

# The Upper Bidgee Bulletin

The Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Quarterly Newsletter



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Welcome to the winter edition of the Upper Bidgee Bulletin. The year does not seem to be getting any better for many and our thoughts go out to those dealing with the continuing impact of bushfires, floods and Covid. Despite being restricted in their activities, our Landcare groups have continued with activities as best they can. This newsletter celebrates their efforts and we hope you find their stories interesting...



## UMLC President's Report

*by Tony Robinson*

In the Autumn 2020 Newsletter I commented on the effect the summer drought had on the trees around us, with the leaves on eucalyptus browning off and dropping. I can report happily that, at least in our patch, they have almost all recovered. Some with epicormic growth but most just reshooting from the branch tips. Along the ridgelines one cannot tell that there was ever a problem. A remarkable adaptation of eucalypts to drought.

Nevertheless, as some of the other articles in this issue of the Bidgee Bulletin remind us, recovery for those areas that were burnt out is going to take a lot longer. However, a number of groups are making a difference. Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach is assisting with recovery in the Bumbalong Valley, and Numeralla Landcare is assisting the recovery of threatened and vulnerable species through exotic predator control. Rosenberg's Goanna gets a helping hand from Bredbo Landcare. Planting has continued unabated, at least in Michelago and Cooma, despite the fires. With the coming of a much wetter winter all those plantings should do well.

... and we have the virus to deal with, but despite these challenges landcaring continues. Go well everyone and let's look forward to a quieter fire season and a vaccine!



## Coordinators Corner

*by Georgeanna Story*

While the extraordinary events of this year are far from over our efforts are turning towards support and recovery across our communities. The Landcare community and our partners are busy with the recovery of people, our land and the wildlife within. A diverse range of information brochures and videos are available on everything from mental health, to erosion issues, to supplementing wildlife habitat. You can be confident that whatever your concern, there is something online to help. Many support links are provided in the 'In the news' section below.

In addition to supporting our members, UMLC has also assisted South East Local Land Services (SE LLS) deliver several of their projects, including the Save Our Scarlet Robin project and Reaching for Recovery of the Endangered Macquarie Perch.

For UMLC much of the last few months have been spent on grant applications for our groups and with our partners. We have been successful with a Landcare Australia bushfire recovery grant with Michelago Landcare and a SE LLS post-fire predator control grant with Numeralla Landcare. Bredo Landcare are also embarking on a grassland restoration project under the SE LLS Scarlet Robin Project. UMLC is also part of a South East Regional collaborative application for the Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Program 2019-20 to 2020-21. We wait to hear about that outcome.

I'd like to thank our groups that have contributed to this newsletter and would encourage others to share your stories in future editions. Our members often comment on how interesting it is to hear from the other groups in the region. I hope you enjoy this seasons contributions.

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## Upcoming events

**Cooma Landcare AGM** is on Thursday 13th August at 5:30pm in the hall at Cooma North Public School. For details contact Emily at [coomalandcare@gmail.com](mailto:coomalandcare@gmail.com).

**Royalla Pest control campaign.** If you live in the Royalla and Burra region and are interested in having pests controlled for free, register your interest with Georgeanna on 0429779928 or Maryke at [royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au](mailto:royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au)

**Numeralla Pest control campaign** begins this week and review of camera trap footage will be required towards the beginning of September. Anyone interested in assisting please contact Georgeanna on 0429779928 or Jim at [dinoxing@westnet.com.au](mailto:dinoxing@westnet.com.au).

**Carwoola Landcare Spring wildflower walk** 18 October 9-11am at Stoney Creek Hall. For more information contact Tim at [tim.booth1492@gmail.com](mailto:tim.booth1492@gmail.com).

**Upper Snowy Landcare Network** will hold its AGM on Friday 28th August at 2.30pm at the Alpine Hotel in Cooma. Due to COVID, we can only have 10 people present, so please email [secretary@uppersnowylandcare.org.au](mailto:secretary@uppersnowylandcare.org.au) to register your attendance by the end of Friday 21st August.



