

Illawarra



FLAMETREE

SUMMER ISSUE 2015

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Illawarra Local Land Services Officer

For more information about Landcare Illawarra or to submit information for the next Landcare Illawarra newsletter, contact Megan Rowlatt:

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communitysupport@conservationvolunteers.com.au



Megan Rowlatt

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Landcare Illawarra 'Illawarra Flametree' newsletter.

This is our first edition for 2015 and already summer has brought a swarm of activity in the region.

In this issue, we update you about some of the inspiring things community members are doing to clean up our beaches and reduce marine debris along our coast. We also hear about a unique community garden project involving youth at-risk with local organisation Wicked Workshops, who ambitiously started a garden from scratch, and despite the challenges are making great progress. You don't want to miss this story in our 'Edible Illawarra' section.

The hot wet summer has been amazing for our tree plantings which are growing at a phenomenal rate, but at the same time, the weeds have also taken off and throughout this issue we offer some suggestions for tackling some of the species which have taken off, including our article on herb and grass pizzas in the 'Illawarra Woodland & Rainforest Project' section!

We also give you an update on projects and events you can get involved in and ways you can contribute back to the local environment.

We hope you enjoy the Summer 2015 edition of the 'Illawarra Flametree' newsletter.

From the Landcare Illawarra Team.





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LOCAL EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

Clean Up AUSTRALIA Day

This Sunday March 1, is Clean Up Australia Day. There are loads of activities you can join in the Illawarra. Just check out the Clean Up Australia Day website, enter the location you are interested in, and you will see all of the projects happening in your local area.

[Clean Up Australia Day website](#)

Five ISLANDS COMMUNITY Meeting



Five Islands Nature Reserve (the islands) is visible across the Illawarra region. The islands are home to many significant seabird/shorebird populations - little penguins, shearwaters (muttonbirds) and oystercatchers that dig burrows or nest within the vegetation. This habitat is threatened by invasive weeds spreading over the islands, choking burrows and entangling breeding birds.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), in

partnership with the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, invites the local community to an informative free seminar.

You will be able to learn about and contribute to NPWS's seabird habitat and breeding site restoration project.

A variety of speakers will discuss the islands' ecological history, seabirds and restoration project progress. You will also be able to join the 'Friends of Five Islands' volunteer group. NPWS is also seeking any historical photos of the Five Islands to help document previous land uses and vegetation types.

Date: Thursday 5 March 2015

Time: 6.30–8.30 pm

Location: City Beach Function Centre, 1 Marine Drive, Wollongong, NSW, 2500

TO REGISTER RSVP BY 2 MARCH 2015.
EMAIL TO FIVE.ISLANDS@ENVIRONMENT.NSW.GOV.AU

OR CALL (02) 4223 3000

ENVIRONMENT.NSW.GOV.AU OR CALL (02) 4223 3000'



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SALT MARSH WORKSHOPS

Come and learn about Coastal Saltmarsh with one of Australia's Leading Experts

The South East Wetland Carers Network (SEWCN) and Conservation Volunteers Australia has invited internationally renowned wetland ecologist, Geoff Sainty to share his knowledge and experience with interested members of the community. Geoff is an industry leader in wetland ecology and wetland design and management, as well an author of leading wetland publications for Eastern Australia.

Geoff will introduce workshop participants to Coastal Saltmarsh. Coastal Saltmarsh is an intertidal community of plants that have historically been undervalued and considered by many to be boggy swamps of little practical use. As a result many of our Saltmarsh areas have been drained reclaimed or degraded and Coastal Saltmarsh is now listed as an Endangered Ecological Community in NSW. However our knowledge of Saltmarsh communities has greatly improved over the past few decades and saltmarsh are now known to be significant ecological communities that provide food and habitat for fish and other animals as well as being a 'carbon sink'.

These workshops are entirely field based, meaning participants will get a firsthand look at various wetland health indicators, such as vegetation condition, hydrology and impacts on the wetland systems. Geoff will offer some great insight and advice for the protection and restoration of saltmarsh and wetland areas.

Date and Time: Friday 6th March, 9.30 am – 4.00 pm

Workshop Venue: Burrill Lake, Shoalhaven

RSVP by: Tuesday 3rd March

RSVP to: awoods@conservationvolunteers.com.au

Please include numbers for catering and dietary requirements

Date and Time: Saturday 7th March, 9.30 am – 4.00 pm

Workshop Venue: Minnamurra River, Kiama Downs

RSVP by: Tuesday 3rd March

RSVP to: awoods@conservationvolunteers.com.au

Please include numbers for catering and dietary requirements

LANDHOLDER LAND MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

In the coming months Landcare Illawarra will be hosting a series of workshops which will visit a number of sites we are supporting under our Australian Government funded Biodiversity program.

