



Landcare UpHunter

Spring 2017

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Eye of the Needle

Sitting high above the northern Hunter Valley town of Murrurundi lies a little gem of natural bushland, with walking tracks, native trees, native foods, lookout and map to guide you.

Known as Paradise Park, it was originally built by Murrurundi Lions Club way back in the 1930's. It includes the steep walk up through a unique rock formation known as the Eye of the Needle and leads to the main lookout over the valley floor, with the township of Murrurundi and the Pages River below and then rising to Mt. Helen in the background.

In recent years the walk had fallen into some state of disrepair and so the Murrurundi Landcare group (the Pages River Warriors) decided to repair this section of the walk and to greatly extend it to include the cliff tops behind the township which incorporate many unique geological, botanical and microclimate features.

The walk was mapped by Hunter Councils (Environment Division). With funding from the Hunter LLS and from Landcare signage was installed in a shelter made by Murrurundi Men's Shed and sited at the beginning of the trail. They also created directional arrows to clearly mark the trail leading from the entrance, the circular walk up to the Eye of the Needle, the Cliff Tops Walk, lookout and down again to the Paradise Park entrance area.

With the assistance of overseas volunteers through Conservation Volunteers Australia and with the Pages River Warriors members around 4 kilometres of walking trail was cleared and constructed, basically by using hand tools and a chainsaw. A real challenge!

Along the way we increased our own understanding of native plant and animal species.

Traditional foods such as Slender grape (*Cayratia clematidea*), Native daphne (*Pittosporum undulatum*), Native raspberry (*Rubus parvifolius*), Narrow leaf geebung (*Peersonia linearis*), Native cherry (*Exocarpus capressiformis*) and Wombat berry (*Eustrephus latifolius*) can be found, along with medicinal plants such as Sticky hops (*Dodonea viscosa*) and Kidney weed (*Dichondra repens*).

The walk takes in magnificent vistas of the valley below whilst traversing ever changing vegetation zones, rock formations, animal life, caves and those varying micro climates. Spring is also a great time to see the native wildlife and flowering plant life in the Park.

Whilst the terrain is initially quite steep and challenging to pass through the Eye of the Needle itself most of the walk is relatively easy. You may pass other species like Old man's beard (*Clematis aristata*), Rough barked apple (*Angophora floribunda*), Wonga wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*), Narrow leaf ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*) and Small fruited grey gum (*Eucalyptus propinqua*).

The vast diversity of wildlife includes wedge tail eagles, honeyeaters, rosella and other parrots, wrens, cuckoos and thrushes.

Feedback via social media, direct and visitor comments are extremely positive about this walk. School groups enjoy the unique experiences of the Australian bush, finding it a great outdoor experience with students learning more about our local, natural world.

Depending on when you are there, maybe take your own food to the lookout or BBQ in the bottom picnic area (facilities provided).

The Pages River Warriors are proud to have helped create a unique feature for our town. We thank all of those individuals and organisations who have helped improve this part of the valley and made it so accessible for residents, local visitors and travellers.

If you live in the Shire or are just passing through Murrurundi, stop if you can, visit Paradise Park and take a walk through the bush.

Sandy Archibald with Ruth Hardy



WILDERQUEST

From the screen to your classroom and into nature—find fun in WilderQuest.

Are you ready to set off on a wild adventure? Would you like to visit new places, learn more about nature and wildlife and discover the hidden mysteries of our National Parks? Then WilderQuest is for you!

In the classroom, along with other students and your teachers, explore WilderQuest online on a fun and educational website, or use the award-winning app and discover amazing places, play games, earn points and collect badges.

Outside of school you can go on a real-life adventure at a WilderQuest event, a school holiday program or an excursion. On a school holiday tour you can meet Ranger Sam, Pug, Spot and the rest of the gang in a National Park near you.



You can become a water bug detective, or join an Aboriginal ranger in a bush tucker workshop and when you go to the beach, discover more about our NSW coastline on a sea creatures treasure hunt.

Or maybe you would like to download the award-winning iPad App and view a virtual 360 degree rainforest and see different native animals.

You can even become a WilderQuest Ranger by going to the website and joining up or link into the WilderQuest Aboriginal Campfire section for more activities and information on sharing culture and connection to Country.

The online portal has lots of primary school resources for your teachers too.

There are heaps of exciting adventures for you and your whole family!