## Stepping stones for woodland birds across the Michelago Valley

*by Gill and Tony Robinson, Michelago Landcare*

Imagine the Michelago Valley landscape with many more patches of trees and shrubs providing safe paths for birds and other animals travelling from the Tinderries through Michelago area towards the Clear Range and Namadgi. This is the vision of Michelago Landcare, envisaging “stepping stones” of trees and shrubs across the poorly treed Michelago area and providing connectivity for birds and other animals to cross our landscape. Our small band of landcarers have worked hard to make this vision reality.

The 7,757 native plants and shrubs springing up across the valley are a testament to everyone’s efforts. Farmers and more recent arrivals with smaller acreages have all made this happen. There has been two years of plantings over the autumn months. Despite less than average rainfall and a very hot summer the landowners involved in the first year are to be congratulated on achieving an average 80% survival rate. The survival rate was greatly aided by the quality of the tubestock provided by Greening Australia, the Monaro Native Tree Nursery and Lauren van Dyke’s Sow More Seeds.

The second year of plantings has just been completed and judging by the enthusiasm of the landowners for the project, and, again, the quality of the tubestock provided, a similar survival rate is expected.

But it’s not just about the birds! Organisations from around the world are planting millions of trees in a bid to combat global warming. We are one small part of this huge effort.

Thanks to George for assistance in delivering plants and guards and to members of the Michelago Landcare group who have assisted.

The project is part of the Save our Species - Save our Scarlet Robin which has been assisted by the South East Local Land Services and support from the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.



One of the planting sites in 2019. Good growth was achieved despite the difficult climatic conditions (photo courtesy of Gary Morris)



A planting site in 2020. Note the newer biodegradable waxed guards (photo courtesy of Leanne Pattison)



## Cooma Landcare rolling on...

*by Tim Scrace, Cooma Landcare*

The fledgling Cooma Landcare Group (formed 2018) has had a roller-coaster year since our AGM last August.

Our primary project has been planting native vegetation along Cooma Back Creek initially as part of a project started by Cooma Waterwatch in 2016. As the funding for that project wound up, Cooma Landcare pledged to continue planting at the site and conducted several working bees in the spring 2019.

We planted over 400 eucalypts, lomandras and acacias as well as picking up rubbish and doing some incidental weeding. Then came the summer of 2019-20! The prolonged dry spell, the 'ash storm' of January 4, the heatwave of late summer which saw Cooma experience 40 degree Celsius temperatures as well as days of heavy bushfire smoke and the daily stress overpowered the attempts to keep the plants watered during that 'Black Summer'.

Needless to say our plants suffered a heavy mortality rate of over 90%. We recently did some site maintenance removing African Boxthorn, tree guards, dead plants and any rubbish on the site.

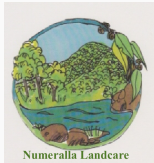
We will continue to plant at the Cooma Back Creek site as plants become available as we feel a determination to not let the setback discourage us. We also have several other embryonic projects including at the Cooma saleyards, and a parcel of Crown Land in West St which we have done a project plan for.

There is also the opportunity to join with another group in Cooma to do some bush regeneration in the North Ridge reserve.

So, as we enter our third year of existence, we have taken some baby steps but hope to be able to report larger strides in the year to come.



Cooma Landcare hard at work (photo courtesy of Tim Scrace)



## Numeralla Landcare's helping hand for wildlife

*by Jim Wharton, Numeralla Landcare*

The past summer's bushfires were not only devastating for our community but also the local wildlife, with an estimated 800 million animals perishing across the state. Those animals that survived the flames were left with a barren landscape that offered little in the way of food or protection from predators. Almost six months later, many areas still show little sign of recovery with soils remaining bare and a lack of vegetation to provide food and safe habitat for our wildlife. For our feral pests, cats, foxes and dogs, this lack of cover makes for easier hunting and their impact can be substantial. Feral cats and foxes have been recorded to eat up to 30 individual animals a day. Numeralla Landcare have decided to give the natives a helping hand by removing pest predators in their neighbourhood. Through support from South East Local Land Services they will be monitoring burnt areas around Numeralla using remote cameras and employing professional pest controllers to trap the pests.

