

Landcare UpHunter

Winter 2016

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Wild About Trailblazing

Landcare UpHunter is a Shire wide resource and support service that provides environmental and sustainable agriculture resources and support to schools and other educators, community groups, farmers, other landholders and residents, and business in urban and rural communities. We also work with our Local Council and government agencies across a wide range of activities and settings.

Landcare UpHunter launched its Wild About Trailblazing project across the Shire earlier this year. Schools and other children's and youth services are provided with Trail Cameras for use as an environmental and agricultural education tool.

Trail cameras have the ability to record animal and bird movement on a 24 hour basis. Set up at a fixed location, the camera automatically takes photos when movement is detected in a set range of vision. Daytime photos are recorded in colour and in black and white by infrared from dusk to daylight. Using infrared instead of flash minimises bird and animal disturbance for recording of images.

The Wild About Trailblazing project encourages young people to be involved in wildlife monitoring, conservation and rehabilitation at their local level and to pass on their learnt knowledge and skills within their schools and general community.

Primary and High schools across the Shire that are already using the cameras for short-term projects have identified, monitored and recorded local wildlife and feral pest incursions in their school grounds—in general areas surrounding their school buildings, sportsgrounds and non-stock movement across agricultural paddocks.

Some native wildlife and pests appeared across urban and rural school environs e.g rabbits, foxes, possums and magpies, with Satin Bowerbirds recorded at rural schools. These birds are known to occur in some of our urban areas in the Shire.

The adult male is a rich black-blue colour and the female has an upper body of olive-green with a white flecked lower body. Juveniles have similar markings and colour to the adult female. Bowerbirds prefer wetland forest and woodland areas, with open space nearby. Winter is their breeding season so this time of the year

Trail camera results have been incorporated into school curriculum, as a discussion point at assemblies to share Landcare, teacher and student knowledge of their physical environment and in developing student research skills.

Each time a school or other service uses the Trail cameras, at the end of their project we are provided with sample photos, a species list etc. to add to our wildlife and feral pest database for the project. recording photos by area. By recording at set locations seasonally will help show, for example, if birds are local or maybe migrating through an area.

Visiting small rural to large urban schools, participating in assemblies, talking with students and staff about their local environment and seeing the outcomes has been great. Learning how to operate a Trail camera was my real challenge!

Wild About Trailblazing is a long-term project linking Landcare, the education sector and other children's/youth services.

To book a Trail Camera or for more information just email: landcareuphunter@gmail.com or Tel: Ruth on 0407 232 539.

Ruth Hardy

Photos: Satin Bowerbird
(Ptilonorhynchus violaceus)

Left - male
Right - female



Oh Boy it's Cold

When the weather gets cold in Winter we wear clothes made specially to keep us warm during the day and at night. We can also keep warm indoors by turning on heating at a flick of a switch at home, at school and other indoor places.

Have you ever thought about how different animals cope with cold weather? Do they have thick fur to keep them warm, are they warm or cold-blooded, do they go to sleep for long periods (hibernate) during Winter months or not?

For some animals their normal source of food becomes very scarce or disappears in Winter. Some will find a safe dry place to rest, slow their body right down (including their heart beat and breathing) and sleep for long periods of time.

We are called warm-blooded. That means we are able to change the temperature of our body to help us live easily in either cold or hot weather but cold-blooded reptiles like snakes and lizards cannot regulate (change) their temperature as the Winter comes. They become less active and need to find somewhere safe to hibernate through the Winter.

The Eastern Water Dragon will sleep right through the cold months, in a snug, sealed burrow beneath a rock or a log.

Large animals have ways of keeping their body temperature warm enough to keep awake during Winter. Smaller animals like the Echidna can turn their body temperature down when the weather gets cold. The Pygmy Possum, Antechinus, Sugar glider and Bat can slip in and out of sleep each day or stop all their normal activities for long periods. In some parts of the Upper Hunter Shire, like the Barrington Tops, it even snows in Winter. Have you seen any up there? Tasmanian Devils at Devil Ark love it when it snows and have great fun rushing about and digging in the snow.

Lots of native wildlife rely on tree hollows and fallen branches for their sleeping homes during Winter and also for breeding and for protection from other animals and even from us! Tree hollows can take fifty years or more to form so it is important that we protect any trees with hollows and that we don't clear all branches that are lying on the ground.

Can you name all of the native animals in the photos below? The answers are at the bottom of this page.