These workshops will focus on a variety of topics, and attendees will be able to see first hand, the techniques which have been applied in restoring, managing and protecting native vegetation on private property.

Many of these properties are active farms as well as properties which have been set aside for conservation. Topics covered will include;

- Feral animal fencing
- Appropriate tree planting protection
- Introducing native ground covers in restoration work
- Managing road verges and vegetation edges
- Managing weeds
- Revegetation

Keep an eye on our website and social media accounts for information coming soon.



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LOCAL NEWS & PROJECTS

World Wetlands Day

Adam Woods

In celebration of World Wetlands Day earlier this month, the South East Wetland Carers Network and Killalea State Park worked together to deliver a guided walk along 'The Farm' beach and around Killalea Lagoon.

Less than two hours south of Sydney, Killalea State Park is over 250 hectares of pristine coastal reserve with some of the best beaches on the NSW South Coast. With 8 kms of coastline, rainforest areas, extensive wetlands and seabird breeding areas, Killalea is popular for camping, day trips, educational groups, canoeing, surfing and fishing.

40 people turned up on the day to see these gorgeous coastlines, endangered littoral rainforest areas, extensive wetlands and seabird breeding areas within the park, as well as hear from Park Manager Nathan Cattell about the history of 'The Farm' and Aboriginal heritage around the park.

"The walk really left me motivated and encouraged as there was such a great diversity of people present." Explains Wetland Carers Network Project Officer Adam Woods.

"We had a number of participants actively contribute to the discussion.

The willingness to share knowledge and wisdom was no better illustrated than when local author Terry Rankmore discussed and showed us how Acacia sp were used in indigenous communities".

The Wetland Carers Network and Killalea State Park run regular workshops around native vegetation, cultural heritage and wetlands.

For more information visit the [Killalea State Park website](#) and [Facebook](#) page, or subscribe to the Wetland Carers Network Newsletter by emailing Adam Woods on awoods@conservationvolunteers.com.au





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MEET THE VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Meet: Kate Kelly

Group: Beach Clean Ups Illawarra – group coordinator

What motivated you to volunteer?: Visiting the local beaches we noticed way too much rubbish and debris and decided to do something about it. Beach Clean Ups Illawarra was formed by a group of concerned residents.

We pick up way too many cigarette butts, lollipop sticks and plastic straws. These small items are often not noticed on the beach because of their colour but have huge impacts on marine wildlife.

The group is made up of people from all walks of life and age groups, but we all have one thing in common and that is that we want to see our beaches in a better condition.

In 2014, we won the Wollongong Council encouragement award for protecting and enhancing the environment.

How does the group work?: We meet once a month at a local beach in the morning generally around 8.30 am and we collect rubbish from the beach for an hour. Some people go for a coffee or a surf afterwards and others go off to other personal events. It's a very casual arrangement but the difference that hour makes to the beach is huge.

How important is this work and why should people get involved?: We are regularly seeing urban waste make its way to our sandy shores either through urban runoff or being washed ashore from other areas, rubbish from recreational fishing activities is a huge contributor and



general litter from beachgoers and day trippers also contributes largely to the debris we see along our beautiful beaches. The impact on marine and bird life is devastating. Fishing line entangles and often chokes wildlife or leaves them immobile so they starve to death. Ingestion of broken down bits of plastic by marine

life and birdlife also causes death through toxicity and starvation. All around the world this is an issue and we all need to be doing our part to make sure this debris is removed from the land so it doesn't end up in the ocean.

We hope that by getting involved or even people seeing our group members carrying out regular beach clean ups, the wider community will take more responsibility in taking their rubbish with them and perhaps even making more sustainable choices as consumers.

To get involved: Visit our **Facebook group**, this is where we post information about our up and coming events, information to raise awareness about marine debris, and information to spark discussion around environmental issues.

We also have an Instagram account @beachcleanups people can follow us on.

We now have two groups working in the Illawarra, one on the northern beaches and one further south, but it would be great to see Clean Up groups spring up all up and down the Illawarra coastline. Check out our **Facebook group** for more details.



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WILDLIFE WATCH

What goes up MUST come down...

