

# Landcare UpHunter

Winter 2017

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## Ewe Management

Across the Upper Hunter Shire our farmers produce a wide range of goods—food for human and animal consumption, for textile fibres, medicinal products and other industry uses e.g. cattle, sheep, alpacas, wool, vegetables, fruit, wheat, canola and dairy/milk.

Building skills in managing ewe production and profitability was the focus of a recent one day workshop in Merriwa aimed at assisting sheep and wool producers to improve their skills in managing overall ewe productivity and in raising healthy lambs. Twenty-six new and established landholders from the Upper Hunter area participated in this informative, technical and hands-on workshop, organised by Hunter Local Land Services (LLS).

Geoff Duddy from Sheep Solutions and Jane Bennett, District Veterinarian from LLS were guest presenters. They covered all practical and theoretical aspects of managing a profitable sheep enterprise. Preparing ewes for joining (mating) to ensure the lifetime performance of a ewe and her offspring, pasture assessment, supplementary feeding, feed budgeting, economic analysis and assessing ewe condition score were included.

Jane highlighted the importance of routine health checks for sheep including drenching, (worming) and regular vaccinations—following industry 'best practice' for good outcomes.

Monitoring the worm burden in ewes and assessing any resistance to drenches through Worm Egg Counts helps to ensure they are in good condition, gain and maintain weight and produce healthy lambs. Monitoring also allows landholders to manage their pasture and minimise soil contamination, especially over Winter and Spring periods of the year.

Geoff emphasised how ram and ewe physiology can have an impact on fertility and lamb production e.g. ensuring teeth are aligned properly to allow sheep to forage effectively or that hooves are not overgrown, have physical damage or infections like a foot abscess.

Using a scanner to identify a ewe's pregnancy status helps maximise it's survival rate, maintain wool production/quality and lamb growth. Is the lamb developing as expected?

Is the ewe carrying one, two or more lambs and is she maintaining a healthy weight? Does she need any supplements? Up to 80% of a ewe's crude protein is separated to the uterus in her late pregnancy and supplements may be needed e.g. bentonite, cobalt or Vitamin B12. Nutrition basics—energy, protein, vitamins, minerals and supplementary feed practises for a ewe or even for a ram.

Assessing ram condition 8 weeks before joining to ensure optimal fat reserves are maintained is critical. Rams lose weight during the joining period and feeding supplements like lupins, cereal grains, corn and cotton seed beforehand can make a significant difference to the animals overall health, fertility and subsequent lamb production rates. Having 'lick feeders' available during joining periods can save up to 25% of the time a ram spends on foraging for their food, providing an easy, central location for feeding.

Environment plays its part too, shade for stock in paddocks, water access/quality, temperature and humidity and the length of the wool the sheep is carrying. Rams should be sheared twice a year but not within 8 weeks of joining and vaccinations and drenching up to date. At least 2 months wool growth on a ram is recommended. An increase in body temperature due to infection or heatwave can reduce conception rates through lower fertility in rams. Avoid dipping or mustering close to this time as this can be stressful too.

The size of the Mob, the age of the ram or ewe, the time of year, the animals weight, condition and environment all play their part in successful lamb and sheep maintenance and using 'best practice management' is always the best way to go.

Develop sheep with more resistance, tolerant to disease and hardier by nature.

At the end of this workshop participants each took home a USB on the presentation/industry information. A great resource for future planning.

Geoff Duddy & Ruth Hardy



## Pitch'n Short Films

There is a great short film competition currently open to young people aged 12-18 who live in the Hunter-Central Coast region.

The 2017 Pitch'n Film Competition lets you get really creative with a camera to plan, shoot and produce your own short film exploring environmental issues. The two competition categories allow you to showcase ideas and solutions on the future of clean energy and protecting out threatened species and how local community groups are working to meet these challenges.

All entrants to the competition are encouraged to:

- Explore solutions to these environmental issues
- Engage with their local community and
- Create a short film that shows community groups, volunteer groups or youth groups that are advocating for these solutions.

If you are aged 13-18 you can also enter the Pitch'n Advertising Competition through promoting the film competition on Instagram. Six films will be selected as the finalists with the winning films to be screened at the Real Film Festival in Newcastle later this year.

A total of \$8,000 in cash and prizes will be shared across both the Pitch'n Film Competition and the Advertising Competition finalists. Launched by the Office of Environment & Heritage, the competition is open for submissions until the 1st of September.

