

Landcare UpHunter

Summer 2016

In this issue:

Food & Fibre Education	p1
Junior Landcare- A Kingfisher in my paddock	p2
Recycling Egg Cartons	p2
Hollows as Homes	p3
Resources & Funding	p3
Events for your Diary	p4
Hollows as Homes- continued	p4
Contacts	p4

Food & Fibre Education

Recently I came across a farm gate sign posted on Instagram that said 'if you eat, you are involved in agriculture'. All of us, in different ways, contribute to the growing of food.

Food and fibre is critical to every human on earth. Agriculture, fishing and forestry are an essential part of Australian society but most of us will not have lived or worked for a food and fibre producer at the grassroots level such as a farm, a fishery or a market garden.

As a modern and mostly urban society, most Australians rely on buying their food from a supermarket, local Farmers Market or other retail source. Where it was grown, how it was grown and is it fresh and healthy are questions that often inform our decisions on where we source our food and fibre. Growing food at home doesn't usually meet all our needs.

As the worldwide population continues to grow it becomes increasingly important for our government and industry to invest in food and fibre education programmes nationwide.

With over 85% of Australians living in an urban environment the challenge to ensure food and fibre education makes it into the classroom can be particularly difficult to achieve.

The significance of food and fibre education for school students has been recognised by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (ACARA) in Kindergarten to Year 10 Australian curriculum. It has 168 mentions across multiple education subject areas.

The idea of helping school students learn about farming and where their food comes from is not new. In the past, promotion of agriculture to schools relied on local or State-based education, rather than a national co-ordination curriculum. This often limited their access to national industry funding and their ability to effectively interact with national bodies.

In 2009 the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) was established with the Education sector, primary industry organisations and government involvement.

PIEFA works to assist teachers to plan and implement outcomes in Australian schools.

With support from industry members and government funding from the 'Agriculture in Education' programme, PIEFA are able to write multiple resources for teachers, provide teacher professional learning, fund partner schools around the country and upgrade their web portal for schools, called Primezone, a one-stop web portal for teachers to search for food and fibre resources, find case studies, funding opportunities, apprenticeships, Professional Development events and information on the Archibull Prize for schools.

As the wealth of food and fibre resources available to grows, the challenge then becomes providing teachers with the knowledge and confidence to allow them to deliver content in the classroom, with virtual support from PIEFA. Resource material ranges from Food and fibre production, Farming for the 21st Century; Integrating a school garden into classroom practice (AgPatch—Garden Connections); Quad bike safety; Year 5 & 6 exploring the importance of bees in sustaining our ecosystems (for at least a third of everything we eat); Water sustainability through science; Soil for growing great grain to whether Growing pulses feeds more people.

Listed 2016 media articles include 'Rising Salt' connects farmers to science teachers; Primary Industries Entrepreneurial schools; Mummy, where does steak come from?; Connections through food & fibre education and reflections on a Rural Discovery Day.

The 'School stud starts life-long passion' article talks about how one sheep industry workers passion for agriculture started with her high school sheep stud—now wherever she moves for work her small flock of Corriedales go with her! You can also follow the link to watch the video "Making the most of it" which showcases innovations and career opportunities for students in agricultural industries.

If you know a teacher maybe you can ask them if they are aware of Primezone. If not, then give them the web details at www.primezone.edu.au or they can contact PIEFA direct at via our email at ceo@piefa.edu.au.

PIEFA produces a monthly newsletter and past copies can be viewed online at www.piefa.edu.au. Just go into the 'Archives' link and click on 'Newsletters' section.

If you want to receive future copies direct then go into 'About' and use the 'Subscribe to the Newsletter' link.

Kelly Spence

primezone
The Institute for all-ages primary industry education

Home School Resources About Contact Login Register

Primezone provides teachers with single-point access to a range of primary industries education resources.

Learn more

Type a keyword or subject to search resources

Click here for advanced search

A Kingfisher in my Paddock

I wonder if you have ever seen a Kingfisher in the wild, sitting on a fence, on a tree near or by a creek or flying low across the landscape. They are small, brightly coloured birds that can be hard to spot against a background of green grass, bushes and trees.

