

Landcare UpHunter

Autumn 2014

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Youth Leading the World - in Aberdeen

At St. Joseph's High School in Aberdeen are a group of Youth Leading the World (YLTW) students known as the Illustrious Eleven! They have passion for addressing environmental issues and sustainability in their community.

At the 2013 YLTW Upper Hunter Congress they studied a four step process of Focus, Vision, Change and Action. Having natural leadership skills, these students worked with about 50 grade 6 to 10 students, guiding them in small groups to develop five key ideas to lead change in their communities for a better environmental future. Ideas that flowed from that were amazing!

Students have made changes in their everyday lives to reduce their impact on our planet and driven family based changes - sustainability starts there! The driving force behind YLTW, OzGREEN, had a National Summit coming up and these eleven 15-year-olds travelled to Sydney for this. We rented a mini bus and a few risk assessments later I drove them to the Summit.

One mother gave me a 'survival kit'. I can't think why! With chocolate, ear plugs and Panadol. Despite best intentions and a focus on packaging, low food miles and sustainable food production, we stopped at a fast food outlet on the way. I guess change doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen.

At the Summit the group rubbed shoulders with other like-minded youth with longer experience in YLTW. It was inspirational to see changes others were making and to know we weren't alone. Sue Lennox, founder of OzGreen and YLTW, helped them further develop as change leaders and individuals. Brainstorming ideas, using the four step process, developing a change plan and going home energised were all part of the experience.

Back in the Upper Hunter a youth led community Forum was held for Local Council, business, Indigenous leaders, teaching staff, parents and families. The group announced three new projects for the next 12 months.

1. **30 Day Instagram Challenge** - a plan of environmental actions, one activity accomplished each day for 30 days and posting your eco-selfie on your Instagram using #yltw30daychallenge.
2. **Recycling at Fast Food chains** - working to influence local fast food chains to provide recycling facilities in their dining rooms and make this a policy for all new such local outlets.
3. **SUSTAINATHON 2014** - a campaign to reduce garbage to landfills, collecting data on weekly landfill rates.

The Illustrious Eleven recently undertook two-days of Facilitator Training, skilling them up to run the 2014 Congress in September. Our first real public gig was holding a stall at the recent Upper Hunter Show. This gave students a chance to communicate ideas, applications and project plans to a public audience from varied lifestyles and with varied views on environmental issues.

"I commend these students on their concern for sustainability and stewardship of our land. They are leading a new generation of 'thinkers and doers' wishing to nurture and sustain our precious resources. They are inspiring, displaying good judgements and maturity beyond their years". (*John Tobin, Principal*)

YLTW Muswellbrook have great ideas to make change in our community. Next time a young person starts to talk to you about saving the world, stop and give them a chance to convince you. After all, it's your world too.

Kirsten McKimmie



Amazing world of Algae

In oceans, dams, rivers or even your own backyard pond or fish tank live masses of tiny organisms called Algae. Organisms help make up lots of the living 'bits' or forms of life on our planet, in plants, in animals and even in us! For over 2 billion years algae have lived and grown in water or on damp surfaces across our planet. They are the fastest growing organism of their kind in the world, needing water and light as an energy source to live, grow, multiply and make lots of the oxygen we need to live and breathe.

As a plant or plant-like organism they don't have real roots, stems or leaves and don't have a body for carrying fluids, like we have. Some algae are so small they can only be seen under a microscope or they can be as big as seaweed. There are thousands of different types of algae and they can be red, green, yellow, brown, purple.

Farming algae - some algae are grown for food or health products. They double every 8-12 hours and produce up to 10 times more oil than in other crops like palms and with up to 80% (in dry weight) massed in their oil.

You don't need the best farming land as algae can grow really well in salty or brackish water. With enough water and nutrients to support its growth - like nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron and the with the right amount of sunlight algae can grow in poor quality soil, even growing in the desert.

Seaweed is harvested around the world for use in foods and other products but did you ever think of it as algae?

Algae can make great natural fertilizer. It is environmentally friendly and can be more cost-effective for farmers and other landholders than using chemical fertilizers. Like some other naturally sourced fuels around the world, algae can take CO₂ out of the air as they grow - creating carbon neutral fuel!