Your short film can help communities and government understand how young people think about the environment and how we can all protect and improve it for the future. Advertising and promoting the competition on Instagram will help reach wider communities.

Launched by the Office of Environment & Heritage, submissions for both competitions will close on the 1st of September 2017.

The website has valuable information to help you in your research, planning and production of your short film, like where to go for data on Threatened species. For example, local Hunter based organisations/websites like the Hunter Bird Observers Club and the Hunter Community Environment Centre and wider afield at the Saving Our Species Program (OEH) or the NSW Bionet.

If you want to focus on Future Energy then the Pitch'n webpages show a range of local and broader organisations/websites like Climate Action Newcastle or Transition Newcastle and the Nature Conservation Council and Greenpower. Have a look at the list.

When you are ready to submit your entry your completed short film can either be emailed or sent digitally via YouTube or Vimeo.

For general information or to download the competition entry forms and the guidelines go into Google and type in Pitch'n film competition 2017 and it will take you straight to the website page. Alternatively you can go to [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/communities/pitchn-film-advertising-competition-2017.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/communities/pitchn-film-advertising-competition-2017.htm)

You too can be a short film maker!

Ruth Hardy



*Swift Parrot*

## Feeding Wild Birds

Native Australian birds have been in this country for millions of years. Over time some of them have changed in how they look, what they eat, where they live and where they nest. Some of our wild bird species are now extinct and some others are listed as either a 'Threatened Species' or 'Critically Endangered'. It's important we keep as much natural habitat for them as possible.

Some birds move from their usual habitat as their living areas are cleared of native vegetation or as watercourses are changed or filled in. Unusual weather patterns can also mean native foods are in short supply e.g. in drought and they may need to seek food elsewhere. Just like us, birds need ready access to water, to drink, give to their young, to bathe in and even to build a home (nest).

Each species, big or small, has its own food needs—native seeds, nectar, fruit, berries, insects, reptiles, sometimes other animals.

What is best for wild birds? Should you encourage them to your garden to feed on bird seed you bought from a store or processed food made for us to eat like bread? Should you feed them mince or let them forage for food in the wild? Have a think about that.

Feeding wild birds such as Magpies or Kookaburras food that we normally eat is bad for their diet and can make them dependent on us rather than foraging naturally. It can also attract unwanted pest species into our gardens and local parks. For example the introduced and very competitive Indian Myna. Do you know what an Indian Myna looks like?

Here are some questions for you. You may already know some of the answers:

- How many species of native birds do we have in Australia?
- What is the difference between a Magpie and a Magpie-Lark?
- What is the difference between a Noisy Miner and an Indian Myna?
- How small is a Superb Fairy Wren and what does it weigh?
- What is the largest native bird species in Australia and how heavy and tall is it?

Enjoy the sights and sounds of the native wild birds in your garden, at school, in parks and on the land. Let them feed naturally.

Websites like [www.backyardbuddies.org.au](http://www.backyardbuddies.org.au) and [www.birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au) are good places to look for your answers.

Ruth Hardy

## Ecological Change in Australia

Average land surface temperatures across the Australian continent have risen 1 degree Celsius over the last century. How has this temperature change contributed to biodiversity patterns across our landscape? What are the links between climate and ecosystem response? Whilst there is some research related to changing biodiversity, ecological impacts from this change have not been systematically investigated. Research tended to focus on projecting potential impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem distributions.

CSIRO, in partnership with the Department of the Environment and Energy are working to better understand how Australia's biodiversity has changed over the past 100 years. Their three-year Recent Ecological Change in Australia Project (to June 2018) is bringing together scientific evidence, historical climate data, models of ecological change and anecdotal observations. This includes biological data from the Atlas of Living Australia/organisations with species location, environmental records, climate data.

Researchers are looking for people with at least 10 years experience with/knowledge of a piece of land and its features to participate in a national on-line survey to provide information on how that particular area has changed, if at all, over recent years.

You can provide insight and tell your stories on your experiences and observations of familiar places in Australia—a local park or piece of bushland, a farm or other private property, a Travelling Stock Reserve, Nature Reserve or other familiar place.

Help build a unique and historical record of ecological change over recent times, in your local area and ultimately across Australia.

Just go to [www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au) and into the Research section, then click on Recent Climate Driven Ecological Change in Australia.

Ruth Hardy

## Resources & Funding

Learning from Trees, Life Lessons for Future Generations—a 2017 report on key findings from Planet Ark research on the importance of outdoor learning and young people spending time in nature. Also a National Tree Day video by Steve Parrish on "What can Nature Teach Us". Just go to <http://treeday.planetark.org> and click on Research to view the Report and/or the video.