There are two types, the Azure Kingfisher which is only 15—19cms. long and the Sacred Kingfisher which is 20—23cms. The Azure is glossy blue on top, has white spots to the rear of its eyes, orange markings underneath and feet that are red. They like to perch on low branches that hang over water or fly fast over it, making quick splashing dives as they search for their aquatic food.

An Azure Kingfisher will usually nest in a small burrow in a creek bank, making sure their home is really close to their food and drinking area. They make a rather high, squeaking noise, mainly when they are flying. It sounds like they are saying “peet, peet”.

In contrast, the Sacred Kingfisher has a dark blue/green head, buff coloured eyebrows, black mask, wings and tail are a peacock blue, a green back and a white collar across its neck, breast and underneath. It nests in tree hollows, termite nests or even in a tunnel along a creek bank. It usually lives in woodland or open forest and but can occasionally be seen in parks and gardens.

In the Upper Hunter the Sacred Kingfisher is more common. Have you ever seen one? Maybe on a power line, on a fence post, in a tree, on a stump, particularly close to water? They might be on the lookout for food, darting down quickly over a waterway looking for large insects, small reptiles, crustaceans or their larvae and if they want a change of diet they'll even catch a small fish.

They make a different noise to the Azure Kingfisher, rather like a high pitched “dek, dek” which can rise to a harsh trilling sound.

The first time I saw a Sacred Kingfisher at home it was sitting on a bush in the back garden, I watched it for several minutes before it flew off. The colours were amazing! I was surprised at its size, smaller than I had imagined it would be. It was back the next day.

I haven't spied one for a long time but last week I saw one in the bottom paddock. Then the next day I saw another one across the road—or was it the same one? Sitting on the fence seems to be a favourite pastime for my local Kingfisher, always close to water.

To see an Azure Kingfisher online (one from the Hunter region) go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=jrFcQ742OVM> for a look.

Ruth Hardy



Recycling Egg Cartons

There are many ways in which you can use clean egg cartons to make useful things (once the eggs have been used of course).

Desk organizer—remove the top of the egg carton. Place the bottom half inside a desk drawer to hold small items like paper clips, pins and rubber bands. You can paint or decorate the carton, particularly if you want to place it on a desktop where it will be seen.

Palette—use the Styrofoam kind for water colours or acrylics to hold colours. Detach top of the carton and use for mixing colours.

Waste paper Basket—your will need 8 cartons for this. Cut off the tops then poke holes on the flap that is used to close the carton. Take some ribbon and tie each carton to the next one, eventually making a circle. Used, plastic shopping bags fit into these nicely.

Containers for growing plants from seed—poke a few holes in the bottom of the carton for drainage. Fill about three quarters of each cup with seed raising or good potting soil. Plant your seeds, put them in a sunny position by a window indoors or a protected area outdoors. Remember to check them each day and give them a light watering. A spray bottle filled with water is good for this.

Jewellery organizer—paint your carton or cover it with spare fabric you can find and store small pieces of jewellery etc. in the cups.

Golf ball storage, can be a present for Mum or Dad if you don't play golf—an egg carton makes a great place to store extra golf balls. It makes it easy to sort them by their brand and their condition. They are also stackable so they can be stored neatly away.

Game or toy storage—keep on losing some of your little toy pieces? Then use a carton to store doll shoes, game pieces, dice etc.

Hanging decal—cut individual cups from a carton and paint them in different colours. Punch a hole through each top and hang them on some string. Tie a knot just below each cup to hold it in place.

Cheap ice cube trays—you can also use plastic egg cartons to make extra ice trays in your freezer. and when Christmas is over again—line each egg carton cup with cotton, foam or tissue paper and store small Christmas tree ornaments in them.

Ruth Hardy



Hollows as Homes

In our urban and agricultural areas large, hollow-bearing trees are in decline across the landscape and many species of native animals rely on tree hollows, for protection from predators, nesting and raising young. In NSW hollow-dependent species include at least 46 mammals, 81 birds, 31 reptiles and 16 frogs. Of these, 40 species are listed as threatened with extinction. This is why the 'loss of hollow-bearing trees' has been listed as a key threatening process to biodiversity in the New South Wales landscape.

