

Landcare UpHunter

Spring 2014

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Escape to National Parks

National Parks and Reserves in the Upper Hunter Shire provide us with opportunities to enjoy our great outdoors, with abundant native wildlife, flowers, trees and spectacular views. Towarri, Scone Mountain and Barrington Tops National Parks and Burning Mountain Nature Reserve are easily accessible. Cedar Brush and Wingen Maid Nature Reserves are not so easily accessible.



Burning Mountain is a geological wonder of the world - a burning coal seam 30 metres below the surface. Starting some 5,500 years ago near the Pages River (6km. north) it moves about 1 metre a year.

The Washpools camping/picnic area in Towarri National Park is set against the Liverpool Range backdrop. North of the picnic area is the Washpools rock formation. Towarri's ancient Narrabeen sandstone forms part of its northernmost reach from Sydney, having existed for over 300 million years.

On extended walks through some of the parks more rugged terrain you might encounter endangered bird species like the Glossy black Cockatoo in stands of Casuarina trees or the Speckled warbler or maybe see a Caligula skink that is found only in Towarri, Liverpool Ranges and the Barringtons).

Scone Mountain National Park was established in 2005. It has great views overlooking Scone and the Hunter Valley, right from the edge of town and accessible from Noblet Road. Take a picnic with you, take the family too!

Barrington Tops National Park (via Moonan Flat) has a plateau 1,200 metres above sea level, up to 10 degrees cooler than the valley floor. Sub-alpine wetlands around the Polblue Swamp camping/picnic area are home to threatened species like the Broad-toothed Rat and vulnerable sub-alpine native orchids. Red-necked wallaby, Brush-tailed possum and many woodland birds - so take your binoculars.

Along Barrington Tops Forest Road, Devils Hole there are sweeping views of World Heritage listed Gondwana Rainforest, with Xanthorrhoea grass trees as you drive along Pheasants Creek and Tomalla Roads. Camp next to your car at Horse Swamp, near Polblue Falls off Tulbracca Road. Towering trees like Mountain Gum (*Eucalyptus dalyrpleana*), Snow gum (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) and rough-barked Messmate varieties abound.

Drop in to the NPWS office or the Tourist Information Office in Scone to pick up brochures on local parks and Reserves or find information about road conditions. Alternatively you can call 6540 2300 or go to the NPWS visitor website at www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au.

Remember when you are out and about in the parks take water, food, all weather gear, hat, sunscreen and always drive to the conditions.

Rachel-Ann Wilcher & Ruth Hardy



Speckled Warbler
Photo by Chris Tzaros



Logs & Leaves, Birds & Bees

Making homes and habitat for local wildlife in your backyard can be quite simple and quick to make. Some you may be able to create yourself, for some you will need the help of an adult to make them.

Recycled or natural materials around your home can sometimes be used to build really valuable wildlife homes.

You can put a pile of leaves in a quiet corner of your garden to provide a home for a variety of small animals - lizards and insects included. Adding some small logs and sticks will help you to make a good home for some of them to make nests, sleep during the day, raise their young and even hibernate when the colder weather comes.

The numbers of Bees around the world are declining, so making life easier for any that are in your garden means you can play a big part in helping these great insects survive. Bees help our plants and trees to grow and to produce flowers and nectar. Does your family keep honey in your kitchen? Does the label on the jar say what trees or plants the bees used to make their honey? The nectar from Ironbark, Stringybark, Yellowbox, Blue gum, Featherbrush, or even Thistle and Fireweed are all used by bees to make honey.

Bees like to make a home in a suitably sized tube-shaped hole. Ask Mum or Dad to help you make "Bee logs". Lengths of hollowed out bamboo are ideal for this, set into a bored-out section of a branch. They can tie several lengths of bamboo or other suitable tubes together and drill a series of deep holes around 6mm (1/4 of an inch) into a small log. You can then hang it up in your garden.

