



Landcare UpHunter

Summer 2013

In this issue:

Conserving Cressfield	p1
Junior Landcare -	
Frog Hopping	p2
Watch us Grow	p2
NSW Landcare	p3
Gateway	
Resources & Funding	p3
Diary Events	p4
A Devil of a Time	p4
Contacts	p4

Conserving Cressfield

Just north of Scone lies Cressfield, a 1,500 hectare thoroughbred horse breeding property. Originally a wheat and sheep raising farm, it still retains its 5 stand shearing shed in operating order. Now it grows Lucerne hay for 70+ hungry mares and foals and stocks 500 head of Angus cattle.

The two-storey, sandstone 1917 Queensland Federation style homestead is "listed as an item of the environmental heritage". After government approval, major homestead restoration works were undertaken in 2010.

Two watercourses which merge below the homestead provide continuous underground flow and wells and bores pump water for property use. Since 2003 some 9.6kms. of double-sided riparian zone has been fenced off from stock, providing conditions favourable for restoration of the land.

Cressfield developed a 35 stage "Property Development Plan" to provide for natural regrowth of Native Vegetation, flora and fauna habitats, shade for stock, soil stabilisation and natural aesthetics.

Adjacent to the alluvial flats are 500 hectares of steep, wooded bushland in wonderful condition. The natural regrowth is spectacular with thousands of trees and shrubs like Casuarina and Eucalypt where before there were cleared grasslands (fencing prevents stock accessing this area).

Seeds are sourced from Cressfield's native trees, grown at the 'in-house nursery' and planted on targeted areas. Native vegetation is gradually replacing non-native grasses and woody plants. The iconic River Red Gum has also been re-introduced, forming an Ecological Endangered Community to help restore the landscape.

Rising feral animal populations, deer and pigs 'coming down from the hills' etc. requires effective pest control.

The abundance and diversity of birds on Cressfield gives a good indication of the health of the local ecosystem, of wildlife corridor connectivity, waterway quality and on-ground restoration and native vegetation outcomes.

Quarterly Bird Surveys since 2010 revealed over 80 types of resident and migratory native birds and threatened species. Riparian areas support most species, then core areas of intact woodland. 12 bird monitoring stations have helped identify migratory birds like the White-Throated Warbler, Dollar Bird and Golden Whistler, threatened species Speckled Warbler, Scarlet Robin, Brown Treecreeper, Grey-Crowned Babbler and declining woodland birds like Jacky Winter and Dusky Woodswallow. Research results are with State and Australian Bird Registries.

Environmental workshops are occasionally held on the property. For example, a CMA WaterWatch workshop as part of the 2013 NSW Rural Women's Gathering held in Scone recently, another on Local Weeds Identification & Weed Control, held by Conservation Volunteers Australia and a Bird Monitoring Research Practices Field Day.

These projects, riparian zones works and Property Development Plan helped Cressfield participate in the Hunter Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GERi) a Conservation Partnership. The GERi is a landscape scale conservation corridor stretching from the Grampians in Victoria to far north Queensland, along these eastern Australia regions.

Connecting protected corridors of environmental interest to surrounding ones, especially to State Nature Reserves nearby, supports native flora and fauna movement and shows what landholders can achieve over time.

Our partnerships with government, Landcare, Greening Australia etc. assist our sustainable agriculture, landscape management, knowledge and planning.

Wayne Bedggood



Golden Whistler
gaemechapman.com.au



Scarlet Robin
Chris Tzaros

Frog Hopping

While we were warm and cosy in our homes during winter, tadpoles were busy growing legs and venturing from their 'nurseries' in puddles and ponds throughout the Shire. During Spring, the rain provided ideal conditions for many frog species to congregate around ponds, waterholes and swampy areas to breed and reproduce. Frogs who just use their hind feet to swim usually have more webbing on their feet. Others use the 'dog paddle' effect.

Frogs are particularly noisy in Spring as males call to attract nearby females. Different species of frogs make different sounds. Have you heard a Green tree frog making a 'crawk, crawk' sound in your house drainpipes or tanks? The hollow pipes help them amplify any sound they make. Have you heard Water-holding frogs going 'woarp-woarp', brown coloured Broad-palmed frogs 'quarking' or others 'chuckling' away?

