season e.g. brushcutter, a sturdy mower, loppers - or someone to assist you with this"

"The importance of educating yourself about the rainforest - plant and weed identification and propagation. Avoidance of mistakes which will come back to haunt you (e.g. when I first moved to the valley, I planted gum-trees close to my house which I then had to have felled when they grew very tall (and beautiful!) and a threat in high winds.)"

"It's OK to feel overwhelmed. If you aren't enjoying what you are doing, consider stopping, having a break and re-evaluating"



The challenge of the long game: Your forest will not be transformed in one or two seasons. Forest restoration takes time and requires dedication and perseverance. But you will be rewarded eventually.

Weed Management

We sometimes detect an expectation that Landcare exists to get rid of weeds on private property. Only sometimes. Generally, weed management is the responsibility of the landholder.

But weeds can be serious threats to biodiversity, so weed management is an important component of most rainforest restoration projects. Lantana or Camphor Laurel can be readily converted to rainforest using skilled bush regeneration techniques - many examples are showcased around our valleys. Weeds do not respect property boundaries, so sometimes a coordinated neighbourhood or valley-wide approach is desirable. And many weeds have low priority for removal – they hold the soil, fix carbon and some have habitat value for native fauna.

Ideally, Landcare would be helping landholders to manage their native vegetation, fauna habitat and weeds by providing information, resources and site visits. But active committee members are a small group of volunteers, and events such as field days have dropped off during the pandemic (but will be back).

Can you help?

Please don't say:

- When are “they” going to do something about the Palm Grass/Morning Glory/Privet/Bana Grass?
- That landcare work site looks like a bomb has hit it. Disgraceful. (Please talk to us, not about us and fact check.)
- Weeds are there to heal the landscape. (Sometimes, but often they need to go. Again, fact check.)
- I don't mind at all if you want to bring your team in to clean up my property.

Please do say:

- Can you point me in the right direction to manage this weed?
- Would someone be able to drop around and tell me which are natives and which are weeds?
- Can I go on the list for one of the funded projects? (just don't expect it to happen instantly)
- Can I help? I have skills in plant identification/weed management/admin/social media/graphic arts/event management. Or no skills at all but I'm keen to learn.

Community Jumpseed Working Bee

You might have seen a number of key volunteers over the last few months working along the Huonbrook Roadside on Handweeding jumpseed. There's now a coordinated **Working Bee** every third Sunday 9.30 to 11.30 handweeding jumpseed.

Meet at Huonbrook Road around the Mill Road corner. Enquiries to Robyn 66840140

Thanks to all the workers who have participated so far. Great to see the results with more to come.



Black Taro removal from Wilsons Creek, Huonbrook and Wanganui STAGE 1

Now we have put together a project outline for Black Taro removal.

Almost all of the Black Taro will be on private land and/or will require access through private land. Black Taro is not a weed species that legally requires removal and no one is under any obligation to remove it, or to allow others to remove it. Here, we have put together information and a map so that the community can think about what could be achieved if everyone works together on a completely voluntary basis.

We cannot envisage funding for contract labour to do the actual work (huge amount of money). There is an enormous volume of Black Taro in our valleys, removal requires skills and disposal methods that can easily be learned and people power will be the answer. We'll look for some short term funding for a project officer to pull it all together and make a strong start. This will be a very long project, and it's always difficult to keep up momentum long term. (Our Coral Tree project of 2013 is still going through a mop up stage, and Giant Devils Fig, alas, will be with us forever.)



**Any ideas out there?
Let's continue the community discussion phase.**

Background

Black Taro was amongst environmental weed species mapped in 2005-2006 on roads and creeks in the project area (Figure 1). The mapping showed considerable infestation in Wilsons Creek but almost zero in Coopers Creek. The species was identified for theoretically possible eradication as the plants were mostly confined to waterways and are dispersed primarily by water flow. Systematic removal from upstream extremities should result in permanent eradication, so long as it is not moved around in soil or planted deliberately. Its removal is desirable as clumps of the plants produce toxic sludge with low habitat value, while competing with native riparian vegetation.

Since 2006, Black Taro has spread extensively in Wilsons Creek, alarming many landholders. Many remove it but suffer from ongoing reinfestation from upstream. Others unknowingly plant it. Additional locations have been identified, mapped as Points of Interest on Figure 1.

WCHL regularly draws attention to Black Taro issues and removal methods (newsletter, social media). Effective removal needs significant resources including ideally high levels of volunteer labour. Some initial planning, coordination and prioritising, survey, skill transfer and publicity are envisaged in Stage 1.

We have compiled information about local and regional case studies, including treatment methods and success rates.

Issues

Safety

The usual precautions for working outdoors, on uneven ground and in/near water will apply. Black Taro has sap which may irritate the skin. Gloves desirable.

Removal methods

Pull or loosen and dig with small hand tools. Digging to the extent of "excavation" requires approval in the riparian zone – to be avoided. Fragments left in the ground will resprout. Remove all loosened material so it cannot wash downstream.