A nesting box for a bird can be made from wood off-cuts, provided they haven't been treated with any chemicals that might harm the birds. There are plenty of easy designs for making bird boxes around but they are basically a wooden box with a large enough entrance hole in one side. Having a hinged or lift-off lid means the bird box can be easily cleaned once a year (Mum or Dad may have to do this).

Some wood, nails and a few hand tools are all you and your parents (or other adult) should need.

If their homes keep out the rain and the wind, the birds in your garden should be happy. Don't forget, different sized birds need different sized holes to get into and out of their home so be sure to plan first which birds you want to use the boxes before you build them.

Ruth Hardy

Shade for our Stock

On Friday 25th of July students from Scone High School planted twenty Rose Gum (*Eucalyptus grandis*) and twenty Narrow-leaved Ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*) native tree tube stock, to celebrate National Tree Day. Year 9 agriculture students planted these young trees in two different locations on the school's Agriculture Farm.

In the first location trees were planted primarily to provide shade for livestock at the school - breeding cows, show steers and White Suffolk sheep. The second location is an area that is highly prone to erosion. Planting Eucalyptus here will help with long term stabilisation of this patch of school land, acting as a natural buffer against erosion, build soil quality and allow water take up in periods of heavy flow.

Teachers and students then constructed fences around the planting areas to protect the trees from livestock. The students have been given responsibility for ensuring that these young trees are watered and looked after.

We all enjoyed planting the trees and fencing that day - teachers and students working together for long term improvements to the Scone High School Agriculture Farm land and for the welfare of the sheep and cattle.

Activities like this increase the student's understanding of protecting and improving their local environment and helps to develop practical skills.

Scone High School appreciates Upper Hunter Shire Council's generosity in donating tube stock and for giving our students the opportunity to be part of 2014 Schools National Tree Day activities.

Lauren Hunt



The Aussie Backyard Bird Count

National Bird Week will be held between the 20th to 26th of October this year and thousands of people across the country will be taking part in the biggest citizen science event ever - the new Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

BirdLife Australia and Birds in Backyards are jointly co-ordinating this event and you can be part of it!

For just 20 minutes of your time, at a 'green patch' of your choice, the Aussie Backyard Bird Count team want you to record the birds you see and recognise and also look up and record those that you are not familiar with. You can do this in your own backyard, in the paddock, in a local park or at another piece of open space. A pair of binoculars might come in handy too.

If you don't have a 'Bird book', write a brief description of the bird (size, colours, markings) and find it on your computer. Or maybe you can loan a book from your local library.

You can record your findings on the www.aussiebirdcount.org.au/ website or use the free app (available to download in October). Statistics on the number of people participating across Australia and birds and species progressively counted will be available on a daily basis.

For information on other Bird Week activities go to the '[events calendar](#)' on the website.

Just email birdweek@birdlife.org.au or call them on (03) 9347 0757. Your family, friends and neighbours, Local Council, media, community organisation or business can all get involved.

Landcare UpHunter would love to hear from you - what birds you saw, what birds you knew and those whose names were new to you. Just email us at landcareuphunter@gmail.com.

Ruth Hardy

Resources & Funding

The Action Plan for Australian Mammals - a three year review of mammal extinction rates in Australia (the highest in the world). Draws on over 200 experts contributions. Go to www.publish.csiro.au/pid/7010.htm

Friendly Faces Helping Hands Foundation - if you need to travel from a rural/regional community to a city for family medical reasons, find accommodation & other amenities etc. then Friendly Faces Helping Hands provides information & support on hospital, health & other resources. Go to www.friendlyfaces.info/ or Tel: 0457 175 888

Climate Kelpie - connects farmers & their advisors to information & tools on climate, to assist farmers in making business decisions. For information on this government & industry initiative go to www.climatekelpie.com.au.

Children & Nature Network - works to connect children, their families and communities to the natural world. Go to www.childrenandnature.org/.

Roadside Vegetation News - the NSW Roadside Environment committee has a new best practice guide for Roadside Vegetation Management Plans. Go to www.rms.nsw.gov.au/environment/downloads/managing.roadsides.html.