There are about 200 different species of frogs in Australia and they come in many colours. They can be green, brown, have shades of black, yellow, red or white markings and have stripes, dots or curved lines on their body.

Did you know frogs never stop growing? So the biggest frog of the same type you see is likely to be the oldest in their group. Like us, frogs have a backbone. Unlike us they are able to spend a considerable part of their life underwater. When underwater they breathe through their gills and when on land through their lungs. They can even breathe through a lining in their mouth or through their skin (they breathe this way when they hibernate).

Frogs aren't fussy about how much they can stuff into their mouth in one go, usually insects and other small but 'tasty morsels'. They are inclined to swallow their food whole. Some frogs have teeth on their upper jaw (maybe for grasping onto food) and some species have no teeth at all.

Mulching your garden beds at home will attract insects that frogs can eat. They like to hide in crevices, amongst rocks and plants and just love vegetable gardens. Some like the Green tree frog 'hang out' in tree hollows.

Have you seen frogs hopping in your garden or at a local creek? What type of frogs are they? Email us at sconelandcare@gmail.com and let us know.



Green Tree Frog

Ruth Hardy

Watch us Grow

Scone Public School have been awarded a Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grant via Landcare Australia Ltd. The school's Watch us Grow project focuses on teaching our Primary students about sustainable food through seed collecting, growing and distributing vegetables and learning simple, nutritious ways to prepare food.

Motivating students to 'get back to basics' and understand the effort that goes into producing food is a key focus. Native trees and shrubs will be grown from seed and planted within the school grounds. Teaching students about seed collection methods, times of the year to collect seeds is part of the process. Excess food and plants will be used for fund raising to support the school's ongoing environmental learning program.

The student Environment Team and teachers are making tube stock containers out of recycled paper. Tube stock can then go directly into the ground when they are ready to plant, rather than needing to be removed from containers. Our brand new greenhouse was bought with the grant money. It will shortly be fitted out ready for next term when students and teachers can start to grow tube stock from seed to grow food and native plants.

Watch us Grow is a living, learning education tool for the future!

Scone Public School are a registered Junior Landcare Group. It is easy for your school to register their group. Go to <http://www.juniorlandcare.com.au> and follow the prompts.

You can access a range of educational resources on the website too.

Vicky Schofield



NSW Landcare Gateway

Landcare related groups in the Upper Hunter Shire cover diverse interests and activities in their communities or even across the region e.g. Junior Landcare, Tidy Towns, native vegetation plantings, environmental health, sustainable agriculture, community education and resourcing, National Tree Day and Clean Up Australia Day events, working with business Local, State and Federal government to identify and address environment needs.

As part of the NSW Landcare Support Program (a co-operative effort between State government and Landcare NSW), the Department of Primary Industries recently launched the NSW Landcare Gateway website.

It provides varied information, including on local Landcare events and other activities. For existing Landcare Groups, there is opportunity to promote your activities and achievements via your own web pages on the site. If you are part of a Landcare Group than wants to list on the Gateway go to <http://www.landcare.nsw.gov.au> and follow the prompts to register.

Your Group can register its contact details only or if you want to, develop web pages on for example, the history of your Group, past and current projects, Junior Landcare, other activities and Group brochures. You can list upcoming events, workshops, Field Days and other events on the Gateway.

Resources & Funding

In Safe Hands Toolkit (3rd edition) - a safety management and practice guide for community groups. Published by Conservation Volunteers Australia & Conservation Skills Centre. <http://www.insafehands.org.au> to download.

Native Plant Guide App. To purchase a copy enter 'native plant guide' in the search box at the App Store on your iphone or go to <http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/native-plant-guide/id402131549?mt=8>

Primary Industries Partnerships in Schools (PIPS) Toolkit - this is aimed at building links between agribusiness and school classrooms for student future career opportunities. Go to <http://primaryindustrieseducation.com.au/>

Stephanie Alexander Garden National Program - provides primary school teacher resources and training. For information and registration go to <http://kitchengardenfoundation.org.au>

Weeds attack! - a multimedia web based interactive learning resource for school students. It is based on Stage 3 Science & Technology, applicable for Stage 4 Science & Stage 6 Earth & Environmental Science: Introduced Species. View from the Teaching & Learning exchange (TaLe) <http://www.tale.edu.au> (NSW DET access).