Disposal

Heavy to move, high water content. Vehicle movements e.g. to Council's green waste facility are impractical and undesirable. On site options (above the floodline) – solarise under black plastic, erect "hammocks" for material to drain and dry.

Herbicide use

Herbicide use will be avoided or minimised in riparian areas, especially in drinking water catchment. In the long term, we would not rule out herbicide use where intractable infestations remain and pose a reinfestation risk. Herbicide could potentially be applied by cutting and pasting at the driest time of year. But maybe we can do without it.

Follow up

Resprouts are likely and reinfestation from upstream will produce new plants. Check creekbanks after flood.

Project activities

- Info sheets, social posts
- Visit landholders expressing interest
- Demonstrate removal and disposal
- Connect second hand materials including black plastic, shadecloth for “hammocks” with people who need them
- Survey of Coopers Creek downstream from known records (high priority), re-survey of Wilsons Creek (lower priority). Encourage social creek surveillance walks.
- Keep records of works and new locations
- Evaluate success and issues, plan Stage 2
- Look for funding and other partner assistance e.g. organised volunteer teams

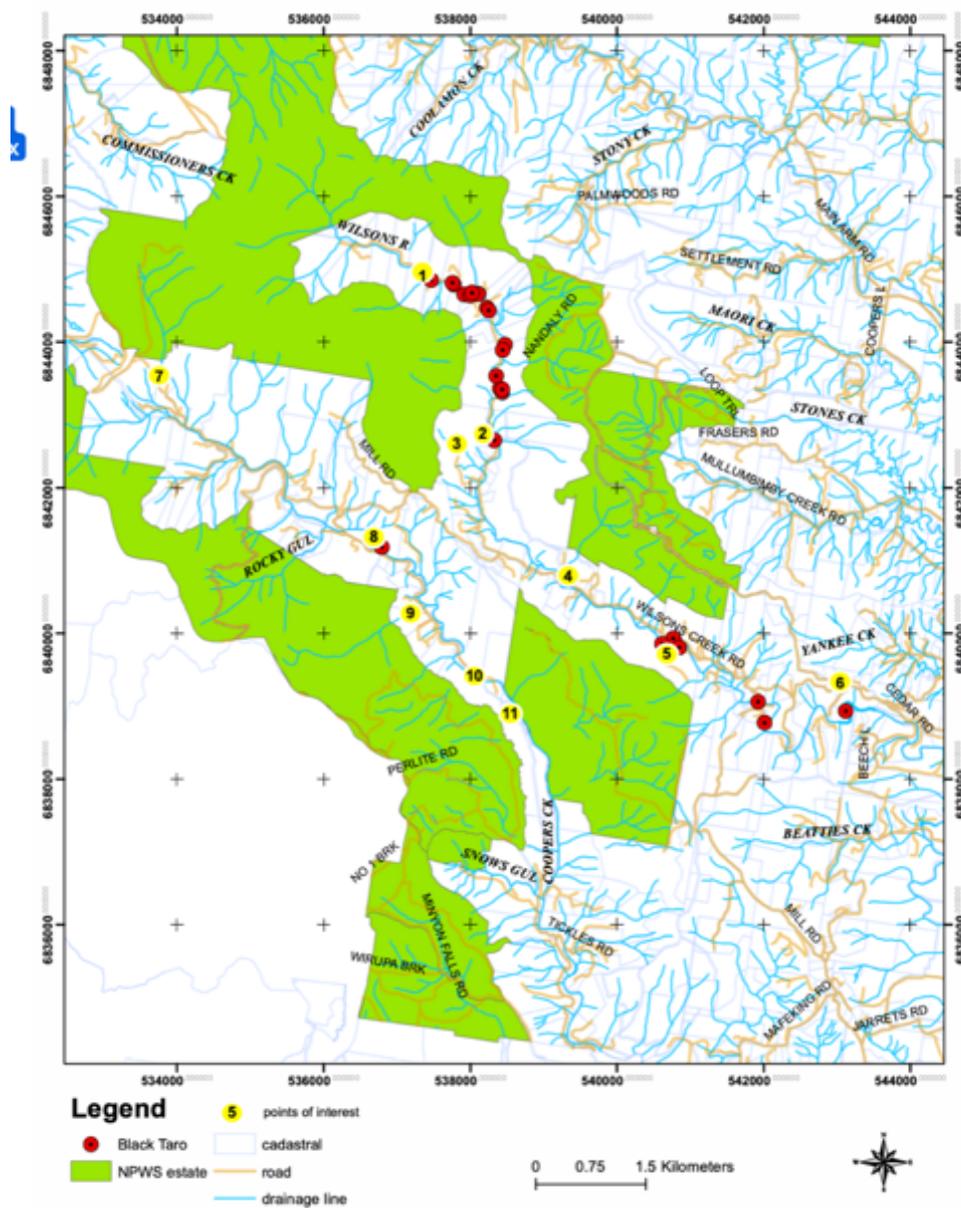


Figure1 Black Taro occurrences

Table 1 Points of Interest

Point Number	Location	Notes
1	Upper Wilsons. Mid creek flat	Furthest upstream location, expanding rapidly, priority for removal
2	Upper Wilsons. Left bank	Badly infested tributary. Landholders to be consulted, needs assessment, planning, resources
3	Upper Wilsons. Head of clean tributary west of creek.	Planted by landholders in mistaken belief that it is an edible variety. Prompt removal agreed.
4	Wilsons. Raised pond close to clean tributary	Planted. Landholders are happy to remove
5	Wilsons. Left bank.	Badly infested tributary. Assess, plan resource. Begin removal from upstream extremity of tributary.
6	Wilsons. Koonyum Range turnoff quarry	Small patch observed, likely to have come from temporary soil dump by contractors clearing drains. Removed by WCHL
7	Huonbrook	Red Road. Large expanding patch a little distant from origin of Coopers Creek. Landholder keen to be involved. High priority
8	Wanganui	Recently documented infested tributary related to 2006 record on main creek, left bank. High priority, community working bee?
9	Wanganui	Right bank tributary. Infestation on Lost Valley creek. Landholder has removed over the last 3-4 years, requires surveillance to ensure no regrowth.
10	Wanganui	Head of Wanganui Gorge, causeway vicinity. Scattered isolated plants identified and removed by WCHL over the last several years
11	Wanganui	Wanganui Gorge, within National Park. Single plant, left bank. Removed by WCHL.

‘Before and Afters’

This was a new segment in our last newsletter that means just what it says! The aim of course is to show what can be achieved over time and that we don’t necessarily have to wait 20 years!

If you have some great before and after shots and a timeframe, please send them through to wilsonscreeklandcare@yahoo.com.au No names, no addresses!

SITE 1 (under powerlines!)

BEFORE



Area cleared of lantana and molasses grass 2019



Early planting 2020

AFTER



Dec 2021

SITE 2 (Bamboo removal)

BEFORE



2 Large bamboo clumps 2020



1 clump of Himalayan Blue

AFTER (physical removal)



May 2020



AFTER (follow up and natural regen)



Dec 2021

SITE 3

BEFORE (lantana and banana in situ)



July 2019

Banana clump

AFTER (lantana removed, regen underway with strategic planting)



January 2022