Ruth Hardy



Soaring Like an Eagle

The Wedge-Tailed Eagle is the largest bird of prey (raptor) that we have in Australia. They live in pairs, stay together for life and live in the same area all year round, patrolling 'their patch' at dawn and dusk. Forest and woodland areas are their favourite places to hang out. Have you seen any of these Eagles flying in the wild? Where did you see them?

April to September is the normal breeding season for a Wedge-Tailed Eagle. A pair of them will soar high in the air diving and looping together in acrobatic displays. They will make their nest high up in a tree or on a cliff and if it is still there when they breed, they will use that nest year after year. Their nests are very big and can weigh up to 400kgs. That is big and heavy!

The female lays 1-3 eggs and watches over them—Mum sits on the eggs to keep them warm at a constant temperature and Dad brings home the food. After 45 days the eggs hatch but only one baby (chick) usually survives to fly from the nest. Some juveniles fly over 800kms, searching for a new home.

Ruth Hardy



Small area Garden

Living in urban areas brings with it a variety of home sizes, shapes and garden spaces. If your home has a small area for creating a garden there are ways to grow plants successfully, whether herbs other food sources or to simply enjoy.

Think about the space you have to establish your garden, what you want to use it for and how to get the right balance of plants in that space. Work out how much sunlight your garden or balcony gets at different times of the year, if it has good ventilation for your plants to grow and does it get heat build-up from lack of fresh air. Having beneficial plants to cool an area may mean you need to use more water than usual so having an efficient watering system is essential.

Use a ph kit to test the quality of your soil first, particularly if you plan to grow food. Your local nursery, hardware store or supermarket should have one. If your soil is poor for growing vegetables will adding 'soil conditioner' improve it enough or is there space to install raised garden beds? Use a high quality soil mix specially formulated for vegetables.

If you don't have a garden but a balcony instead some foods/other plants can be grown in pots, against or up a wall.

What will grow in your area, when should you plant and what have your friends and neighbours grown successfully?

Only select plants suited to your particular space and environmental needs—temperature, sun, shade, wind, soil etc.

Trailing tomatoes grow well in hanging baskets, particularly under a roof or veranda. Ferns could be good here too.

Recycling old gutters or planter bags can create a great vertical space or maybe you can use a pocket planter instead.

However you plan your growing area and whatever you decide to plant should enhance and complement your living space and lifestyle. Your 'green space' should be a place to relax, get enjoyment from and maybe even entertain.

Ruth Hardy



Resources & Funding

Frog & Tadpole Study Group of NSW - access their website for information at <http://www.fats.org.au/>

LandSmart app for sustainable property management: Information for landholders/managers (particularly city-based landholders with rural properties - smart management practices, looking after land sustainably and responsibly. Access expert advice, resources, information from your smartphone. <http://landsmart.lis.nsw.gov.au/>

National standards for ecological restoration: Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia has published national standards to increase the likelihood of successful restoration. Relevant for minimally resourced community projects to large-scale industry and government projects. <http://www.seraustralasia.com/standards/contents.html>

National Biosecurity Act 2016: This has replaced the Quarantine Act 1908. Co-administered by Ministers of Agriculture, Water Resources and Health. <http://agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/legislation/new-biosecurity-legislation>

Teabag decomposition research: The EU Soil Data Centre is seeking citizen scientists around the world to bury teabags as part of its research to measure rates of plant decomposition globally. Find out about how you can participate at <http://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/networkcooperations/tea-bag-index>

Climate Smart Agriculture Guide: Provides detailed guidance on planning/finance and worldwide case studies. Website developed by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security with contributions from World Bank experts, CGIAR and many other institutions work on these issues <http://csa.guide>

Key to drought resistant trees: US study that found trees most resistant to drought are those that are better at withstanding stress to the water transport system carrying water from roots to the crown. Water inches up the xylem to replace water evaporating from the leaf surface. When water is scarce, trees have to pull much harder on the water in the xylem, which allows air bubbles to infiltrate. Bubbles cause blockages, or embolisms, that clog the pipes the way a blood clot blocks flow through an artery. Go to <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/04/160418161353.htm>

Funding

Eco Schools Grants—NSW Environmental Trust funding for providing learning opportunities through curriculum-based environmental projects. Applications close 17th June at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/schools.htm>

Events for your Diary

Landcare UpHunter stall—farming, environment, Landcare, education resources, plants/herbs. Visit us at:

Merriwa Festival of the Fleeces, Golden Highway, Merriwa (In main street) on Saturday 11th of June between 8.00am-3.00pm.