A Review of Literature published 2009 - 2012 on climate change adaptation and Australian primary industries. Published by Primary Industries Adaptation Research Network. Go to <http://piarn.org.au/> to download a copy.

The Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment (University of Newcastle) - go to <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/tfi>

Funding:

SITA Community Grants program - funding up to \$5,000 for social and environmental projects to create a more sustainable environment. Go to <http://www.sitacommunitygrants.com.au/about-us/sita-community-grants> .

Hunter Local Land Services - up to \$1,500 for community groups, schools and Local Council for educational activities to improve environment health. Activities covered include workshops, field days, forums, tree planting and educational publications. Until 31st December go to <http://www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/> and select Funding and Support tab. From 1st January 2014 visit <http://www.ils.nsw.gov.au/hunter>

NSW Farmers Association 2014 Tertiary Scholarships - agricultural and open scholarships for students who are members or are from a family with an NSWFA member. Tel: 1300 794 000 go to <http://www.nswfarmers.org.au>

Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation - tertiary scholarships of \$5,000p.a. when studying an agriculture related degree. Go to <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/horizon> and follow the prompts.



Diary Events

National Landcare Webinar 12th of February 12.30pm-1.30pm Topic "Landcare Farming - makes sense and money". To register go to: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5563444528868622849>

Native Bee Workshops (Newcastle) with Dr. Tim Heard - 1/2 day on 12th of February starting either 9.00am or 4.00pm or a full day 19th of February at 9.00am (cost applies). To register Tel: Belinda 4921 5700 or email belindamcnab@newcastle.edu.au

Murrurundi Landcare & Tidy Towns, Pages River Working Bee February/ March. Tel: Robyn 0419 705 753 or email ethelo009@hotmail.com

Devils in the Wild Tours at DevilArk, Tomalla. Saturday 11th January, 1st February, 1st March (cost applies). Go to <http://www.devilark.com.au>

Clean Up Australia Day 2nd March, Schools Day 25th of February and Business Day 28th of February. Go to www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au

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We welcome new volunteers & the knowledge & enthusiasm you can bring to our organisation & Landcare

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A Devil of a Time

At Tomalla in the Upper Hunter Shire is the DevilArk breeding facility for Tasmanian Devils, providing a barrier against extinction. About 10% of the pre-disease Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) population survive.

The disease is contagious and specific to Devils. Adult animals may have disagreements over food for example and through this behaviour DFTD can be transferred from Devil to Devil. There is no known cure to date.

It is a natural scavenger, feeding on dead animal carcasses rather than stalking its prey for food (it doesn't have good long range eyesight).

DFTD disease free wild Devils from Tasmania and zoo bred animals were carefully selected to first establish the DevilArk breeding program in 2011. With 15 of the 20 breeding Devils confirmed as having pouch young this year (35 joeys so far) the Tomalla population has increased to just under 200. The young are carried in their mother's pouch for about four months.

Large free range enclosures provide a similar natural environment as in the wild. 'Devil food enrichment feeding' also encourages wild behaviour.



Have I arrived at DevilArk yet?



Yes, but who are you?

Temperatures at Tomalla simulate climatic conditions Devils would have in Tasmania, including frosts and snow in Winter (elevation is at 1,350m).

Much of the native vegetation mirrors the complex bushland habitat seen in Tasmania, with a tall Eucalypt forest on the property and its surrounds.

Common weeds like Stinging Nettle and Thistle and the invasive Scotch Broom exist in the area. Weed control plans and works provide long term native vegetation outcomes. Acacias and native grasses are establishing again and birds like the Southern Emu-wren and Thornbills seen on site.

The new interpretative Centre was officially opened recently. It houses interpretative material (of course), has static displays, video presentations and a Devilish sound machine where you can listen to Devil vocalisations.

The Centre provides office facilities for staff, a reception area, a modern kitchen, toilets, meeting room and outdoor verandah space

Local volunteers from the DevilArk Advocates group in the Upper Hunter Shire promote the project and raise funds, primarily by displays and stalls at events across the Hunter and other practical support where required.

For more information on the DevilArk Advocates or to join the group contact Leanne by email at info@devilark.com.au or Tel: 1300 553 565.

Ruth Hardy



Have a safe & happy Christmas & New Year