Farms, agricultural areas and ex-farmland are often characterised by large, old, isolated trees, or small clusters of trees. These clusters often act as 'stepping stones' and can be vital in linking up other small patches of trees on adjacent farms, allowing native wildlife to more easily move throughout the landscape. A good example of this is a glider going between patches of local trees.

Even a single standing tree with a hollow can provide valuable habitat or a nest or den for a native animal that would otherwise not be able to live or survive on that land. It usually takes decades for a tree to form a natural hollow and one deep enough for wildlife.

A good example of an animal that depends on clusters of trees on farms is the Superb Parrot. Listed as vulnerable to extinction, it uses paddock trees for nesting, feeding, landing and protection. Other species reliant on tree hollows and relevant to the Hunter include the Turquoise Parrot, Musk Lorikeet, Powerful Owl, East coast free-tailed bat and Spotted quoll.

continued page 4



Resources

Resources for Fire-affected Farmers—Hunter Local Land Services assistance via their Local Control Centre for landholders for recording of damage from the current bushfires. Also veterinary assistance, destruction, burial & fodder. Call 1800 814 647.

NSW Rural Fire Service—updated information on fire bans and bushfires in your local area and throughout NSW at 1800 679 737.

NSW State Emergency Services—Support & advice in an emergency, including creating a Home Emergency Plan. Call 132 500.

Rural Support Worker (DPI Rural Resilience Program)—for information on support available for farming families recovering from natural disasters and other service provider connect. Call Caroline Hayes 0407 971 675 or email caroline.hayes@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Rural Financial Counselling Service—free financial counselling to eligible primary producers, fishers or small rural businesses suffering financial hardship. Contact Ray Hynes (Northern Region) at ray.hynes@rfcsnsw-northernregion.org or Tel: 6545 3544.

Bee Mite ID website—US Department of Agriculture web-based tool for Identification of Bee Mites. With over 700 described mite species (and at least 200 undescribed) associated with managed and wild bees. Some coexist beneficially with bees, some are harmful parasites. The website shows mite features, distribution, natural host ranges <https://idtools.org/id/mites/beemites/>

Making the right choices for your land: a guide for new landholders—Hunter Local Land Services have a new resource brochure covering a wide range of issues for new landholders (good for existing ones too) e.g. where to go for advice/support on infrastructure, farm business, legislation, financial and even local Landcare groups. Go to hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au/ or call 4938 1030.

Resilient Community organisations—a disaster recovery toolkit developed for and by communities to assist organisations measure and improve their resilience to disasters and emergencies. Includes a benchmarking system and six step disaster resilience plan with information and resources for an action plan. You can access the website at <http://resilience.acoss.org.au/>

Mentor the Treasurer—Certified Practising Accountants Australia (CPAA), in partnership with Pro Bono Australia offer qualified members opportunity to support small, not-for-profit organisations with assistance to better manage their funds, achieve financial independence or find an auditor. NFP's can access their treasury guide at <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/mentor-the-treasurer/>

Funding

IMB Community Foundation—funding for economic, social, environmental, educational, cultural diversification in local communities. Grants from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Applications for 2017 close on 24th of February. Go to www.imb.com.au for an on-line application.

Ais for Farmer Upskill—farmers can access subsidies, pre-approved courses via the State Government, Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program or apply for a range of other professional development activities. Up to 50% reimbursement (ex GST) up to \$5,000 a farmer, \$9,000 for a farm business at <http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/professional-development-program>

2017 NSW Farmers Association Tertiary Scholarships—five scholarships available to the value of \$4,000 for students committed to helping farming and rural communities grow and prosper. Open to students in their second or subsequent year of full-time study, with a parent or guardian as a full member of the Association for at least two consecutive years or a student with a membership of two consecutive years. Applications close on the 3rd of March. Just go to www.nswfarmers.org.au and follow the prompts.

Keep Australia Beautiful Litter Grants—funding up to \$5,000 (incl. GST) for tools and resources to address litter solutions in your local neighbourhood. The application period closes on the 1st of March at <http://knsbw.org.au/our-programs/community-litter-grants>

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal, Small Grants for Rural Communities—up to \$5,000 for small rural communities and remote locations. Priority to communities with a population of 10,000 or less. Applications close 31st March. Go to www.frrr.org.au

Events for your Diary

Landcare UpHunter stall - farming, environment, Landcare, education resources, plants/herbs—no stalls in Summer, recommencing Autumn.