Launched only last year, in 2016, there are already 897 schools using WilderQuest across NSW/ACT and more than 1,100 schools using it worldwide. Wow! Developed by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, with support from the NSW Environmental Trust, WilderQuest was specially created for children to bridge the gap between technology and the great outdoors.

It is designed for Primary School stages 1, 2, 3 (Kindergarten to Year 6) and includes links to both the NSW and the Australian curriculums with a focus on Science and Geography, including Maths, English, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and Information & Communication Technologies—call it ICT for short.

Over the next three years several new innovations are planned for teachers and students alike, including the expansion of school excursions on offer so you continue to be inspired inside and outside of your classroom. Just look out for them on the website.

Is your school already part of WilderQuest? If it isn't, maybe you can be the one to inspire your school and friends to participate!

Visit NSW National Parks website <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/education-services/wilderquest-learning> to find out more.

Megan Sam



Teddy Bears & Bee Flies

In the “Buzzing Around School” article (Winter 2017 issue) we talked about Native Bee workshops held in local Primary Schools, covering some aspects of bee behaviour, food preferences and sourcing, different species of Native Bees and types of nests used. This time we are asking you “What are the differences between Australian Native Bees and Bee Flies—what do you usually see?”

Did you know there are over 5,000 species of ‘Bee Flies’ (Bombyliidae) worldwide. The highest diversity for these flies occurs in semi-arid and arid environments. Antarctica is the only continent where you would not be able to find them.

Bee flies are mostly large, fat and hairy (for a fly that is), they often have a long rigid proboscis (nose) with a wing span of up to 45mm. whereas some very small ones may only be 1mm. in wing span. They come in different colours and shades, from iridescent green-blue to translucent. They are good mimics of bees and some have black and yellow strips along their abdomen.

Just like bees, these flies usually go from flower to flower to source nectar to feed to their young. However a few species feed on flower pollen instead, making them important pollinators for plants. Their larvae are parasitic, feeding on other bees and wasps. As they are smaller than some other fly species they can often reach for nectar inside wildflowers that are inaccessible to other flies.

Bees also carry pollen to their nest to give to their off-spring—some flies feed on pollen but give decaying material to their young.

Bees have thick, branched hairs attracting pollen to their body—some fly species are hairless or have simple, non-branched hairs.

Like other bees, the Teddy Bear Bee has a broadened basitarsus on the hind leg (the first segment of the end of the leg)—flies have a narrow basitarsus. Flies have large compound eyes found more toward the front of the head whereas bees have compound eyes on the side their head. Flies have two pairs of wings—bees have only one pair of wings.

Ever thought about the waistline of a bee or fly? One narrows between thorax and abdomen, the other does not. Which is which?

Ruth Hardy



Resources & Funding

Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW—Angela Hayes is the new Rural Financial Counsellor, Northern Region (she replaces Ray Hynes who retired). This is a free financial counselling service to eligible primary producers, fishers or small rural businesses suffering financial hardship. You can contact Angela on Tel: 6545 3544 or via email at angela.hayes@rfcsnsw-northernregion.org.

Project Boundary Rider—Vine Health Australia project trialling the potential of Geofencing software to safeguard SA vineyards from pests, diseases, weeds. Go to www.vinehealth.com.au for information and to access BRider app at Google Play Store or App Store

Denmark’s Organic Action Plan—to support organic food producers and processors to ensure ongoing demand in that country. It leads the world in domestic food sales per head of population. The Danish government has allocated \$75 million to support organic food production, processing and promotion. Go to www.aginnovators.org.au/news/denmark-commits-75-million/becomingworld

NSW Farmers has produced a video on how organic waste collected through Sydney municipal recycling system is turned into high grade compost for use in commercial vegetable production (part of the Next Gen Compost project). Go to www.aginnovators.org.au

Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 & Local Land Services Amendment Act 2016—NSW Government Acts are now in force. View at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au. Also Local Land Services (LLS) hotline for native vegetation questions at some.info@lls.nsw.gov.au.

NSW Biosecurity Act 2015—land managers, public and private have the same responsibilities under the Act, related to biosecurity on their properties e.g. plant, pest, disease, weeds and contaminants. To view details of this just go to www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions—replaces the former Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre. It focusses on delivering world-leading controls for invasive animals, in a humane, efficient, economic way. Just go to www.invasives.com.au/

Next Gen Compost project—Compost information Resources: A Guide for Farmers and other great support information can be accessed via the www.aginnovators.org.au website. You can access a great range of other resource information here too.