'The use of cameras in our project is critical to monitor the success' says Jim Wharton, chair of Numeralla Landcare. 'Not only can we measure the change in pest numbers, but we will also capture images of those native animals that survived the fires.' Koalas are of particular interest, with the Numeralla district a strong hold for koalas in the region. The burnt canopy and reduced food will mean koalas will need to move along the ground more frequently and be more vulnerable to predation.

The cooperation of over 10 private landholders has enabled the control campaign to work at a landscape scale and maximise the impact the control can have. This project also provides opportunities the community to participate in the camera survey work. Volunteers are encouraged to assist in camera deployment and learn from professionals about how to best position the cameras in the bush. The community will also be able to help Landcare members examine the photos using the Australian Museum's digital collection website. If you are interested in joining part of the camera work please contact Jim on 0448 755198 or Georgeanna on 0429 779928 or [upper.murrumbidgee@gmail.com](mailto:upper.murrumbidgee@gmail.com).



Camera trap footage and the threat to koalas post-fire (photos courtesy of ScatsAbout Ecological and Tidbinbilla Nature reserve)



## New 'slow down' signs go up on Two Rivers Wattle Park Drive for the vulnerable Rosenberg's Monitor Goanna

*Lauren Van Dyke, Bredbo Landcare*

The Rosenberg's Monitor (*Varanus rosenbergi*) is listed as a vulnerable species in NSW and lucky for us has made her home down at the Two Rivers Wattle Park Drive. While she is fast asleep (hibernating) we have been busy putting brand new signs up so that come Spring people will know to keep their eyes peeled for this special reptile. Typically she lies right in the middle of the track and is tricky to spot despite being over 1 metre long.

Did you know that the female Rosenberg's Monitor incubates her eggs in a termite mound? Around February, she makes a hollow inside the mound, lays her 14 or so eggs and then leaves through the entrance hole, leaving the termites to repair the damage to the wall of the mound. Come spring mother Rosenberg returns to the nest and helps the little ones by digging them out. The babies then use the termite mound for up to a year because of its even temperature before they head out in a solo fashion. More info: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenberg%27s\\_monitor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenberg%27s_monitor)



## News from the Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach

*Antia Braddeman, UMDR*

2020 has been a busy and challenging year for the UMDR so far! The Mt Clear and Orroral Valley bushfires heavily impacted the Bumbalong Valley- an area where we have been working over the last years. Many people in the community and the surrounding landscape were unfortunately heavily impacted, including some of our project sites and the river itself as ash and sediment was washed in. Months on groundcover is struggling to recover where the fire was most intense and erosion risk remains high.



**The Murrumbidgee River was heavily impacted in the Bumbalong Valley, months on groundcover is still struggling to recover (photo courtesy of Antia Brademann)**

The UMDR has been working as best as we can to assist landholders to address the impacts that have resulted from both the fire and the subsequent rain events which have caused erosion and mass movement of sediment into the Murrumbidgee River. We are very grateful for the support of the NSW Soil Conservation Service and Local Land Services as well as funding assistance from the Australian Government's Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Program and Landcare Australia to carry out this

work. You can read more about the work we have been carrying out in our Rivers of Carbon blog (<http://riversofcarbon.org.au/erosion-ash-and-sediment-post-bushfire-recovery-in-the-bumbalong-valley/>).