Livestock Production Assurance—changes to the LPA program start on 1st of October and apply to LPA accredited producers (cattle, sheep, goats). Key changes include Introduction of animal welfare & biosecurity modules; LPA assessment primarily conducted via online learning modules and new LPA accreditation fee. Meat & Livestock Australia's Integrity Hub has details on the LPA program, National Livestock Identification System, LPA learning and producer resources. Go to <http://www.mla.com.au/>

Tick Management Review—Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR) for up-to-date practical information for working in bushland areas. Download "AABR Tick and tick-borne diseases—protecting yourself". View or download at <http://www.aabr.org.au/>

The Australian Climate Change Adaptation Information Hub—Terra Nova supports research/responses in this area by improving accessibility and availability of climate change adaptation data and information for researchers and decision-makers in Australia and regionally. To contribute data to the Hub, access decision support tools and interactive-climate model visualisation or for general information or research data on vulnerable, nationally significant sectors and regions go to <https://www.terranova.org.au/>

Consideration of the evidence for a formal reconsideration of glyphosate—Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) Regulatory Position paper. To view or download APVMA's Glyphosate report go to <http://apvma.gov.au>

### Funding

Farming Together—\$14.9 million initiative for primary producers and processors to collaborate and claim marketplace power, building financial and social sustainability. Provides farmers with free one-on-one consultation, opportunity to create collaborative groups and product research and development assistance. Just go to [www.farmingtogether.com.au](http://www.farmingtogether.com.au)

The Community Grants Hub (on behalf of the Department of Social Services) - Volunteer Grants Program to support the efforts of Australia's volunteers. Small grants \$1,000 to 5,000 including for equipment, volunteer training, general operating and fuel costs. Applications close 20th December. Go to <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/volunteer-grants-2016>

Norman Wettenhall Foundation—Small Environmental Grants that provide support for groups or individuals for flora and fauna conservation, threatened mammal conservation, landscape restoration and education projects. Grants are usually under \$10,000. The Foundation has a quarterly funding model with the current round closing in August, then opening again on 19th of November. Go to [nwf.org.au/grants/small-environmental/grants/](http://nwf.org.au/grants/small-environmental/grants/) or contact [beth@nwf.org.au](mailto:beth@nwf.org.au) to see if your group and project are eligible.

Zanda McDonald Award (Platinum Primary Producers Group). \$50,000 value award that provides access to Rabobank's business management programs, mentoring, cash prize. Applicants aged up to 35 years and must be working in the agribusiness sector—Australia or New Zealand. For more information on the guidelines and application just go to [www.pppgroup.org/](http://www.pppgroup.org/)

Protecting Our Places—NSW Environmental Trust funding scheme open to Aboriginal organisations in NSW. Grants up to \$65,000 available for Stage 1: For planning—up to \$10,000 + \$5,000 for capacity building. Stage 2: Implementation—up to \$50,000. Applications close on 4th of September. Just go to [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/pop.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/pop.htm).

Community Building Partnerships—NSW government funding to assist social, environmental and recreational community infrastructure projects for building or improvement of facilities. Open to Not-For-Profit organisations (including school P & C's) and to Local Councils. For information and submissions via an on-line process go to [www.communitybuildingpartnership.nsw.gov.au](http://www.communitybuildingpartnership.nsw.gov.au)

20 Million Trees—Federal funding across Australia for community groups, other organisations or individuals for community tree planting projects. Grants range from \$20,000 to \$100,000 (GST exclusive) with \$6 million available in total across Australia. Projects must support a threatened ecological community and/or threatened species. Applications close at 2.00pm AEST on 15th of August. Application Form and guidelines at <http://www.nrm.gov.au/national/20-million-trees/competitive-grants-round-three>

## Events for your Diary

Keep Australia Beautiful Week 21st to 27th August. To find the nearest local event go to [www.kab.org.au](http://www.kab.org.au)

National Threatened Species Day on 7th September. For information on events search Google—National Threatened Species Day 2017.

Landcare Week 2017 from 4th to 10th September. Activities include:

Scone Landcare—native tube stock to landholders for property planting. Waverly/Gundy to Bunnan/Kars Springs (east/west) and Burning Mountain to Aberdeen (north/south)  
Email: [sconelandcare@gmail.com](mailto:sconelandcare@gmail.com) or call Ruth on 0407 232 539.