Fertilizer containing phosphorus in run-off from gardens, farming and factories etc. can sometimes cause algae to grow too fast, too big and block waterways faster than plants, fish and other aquatic life can use it up.

Fuelling flight - testing types of algae is happening now, to see if in the future we can produce fuel from algae to help fly our airplanes!

When you see algae floating in your fish tank, backyard pond or local river, think about the benefits for us, our environment and animals from all the types of algae we have in Australia and around the world.

Ruth Hardy



Our Winter Crop

Aberdeen Public School is centrally located in the south of the Upper Hunter Shire. Our 200+ students come from both urban and rural communities. They bring to the school a range of knowledge on their natural environment and on growing food, from backyard gardens, caring for rural properties and family farming. They are encouraged to share their experiences with other students, teachers, parents and their communities.

Our Garden Club students have been preparing soil before planting for our Winter vegetable crop. Straw, hay, compost and other organic matter have been added to improve the soil.

We use companion plants in our vegetable garden e.g. Marigolds to deter some garden pests. Broken eggshells are also good for stopping snails raiding our 'patch' - they seem to think our vegetables would make delicious meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner!

The students really enjoyed a visit from children attending the local Day Care Centre (3 years and under). They worked with the 'littlies' to pot and plant seedlings, sharing their knowledge and skills on growing vegetables and on recycling methods. Making shovels out of milk cartons was great fun for our school students and the younger children alike.

Allan Larnach- with Ruth Hardy



Weed Warriors on the Pages

In the north of the Shire members of the Murrurundi Landcare and Tidy Towns Committee have a long history of working to control weeds and improve native vegetation cover along the Pages River. Partnerships are an important aspect of their work and Conservation Volunteers Australia have sent teams of volunteers and Bush Regeneration staff to assist from time to time when required.

On the first Saturday of each month the Pages River Warriors can be seen clearing weeds and scrub near the Wilson Memorial Oval and along the river bank. Our small group of dedicated local town residents and farming community volunteers work to remove invasive and exotic weeds from Murrurundi's riparian river zone.

Eradication of Willow *Salix spp*, Giant reed or Elephant grass *Arundo donax*, Privet *Ligustrum spp*, Balloon Vine *Cardiospermum grandiflorum*, Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster spp*, Coojong golden wreath wattle *Acacia saligna* and Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus* are all part of our regular 'working bees' each month. The thickness of some weed vegetation often requires an extra bit of power. Life is so much easier with the chainsaw and not just hand tools!

After a morning's on-ground work we all head off for a well earned lunch at a local cafe. There is always time to share our experiences and ideas and plan for the next month's Landcare activities along the Pages River.

We look forward to the day when our ongoing weed eradication efforts enable us to plant native vegetation such as Forest red gum *Eucalyptus teretecornis*, Rough-barked apple *Angophora floribunda* or Hickory wattle *Acacia implexa* to reduce erosion, stabilize the river bank and decrease weed movement downstream in times of heavy rain and improve our natural environment for native wildlife and our community!

Robyn Orman



Resources & Funding

Wildlife Rescue App. - access information on your nearest wildlife rescue group in NSW, wherever you are, when you need it. Mobile download via wildliferescue.ifaw.org or go to Apple Store and Android Market. Developed by the International Fund for Animal Welfare and NSW Wildlife Council.

BioNet Atlas of NSW - for plants, birds, reptiles, mammals, fungi, invertebrates, amphibians, vegetation information drawn from historical reports, government, industry & community body research & public sightings e.g. fauna surveys. Go to www.BioNet.nsw.gov.au

Waterwatch Water Bug Detective Guide - reference chart with pictures & data on Water Bugs. You, your school, community group or family can be Waterwatchers and monitor the health of your local waterways. Download chart via www.hunter.ils.nsw.gov.au click on Media & Publications then Education Resources.

Timebanking - allows volunteers to exchange services through time credits i.e. work 1 hour as a volunteer & receive 1 hour for 'personal value' services. Register via www.timebanking.com.au or Tel: 1300 786 176.

Bee Friendly: A planting guide for European honeybees & Australian native pollinators - to download this free 320 page book (8MB) go to <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/12-014>

Deer as an emerging Pest animal - Go to www.feral.org.au for information on deer and their control.

Funding

Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GERi) Landcare Grants Program - for community groups operating in Natural Resource Management and sustainable agriculture e.g. Landcare, Primary Producers. Applications open 1st May. Go to www.greateasternranges.org.au/ .

Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grants - for schools/youth groups to establish gardens e.g. bush tucker, water wise, vegetable. This round closes 2nd May. Go to www.juniorlandcare.com.au/grants-2/coles-grant

Environmental Trust - Environmental Education - expressions of interest close 17th April; Food Gardens in Schools & Eco Schools both close 16th May; Protecting our Places closes 30th May. For information & to download forms go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au .

Events for your Diary

Hunter Farm Forestry Network,
Field Day on 13th April at 4320 Putty
Road, Howes Valley 9.30am. Tel:
4957 1836 or go to www.hffn.org.au

Scone Landcare General Meeting
23rd April . Tel: Ruth 0407 232 539
or email sconelandcare@gmail.com

Great Eastern Ranges Initiative
events in April & May. Dates TBA:

Stepping Stones Landholder
Workshop, April at Muswellbrook &
Upper Hunter School Bird Survey in
May Tel: Kirsten 6549 5785 or email
kirsten@gersteppingstones.org.au

Landholder Atlas of Living Australia
property plans & training April/May.
Tel: Gabriel on 4032 6443 or email
ganderson@ozgreen.org.au

Pages River Warriors Working Bee
from 8.00am on 4th May & 1st June.
Meet at the Wilson Memorial Oval,
Murrurundi. Lunch at a local cafe.
Tel: Robyn 0419 705 753 or email
ethelo009@hotmail.com

Tocal Field Days 2nd - 4th of May at
C B Alexander Agricultural College,
Tocal Road, Tocal. Fri/Sat 9.00am -
5.00pm, Sun 9.00am - 4.00pm go to
www.tocalfielddays.com

Glenbawn Catchment Landcare
Group - General Meeting & AGM on
14th May at Linga Longa Inn, 2
Riley St, Gundy 7.30pm. Meet for
dinner at the Inn from 6.00pm.
Email gavin.maccallum@gmail.com
for membership & general enquiries.



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Scone Landcare Inc.

PO Box 276, Scone NSW 2337

Contact: Ruth Hardy

Tel: 0407 232 539

Email: sconelandcare@gmail.com



Hunter Farm Forestry

In the past 150 years the majority of our forests have been logged and bigger trees removed. What remains in their place today are 'regrowth forests' which usually contain smaller trees, a denser coverage, less light and space for complex understorey and less biodiversity. Many of our native birds and animals rely on tree hollow habitat which is seen in our older forests.

Private forests account for 30% of timber on NSW land.

Since 1997 Hunter Farm Forestry (HFFN) members have worked with local landholders to establish successful farm forestry projects in the Hunter Valley.

We highlight the role of forests in conserving rural lands, minimising land erosion, protection local wildlife and reducing the impact of global warming.

Sustainable farm forestry practices address biodiversity, conservation, water quality, economic, recreation and other purposes. It can improve land productivity by using Silviculture (management) principles that increase the growth of major trees, logging practices that utilise sustainable methods and milling in an accredited organization.

HFFN has information on resources for landholders e.g. the Environment Protection Authority can provide a map detailing rivers, old growth forest and boundaries, if you are applying for a Private Native Forest certificate.

We hold Field Days around the Hunter on tree preservation, planting and Silviculture strategies, controlling regrowth, weed control, seed collection and growing tube stock, monitoring river/stream health, fencing riparian areas from farm stock and hazard reduction to protect trees etc. from fire.

One of our Field Days last year (at Muswellbrook Forest Nursery) included discussion on methods of seed collecting, correct plant identification and labelling. We potted up Lomandra, had lunch and went for a forest walk.

Besides being very enjoyable, Field Days allow for learning and sharing of ideas on land, water and forestry management and building landholder support networks. A Master Tree Growers course (several days) provides for intensive planning, technical and on-ground skills and knowledge.

What have my family learnt since joining HFFN? For a start, members suggested removing the neighbour's cows. This resulted in significant regrowth in cleared areas and has improved the soil. We learnt that our own patch of forest had too many trees compared to the early 1830s. It has since been thinned, allowing for increased bird and animal populations.

Go to www.hffn.org.au for great information on farm forestry practices.

Bob Gibberd



Ironbark, Grey-Gum & White Mahogany

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