**NSW Soil Conservation Service Operations Manager for Monaro, Ashley Bolton on site with landholders Lyn and Justin installing coir logs to prevent sediment flowing into the Murrumbidgee (photo courtesy of Antia Brademann)**

### **What is the UMDR?**

The Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach (UMDR) is a partnership of regional stakeholders who work together to protect riparian and riverine habitat in the Upper Murrumbidgee. The UMDR aims to provide an overall vision, guiding principles and clear goals for protecting and improving the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River through actions that address major threats in a coordinated and strategic way. The UMDR is involved in catchment planning, monitoring and habitat assessment, community engagement and onground projects.

For more information contact the UMDR Facilitator Antia Brademann on [upperbidgeereach@gmail.com](mailto:upperbidgeereach@gmail.com) or 0429 778 633



## **Waterwatch 2019 Catchment Health Indicator Report now online'**

***Antia Braddeman, Cooma Waterwatch***

Waterwatch has recently released its **annual Catchment Health Indicator Program (CHIP)** report. The 2019 report analyses the Waterwatch data collected at 232 sites by over 200 Waterwatch volunteers across the entire upper Murrumbidgee catchment. The Waterwatch data includes monthly water quality testing, twice yearly macro invertebrate (waterbug) surveys and riparian (riverside) vegetation surveys. This data is used to calculate a health scores for each of our waterways (the larger ones are broken down into sections called 'reaches') which are each given an individual report card in the report. The yearly health scores are compared to how each waterway scored in the previous year. Some Waterwatch sites have data going back over 20 years so it is an impressive data set which can be used to compare how our local waterways are faring over time.

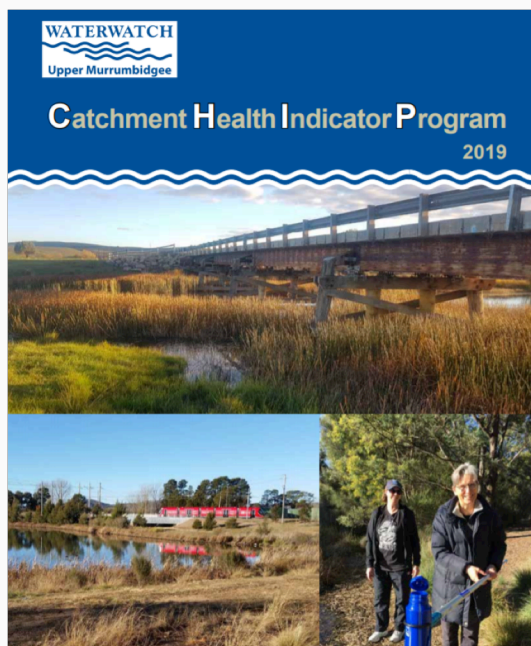
The 2019 report has found that out of 98 report cards, 3 are in 'excellent' health, 37 were 'good', 53 presented as 'fair' and 4 received a 'poor' rating. Overall, we have seen 59% of reaches fell into the fair/poor range which is a rise from 55% in 2018 and 47% the year before that. The continued downward trend in 2019 can once again be likely attributed to the upper Murrumbidgee catchment receiving 40% below annual average rainfall during the previous year. Because the bushfires in our region impacted most of our waterways early in 2020, their impact will be reported in next year's CHIP! You can now find



the 2019 CHIP Report online at [www.act.waterwatch.org.au/Files/CHIP/chip-report-2019.pdf](http://www.act.waterwatch.org.au/Files/CHIP/chip-report-2019.pdf).

Waterwatch is regaining its momentum after the wobbly start to the year which saw volunteer monitoring go on hold as COVID lockdown measures were imposed. Now that restrictions have eased our volunteers are back out there and preparations are underway for the annual **Platypus Month survey program** held during August. If you would like to participate in the platypus surveys or are interested in becoming a Waterwatch volunteer please contact Antia Brademann on [coomawaterwatch@gmail.com](mailto:coomawaterwatch@gmail.com) or 0429778 633.

Cooma Region Waterwatch gratefully acknowledges the support of the ACT Government and Icon Water for the program. As always a huge thankyou to our dedicated volunteers. We cannot do it without you!!