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

National Parks & Wildlife Service, school holiday activities September 25th to October 7th—at Scone, Burning Mountain, Barrington Tops, Towarri, Copeland Tops. Contact Shani Milgate on 4946 4112 or web at [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)

Glenbawn Catchment Landcare Group. Contact Gavin MacCallum [glenbawncatchment@outlook.com](mailto:glenbawncatchment@outlook.com)

Merriwa Landcare Group. Contact Jenny Lee on 0429 337 557

Murrurundi Landcare Group just Email [Sandy@boyscreek.com.au](mailto:Sandy@boyscreek.com.au)

Pages River Warriors Working Bee Wilson Memorial Oval, Murrurundi 1st & 3rd Sunday monthly (morning)  
Email [Sandy@boyscreek.com.au](mailto:Sandy@boyscreek.com.au)

Landcare UpHunter & Scone Landcare—refer details below

## Buzzing Around School

There are lots of tiny plant pollinators in Australia—species of butterflies, bees, beetles, flies, wasps, thrips and moths. Around 65% of all our flowering plants and some of our seed plants (like pines) need insects for pollination of their species. Vegetables and fruit crops rely on insects for cross-pollination as do some plants grown for medical products.

Being able to fly between many plants in a short period makes these insects invaluable to species growth and survival. Bees in particular are good carriers of pollen between plants and collect nectar and pollen to feed themselves and also to feed their young.

Did you know that Native Bees have existed across our Australian landscape for over 80 million years? Australian wildflowers and native bees have evolved alongside each other, each playing its part in our biodiversity, landscape health and food production outcomes.

There are about 1,600 recorded species of Native Solitary Bees, 11 species of Stingless Bees. The majority are solitary by nature but some do live in colonies and make honey.

Native bees are much smaller than the introduced European Honeybee that we usually see. Spotting them in your backyard or bush can be difficult—binoculars may be handy!

Just like us, our Hunter based native bees like different foods to eat and different styles of homes to live in. Green & Gold Nomia, Common Teddy Bear bee and Tiger Nomia build nests underground but Stingless Honeybees nest and raise young in a tree cavity.

The Blue-Banded bee likes fruit like tomatoes and the Harlequin bee and Rayment's Red bee like flowering Eucalypts. Tiger Nomia's go for summer flowering peas and Common Teddy Bear bees like Wisteria as they gather pollen and seek out nectar from plants.

Bees are really good at carrying pollen. They have special hairs on their hindlegs and underneath their abdomen, enabling them to collect and carry large volumes of it. Visiting many plants at any one time ensures the pollen is transferred within plant species.

The sugar-rich liquid 'nectar' produced by flowering plants is a vital food source for bees. Native plants/flowers generally have a sweet-smelling scent, rather than a strong smell. This softer scent is the ideal attractant preferred by our native bees and butterflies.

This year local Landcare organised Native Bee workshops at Aberdeen Public, St Mary's Primary and Scone Public schools (two workshops per school) with some 240 students.

Matthew and Juliet from BeeZotted ran the workshops. They brought to school two native bee hives (with hive entrances closed up of course). These bees are used to car travel!

Students learnt how to identify different native bees, how small they are, the importance of providing trees, shrubs and flowers for them, caring for native bees, how they source nectar and pollen, how bees help wildflowers and food crops through cross-pollination.

Matthew played his didgeridoo, weaving his tunes into stories about our native bees. He showed students how he uses traditional methods for moulding a didgeridoo mouthpiece and plugging any holes with 'Sugarbag wax'. This is a mixture of wax from glands on the bodies of native bees (from his hives) and of propolis. Bees naturally collect propolis from plants that produce it, mix it with wax, use it in an existing nest and also to make a nest.

Each student had their turn in putting an ear to a hive. There were looks of wonder and delight on their faces when hearing the quiet buzz of these tiny Australian pollinators.

Native Bee workshops are part of Landcare UpHunter and Scone Landcare's ongoing work with teachers and students—a great way to interact and learn together.

As Spring approaches and the weather warms up look out for our busy native bees.

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**

PO Box 276, Scone NSW 2337

Contact: Ruth Hardy

Tel: 0407 232 539

Email: [landcareuphunter@gmail.com](mailto:landcareuphunter@gmail.com)



Photos: "Bee" & "Heart-brood" by Matthew Middleton



Visit us at [www.landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/scone-landcare-group](http://www.landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/scone-landcare-group)