Landcare is for Everyone (LIFE) Job Board - you/your organisation can register notices for volunteers needed for on-ground, project or admin work. etc. Go to www.landcarelife.com/get-involved/jobs/type/help-wanted/.

Australian Network for Ecology and Transportation - links industry, government, scientist, community groups to evidence & best practice data on environmentally sensitive infrastructure nationwide. Go to www.ecoltrans.net/.

Creature Word Fill - a downloadable teacher resource on echinoderms, molluscs, crustaceans and other sea creatures. Students can rearrange boxed letters to find missing words. Go to www.nmdc.com.au/fishy-fun-learning/creature-word-fill/.

Funding:

Restoration & Rehabilitation Grants Program - NSW Environmental Trust funding (\$5,000 to \$100,000) for community organisations & government entities, for projects to prevent or reduce environmental degradation. Applications close 19th September. Go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/restoration.htm.

Rural Education Australia Program - REAPing Rewards - a rural & remote communities small grant education program for projects that benefit children and youth (0-18 years) and their educators (up to \$10,000) Go to www.frrr.org.au/cb_pages/rural_education_australia_program_-_reaping_rewards.php.

Events for your Diary

Pages River Warriors Working Bee, Wilson Memorial Oval, Murrurundi 19th October, TBA November, 7th December from 8.00am, Then lunch afterwards at a local cafe. Tel: Robyn on 0419 705 753 or email ethelo009@hotmail.com

National Parks & Wildlife Service - children's school holiday activities. Tel: 6540 2300 or go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks/tours.aspx

Devils in the Wild Tours at DevilArk, Tomalla. Saturday 1st November & 6th December (cost applies). Go to www.devilark.com.au

Sustainability Fair & Community Garden event at the Lions Park, corner Lower Brook St. & Scott St, Muswellbrook 16th November email kirsten@steppingstones.org.au or Tel: 6549 3785

Local Land Services workshops & Field Days as below. Tel: 1300 795 299 for more information:-

Maximising Beef Reproductively 25th September at Scone

Wild Dog & Fox Trapping School 8th - 10th October at Bunnan

Seasonal Conditions workshop - date TBA in the Upper Hunter

Spring Cropping Field Day date TBA at Cassilis

Farm Financial Management 29th October at Gundy

Farm Financial Management 30th October at Bunnan



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Celebrating 25 years

First established in Australia in 1998, Landcare now operates in 22 countries across the world. In July this year Landcare officially turned twenty five. Urban and rural Landcare groups and other organisations across the country have been celebrating this anniversary with a wide variety of projects - finishing by December.



Scone Landcare held a Tree Giveaway & Photo Shoot Project. Rural landholders from Scone, Wingen, Parkville, Aberdeen and Bunnan areas received native tree tube stock to plant on their properties, for around their house or surrounding paddocks e.g. Dwarf sugar gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx nana*), Bottlebrush (*Callistemon lilacinus* and *Callistemon siberi*), Snow in Summer (*Melaleuca linarifolia*), White cloud tree (*Melaleuca bracteata*) and Twiggy heath myrtle (*Baeckea virgata*).

Landholders took photos of their tree planting, sending them on to Scone Landcare for our project records, inclusion on the website and other media.

Individual landholders, grandparents, parents and children worked together to plan their 'planting spots'. dig and aerate the soil, plant their tube stock, protect with tree guards, compost, cover and water in the trees. Even the chickens helped prepare the holes and the family dogs helped to supervise!



Our stock of these young trees is now exhausted (first funded by Upper Hunter Shire Council). With more landholders wanting to participate, we are now looking for more funding (public or private) to extend the project.

Coinciding with National Tree Day in July, we held a stall in Scone where town residents were given native trees to plant in their gardens (tube stock courtesy of Upper Hunter Shire Council). Landcarers were able to provide residents and visitors alike with Landcare magazines, manuals and leaflets, DVD's, CD's etc. on environmental topics like weed identification and control, feral pest management, Junior Landcare, sustainable farming, soil health, threatened species and conservation.

Ruth Hardy



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