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## In the news

**Landcare NSW** has released its Strategic Plan 2021-2022 which has been developed in consultation with the NSW Landcare community with input and guidance from Landcare NSW Musters, Landcare NSW Council, Executive Committee and staff. This strategy is focused on the priorities of the State body but recognises that the purpose and guiding mission of Landcare NSW is to deliver what community Landcare needs in NSW. You can download the plan [here](#).

**LLS Post Fire Erosion Control** A series of 5 fact sheets for landholders, recently developed by South East LLS.

[Types of erosion and their impacts](#)

[Erosion control techniques](#)

[Ground cover management](#)

[Monitoring](#)

[Safety responsibilities and legislation.](#)

Additionally, Murray LLS have produced 3 bushfire erosion videos:

[Landscape scale erosion](#)

[Farm scale erosion](#)

[Small scale erosion](#)

**ANU Sustainable Farms** have offered an excellent series of webinars over the last few months which are now available as recordings. Topics covered include designing and enhancing shelter belts, enhancing farm dams and biodiversity recovery after bushfires. Check them out here: <http://www.sustainablefarms.org.au/fielddays>.

**Bushfire recovery webinar.** Do you live in an area that was recently affected by bushfires? Maybe your group is getting involved in recovery efforts, or you've received funding towards project. In our upcoming webinar you can hear from a Landcare Facilitator heavily involved in the recovery efforts following the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. Recovering after bushfires – what role can Landcare play? will take place at 2pm (AEST) on Tuesday, August 4th, through the Landcarer platform, and will last around 45 minutes. [Click here](#) to find out more, and register. Don't worry if you can't make the live session. You can register anyway, and we'll send you a link to the recording afterwards.

**Assisting regeneration after fire.** Many landholders wanting to assist the recovery of bushfire affected areas are asking what they should do and what species they should be planting to speed up the recovery process. However, as Louise Brodie from the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators explains, in most cases, "the need for planting is likely to be rare in our fire adapted ecosystems, even after extreme fire. Instead, past experience shows that interventions to control weeds are often all that is needed to reinstate processes of regeneration by a diversity of native plants that then provide habitat for fauna". Read more here: <http://www.fscmn.com/?p=2506>

Upper Shoalhaven present a 3 part video series on designing, installing and monitoring nest boxes for local wildlife View the nest box design session [here](#) and nest box installation [here](#).

**The Rural Living Handbook** is a guide to help rural landholders experience the wonderful aspects of rural life as well as to raise awareness of the risks and responsibilities that come with that lifestyle. The handbook is free and available [here](#).

**The Tucker Foundation** has grants of up to \$25,000 available. Priority areas include protection of wildlife and habitat, and to preserve natural reserves of forest, oceans and wilderness and for the rehabilitation of flora and fauna. Applications close 14 August 2020. For more information: <https://www.tuckerfoundation.org.au/guidelines/>

**Cleanaway** are interested in hearing from Landcare groups in the Queanbeyan-Monaro region. They are looking to provide financial and on-ground support for projects. To discuss your project and the type of support you would be seeking, contact Orhan Cambaz on 0407 923 30 Orhan.Cambaz@cleanaway.com.au.

**SE Local Land Services**, Reaching for Recovery of the Endangered Macquarie Perch project. Support is available to riverside land managers on the upper Murrumbidgee to undertake works that will support healthy Macquarie Perch habitat and populations, by reinstating and/or improving riverside vegetation buffers (riparian zones). For more information contact Felicity Sturgiss at [felicity.sturgiss@lfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:felicity.sturgiss@lfs.nsw.gov.au) or on 0427 072 763 or project partners Rivers of Carbons via Lori Gould [lori.gould@arrc.com.au](mailto:lori.gould@arrc.com.au) 0439 030 058 or visit their website here: <http://riversofcarbon.org.au/rivers-of-carbon-murrumbidgee-maccas-project/>

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Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee is registered as  
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*Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare, Upper Bidgee Bulletin*

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