Funding

NSW Wine Scholarship—Royal Agricultural Society funding for \$5,000 (f/t) or \$2,500 (p/t) study. This is an open-age scholarship not limited to any type of course but the applicant must demonstrate a strong wine industry career pathway through their course of study. For more information just go to www.rasnsw.com.au/foundation/scholarships-and-grants/ras-rural-scholarships/

Women Leadership Grants—Women & Leadership Australia is administering a national initiative offering female ag-leaders grants of \$3,000 to \$8,000 to enable participants in a range of leadership development programs. Applications close on 15th December. To find out more on this grant and/or to submit an application go to www.wla.edu.au/farmingagriculture.html

Events for your Diary

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

Bloom Markets—Twilight Market, Food Fiesta & Family Movie Night at Scone Public School, Liverpool St, Scone, Saturday 4th November .

Market is from 3.00pm to 8.00pm.

A free screening of the family movie "Moana" follows after the market.

National Recycling Week— starts 13th November. For details go to recyclingweek.planetark.org/.

Australian Pollinator Week—12th to 19th of November. For child, adult, school resources & information go to www.beesbusiness.com.au

World Soil Day on 5th of December. For this years event information on "that sticky brown stuff" just go to <http://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/world-soil-day>

Landcare UpHunter—Wild About Trailblazing activity for local schools and youth services. For information email landcareuphunter@gmail.com or call Ruth on 0407 232 539.

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@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

Building Bridges to Boorowa

Since 2000 a very successful partnership has existed between North Sydney Council Bushcare, Boorowa Community Landcare Group and Boorowa Local Council.

In September each year volunteers from North Sydney travel to Boorowa in the south-west of NSW for three days of planting native trees, shrubs and groundcovers on local farms. The "Building Bridges to Boorowa" project focusses on creating wildlife corridors for local and migratory birds, including threatened species such as the Swift Parrot.

In the late nineties North Sydney Council were funded by the NSW Environmental Trust to produce guidelines for other Local Councils to implement similar partnerships.

As part of that process, with staff from other Sydney based Councils there, I attended a one day forum at North Sydney on building rural-city partnerships in other areas of NSW.

The 3 day planting trip this year saw 31 volunteers (and staff) leave North Sydney by bus early on Friday morning, arriving four hours later in Boorowa. I was on the bus too, a second visit for me.

After a quick lunch break we travelled to the "Hawk Hill" farm where around 1,000 native tube stock were planted out, along with guards and stakes, then afternoon tea on site. Then back on the bus and a drive to "Rosewood", with another 600 mixed species going in the ground.



By then it was dark but that didn't stop us going "Tree Spotting" on this property, using bus and car headlights to view a corridor of trees planted 8 years ago by Building Bridges to Boorowa volunteers and staff. It was a cold, often windy day at Boorowa (compared to when we left Sydney) but nothing seems to stop these cheerful, indefatigable volunteers!

At 5.30am the next morning (with below zero temperature and frost underfoot) Platypus Spotting by the Boorowa River flowing through town was on the agenda for some. Then on to three properties to plant 3,000+ trees, with lunch and afternoon tea included and a scheduled Biodynamic Farming discussion—this holistic approach to managing our agricultural systems is practiced on one of the farms. Unfortunately I missed out on this.

The evening dinner was a great social event bringing together visiting volunteers, local Landcare, farmers, Councils and State Minister (for Parliamentary Friends of Landcare). Boorowa Community Landcare Group showed us all a short documentary which included farmer stories, views of past plantings and even footage of that weekend's activities.

Some Bushcarers went Platypus spotting again early the next morning, watching them swim at speed in the river through town. I bet they don't get caught by radar cameras!

Then 900 native grasses were planted Sunday on a property containing a rehabilitated gold mine before heading back to Sydney for a late afternoon arrival. Over 5,500 native plants went in that weekend. A typical native planting list includes local Eucalypt, Acacia, Callistemon, Leptospermum, Poa, Bursaria, Dodonea, Lomandra and Carex species.

For the 18th consecutive year a great, well organised weekend bringing the city to the country for long-term environmental outcomes. Well done North Sydney and Boorowa!

Ruth Hardy



Landcare UpHunter is hosted by Scone Landcare Inc.

Opinions & views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Scone Landcare Inc. We reserve the right to edit article contributions.

Landcare UpHunter

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