Landcare NSW—a webinar on the proposed NSW Government's Biodiversity Reforms . Friday 17th of June between 2.30-4.30pm

Register for the webinar at <http://www.webcasts.com.au/oeH170616/>

Emergency Management & Community Resilience Forum on 17th of June in Muswellbrook between 10.00am-3.00pm -

For NGO's, small business & primary producers. To register via Email: colin.perry.dpc.nsw.gov.au or call Colin on 4921 2609

National Tree Day on 31st July & National Schools Day on 29th July Find a local event or register your event at treeday@planetark.org

Scone Landcare - National Tree Day event—native tree handout to landholders in peri-urban & rural areas. Call 0407 232 539 or Email: sconelandcare@gmail.com

Glenbawn Catchment Landcare Group. Contact Gavin MacCallum glenbawncatchment@outlook.com

Murrurundi Landcare Group just Email Sandy@boydscreek.com.au

Pages River Warriors Working Bee Wilson Memorial Oval, Murrurundi 1st & 3rd Sunday monthly (morning) Email Sandy@boydscreek.com.au

Landcare UpHunter & Scone Landcare - refer details below

A Passion for Landcare

Later this month Landcarers and other volunteers from around the Upper Hunter region will meet in Singleton to share their experiences of working in a community organisation, their passion for what they do and the challenges faced by primarily small volunteer groups, within this part of regional Australia.

Hosted by Singleton Shire Landcare Network who have engaged Les Robinson from Enabling Change to present a Passion Mashin' workshop, the focus for everyone there will be inspiring and re-energising volunteer community groups.

"Harvest a crop of brilliant ideas, use proven, simple, low-cost techniques to spread your message, win the hearts and minds of new supporters' les says.

Whilst most of us in the Upper Hunter region reside in towns or villages, there are many volunteers living and working in rural settings, often separated from the mainstream of community and government services, transport avenues etc.

How do we operate, share ideas and support each other in numerous Landcare activities across often large distances, and in some very differing landscapes?

When you are part of a small community group it can be difficult to focus on the future when the present may be focussed on how to pay for your volunteer insurance, writing yet another application for funding (often for small grants) or gaining new volunteers—particularly anyone under 35! You have recognised the environmental needs and projects are there but how can they be undertaken?

Passion Mashin' together is a great way to start and a great way to re-invigorate your group (and yourself maybe). Keeping a focus on being creative and thinking outside the square is much more rewarding for everyone than a narrow group perspective to meet a problem or environmental issue on a local level.

How can you make your group business meetings innovative and enjoyable? As Les says "boring meetings can kill groups, so simplify them". Is everyone in your group given time to share their Landcare experiences and bring Landcare related questions to the group, including from other local community residents?

What media and other mechanisms does your group or could your group use to reach out and support your community, network with other organisations, gain new members or publicise your activities and achievements? If you haven't spoken with your local newspaper journalist, designate someone from your group to give them a call.....and keep up the contact. Make sure you have an activity, recent or coming up, to ask them to advertise in your local newspaper.

The right photograph will go a long way towards drawing in people to the article they are reading (always give the journalist a couple to choose from). Instead of a photograph with Landcarers standing looking at the camera, or a line of planted native tube stock make sure it is an 'action shot'—that draws readers in.

Like other Landcare groups, Landcare UpHunter and Scone Landcare look to both tried and tested, new and innovative ways of resourcing and supporting our communities, within the Scone Landcare boundaries of Aberdeen, to Bunnan, to Burning Mountain and Segenhoe or for Landcare UpHunter, across the Shire.

We network out of our areas with other Landcare groups for sharing information, cross-group support, organising concurrent events for cost effectiveness etc.

We are working more closely with schools/other educators this year, through our Wild About Trailblazing project—providing Trail Cameras on loan for curriculum activities on wildlife and feral pests, continuing our provision of locally occurring native tree species to peri-urban and rural landholders and attending more local events across the Shire, utilising our new gazebo and display equipment.

The Landcare UpHunter gazebo (with logo print around the roof) is available for other Landcare groups in the Upper Hunter region to loan for their events. Contact Ruth on 0407 232539 or email landcareuphunter@gmail.com for info.

Ruth Hardy

Visit us at www.landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/scone-landcare-group



Landcare UpHunter is hosted by Scone Landcare Inc.

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Landcare UpHunter

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