Soil Knowledge Network Field Day—Upper Hunter Sustainable Farming Group. To be held at the Soil Conservation Service, 709 Gundy Road, Scone on the 22nd of February from 9.00am.

Tel: Kim Fenley on 0418 570 743
email fenshome4@bigpond.com to register—cost \$20pp.

Clean Up Australia Day: Business Day 28th February, Schools/Youth Day Friday 3rd March, Community Clean Up Day Sunday 5th of March.

For event information or to register a new activity go to cleanup.org.au

Landholder last day to enrol to vote Hunter LLS board election—closes 31st March at hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au

Quad Bike Safety training in 2017 - for farmers & farm workers. One-day subsidised Quad Bike Safety training, Upper Hunter Shire.

Call Ruth on 0407 232 539 or email landcareuphunter@gmail.com for information or register your interest.

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

Merrima Landcare Group. Contact Jenny Lee on 0429 337 557

Murrurundi Landcare Group just Email Sandy@boyds creek.com.au

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

Landcare UpHunter & Scone Landcare—refer details below

Hollows as Homes—continued

Retaining existing hollow-bearing trees, ensuring younger paddock trees are maintained so they can form hollows and gaining a greater understanding of how native wildlife use paddock trees is vital to maintaining this diversity in community and agricultural areas.

It's not just on our farms that hollow-bearing trees play an important role, but within our urban regions as well. Hollow-bearing trees are often removed in cities, their suburbs and smaller towns, for development. Alternatively, large trees may be retained (in recreational parks or streets) for example. Dead or damaged branches may be removed for reasons of public safety in case they fall. Removing damaged limbs can prevent a hollow forming.

There are less young trees in the city which can grow up into large hollow-providing trees. Fewer trees in metropolitan areas compared to the bush mean fewer hollows for wildlife.

Our urban bushland typically contains only half the number of hollows that are present in bushland outside of metropolitan areas, with even less hollows in our parks and streets.

When we lose hollow-bearing trees, we also reduce the diversity of hollows which can result in fierce competition between wildlife, with some losing out to other, more dominant species e.g. the Rainbow lorikeet may take a hollow from the Eastern rosella. There are often more aggressive interactions at urban hollows areas than rural bushland settings.

Are you aware of any tree hollows in your paddock, garden or local park? What different species do you know of that use them and do they nest and feed their young there?

The **Hollows as Homes project** aims to increase the knowledge and understanding we have about tree hollows; their distribution across our landscape, the types of hollows available and how different wildlife use them. Where hollows are scarce or non-existent the use of artificial hollows or nest boxes as alternatives is still not entirely understood.

Participants in Hollows as Homes provide valuable data on the number and distribution of hollows, the distribution of different types of hollows and the wildlife using hollows and nest boxes. Some of this information is still largely unknown, for example the number of hollow-bearing trees that exist in people's backyards and wildlife use of backyard trees.

Tree frogs use hollows, changing the pitch of their croak when in a hollow so it resonates louder and to attract a female. It also gives protection from predators and daytime heat.

Information collected adds to scientific literature, to allow Councils better plan suburbs, retain existing habitat important for wildlife, educate communities about the importance of tree hollows, as well as to understand exactly what wildlife is using our own backyard.

For more on this exciting project, or to participate, visit www.hollowsashomes.com or [facebook.com/HollowsAsHomes/](https://www.facebook.com/HollowsAsHomes/) or email Dr Adrian Davis hollows.ashomes@gmail.com

You can go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpQtat76d6Q8&feature=youtu.be> to see a Crimson rosella and Sulphur crested cockatoo at their local tree hollow hideout.

Hollows as Homes is a collaborative project between the University of Sydney, The Royal Botanic Garden and the Australian Museum. It is supported by the Sydney Coastal Councils Group with funding from the Australian Government. Citizen science in action!

Adrian Davis



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Scone Landcare Inc.

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