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Tree of the Month SOAPY BOX

Graham Watson

Soapy Box is one of the large trees in our local rainforests. Once you have recognised it, you won't mistake it for any other tree. All the individuals look the same and are all quite different to the other trees in the forest.

The botanical name of Soapy Box is *Citronella moorei*. The name is somewhat a misnomer. The tree has nothing to do with either citrus trees or citronella oil which can be extracted from lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citrates*).

Soapy Box began life in the scientific botanical literature in 1863 as *Villaresia moorei*, one of the astonishing number of plants named by the Victorian botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller. Its name changed again before the American botanist Richard Howard finally placed the species in the genus *Citronella* in 1940. *Citronella* was already a long-standing genus having been established by the Scottish botanist David Don back in 1832. Don derived the name Citronella from the local Chilean vernacular name for a species he placed in the genus. The specific epithet, *moorei*, honours former nineteenth century NSW Government Botanist, Charles Moore. Soapy Box has also been shuffled around from family to family and now resides in the family Cardiopteridaceæ.



Soapy box is a reasonably common tree occurring in rainforests along Australia's east coast from the Clyde River in southern NSW right up to the Windsor Tableland in North Queensland. A big Soapy Box can easily be 50m high but what sets it apart from other trees is the deeply and irregularly fluted trunk.

At the base of the tree these flutes spread out into the ground and appear similar to the buttresses that lots of rainforest trees display.

The difference is that, unlike buttresses, these flutes continue up the trunk to a height of 15-20 metres and that feature identifies Soapy Box.

The bark is soft or corky with prominent vertical fissures (see photos).

The leaves are dark green and glossy with obvious venation and on the paler underside there are small pits (domatia) on the intersection of the main vein with the lateral veins (see photos).

The fruit are small elliptical and shiny black. Fruit can be found from Spring right through to the end of Autumn.

The trunk flutes on this 40m high tree at Huonbrook extend up to the 20m point

The species is dioecious, that is, male and female flowers occur on separate trees, so, if one is not monitoring a female tree, fruit collection can be frustrating!

The timber is not particularly useful. It was popular for the construction of butter boxes, but, as one tree would have made a lot of butter boxes, it was not vigorously harvested. The frequency of this species in remnant rainforests reflects that low level of harvesting. .



The girth of this specimen at Huonbrook measured 7 metres at breast height. Note how the base of the flutes look quite similar to buttresses in other rainforest trees.



Soapy box is a reasonably fast-growing tree and would be a rewarding inclusion in any regeneration project, especially because of its unique trunk architecture.

The soft, corky bark is marked by the characteristic vertical fissures.



The underside of the leaves is paler than the upper surface, the lateral veins are just as prominent and one of the small domatia is highlighted by the red ring.

The glossy dark green leaves have only 4 or 5 prominent lateral veins and the leaves are arranged in a zig-zag pattern along the branchlet.



Contact us: Barbara 66840378, Julie 66840242 Email wilsonscreeklandcare@yahoo.com.au

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.