Megan Rowlett

Recently I was at a local show where I was helping Landcare Illawarra run an information stall. It was a great day, but I couldn't help but notice all of the helium balloons being distributed and floating through the crowds held by children and families attending the show. What's so unusual about this? It's been part of family show culture for generations, it's an inexpensive tool for promotion by organisations passing out these balloons, they have been used during celebrations for decades, and it's something most people don't even give a second thought.

But with this came the accidental release of the balloons into the sky, and the only second thought given to the now potentially deadly plastic entering the atmosphere, was towards the now crying child to which the parent replied 'don't worry, we'll get you another one'.

Balloons released into the atmosphere are a form of littering. Let's not sugar coat it. They inevitably drop back down to earth and into the ocean causing great harm to our wildlife as you can clearly see in the images here. Not only does the plastic balloon itself disrupt the digestive system either leading to death by starvation or disease through infection, the strings also become a deadly entanglement choking birds and marine life.

There are many wonderful organisations out there such as **Ocean Concervancy**, **Take 3**, **Responsible Runners**, **Clean Coast Collective**, and **Balloons Blow** (just to name a few) who are working towards raising awareness about the impacts of marine debris, including the impacts of balloons, so this is nothing new to the conservation



conversation. We even have a local volunteer group, Beach Clean Ups Illawarra, carrying out regular beach clean ups along Illawarra beaches to remove such debris.

There are many ways we can say "get well soon", celebrate a party, wedding, or large community event, express grief at a funeral and entertain your children at shows and fairs. Blowing bubbles, using colourful recycled paper to make pompoms and origami animals, and other colourful decorations at parties are just some of the ways you can avoid balloons

to entertain the kids. Planting a tree in memory of someone who has passed is a nice way to say goodbye, and using bright flags and banners are a great way to draw attention to your organisation at community days and fairs. There are some great examples of alternatives to using balloons listed on the Balloons Blow website to inspire you to take that leap into a more sustainable future.



Images: Sourced from Balloons Blow website. Choking balloon string and stomach contents of dead bird containing balloon fragments



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WEED WATCH

Bidens

Bidens species

With the recent hot wet summer we have just experienced, *Bidens* is running rampant all around the Illawarra along walking tracks, roadsides, our gardens and of course in our lovely landcare and bushcare sites. It's highly invasive, a prolific seeder and if left unattended can completely take over an understorey.

There are a number of *Bidens* species with the most widespread being *Bidens pilosa*, but we also have *Bidens subalternans* and *tripartita* present across NSW.

Origin: South America (*pilosa* and *subalternans*), and Europe (*tripartita*), this erect annual herb can grow to 1-1.5 m high.

Declaration: *Bidens* species are considered an environmental weed across NSW, but has no noxious declaration in the Illawarra.

Identification: Opposite arranged leaves, are oval to lance shaped, with toothed margins on *pilosa* and *tripartita* and deeply or completely divided on *subalternans*. Flowerheads vary with each species:

Pilosa: 5-15 mm long, sometimes have tiny white florets. Barbs on the linear fruit point upwards towards 2-3 spreading 'awns'.

Subalternans: 5-10 mm across have yellow ray florets. Barbs on the linear fruit point upwards towards 2-3 erect 'awns'.

Tripartita: 10-25 mm long, have yellow ray florets and are surrounded by often longer leaf-like bracts. Fruit is oblong and has barbs on the ribs that point backwards away from 2-4 spreading 'awns'.

Flowering and seeding: Flowers and seeds through most of the year.

Dispersal: Barbs stick to animal fur, clothing and are

also dispersed by wind and water.

Control: Cut and bag any seeding heads and remove from site. Hand pull when soil is moist or larger woody plants can be dug out removing roots or cut and paint method can be used. Stems can be left on site to mulch down. Slashing can be used to break the seed cycle by doing this before seed heads form. Introducing native ground covers where possible is an ideal way to outcompete regenerating weeds. See our section on herb and grass pizzas for more information about this. Follow up will be required to break seed cycle on site.

Native look-a-likes: *Bidens* is often confused with native *Sigesbeckia orientalis* which has a similar overall structure, and yellow flowers.



Image: From top down; *Bidens pilosa*, *Bidens subalternans*, *Bidens tripartita*.



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ALONG THE BUSH TUCKER TRAIL

Giant Stinging Tree

With Terry Rankmore

Botanical name: *Dendrocnide excelsa*

Meaning of the name

Greek: *Dendrocnide* - tree nettle

Latin: *Excelsa* - lofty, high

Family name: URTICACEAE

Plant Description

Leaves: Large heart-shaped leaves, light green in colour. The leaves are smooth on top and downy underneath. The hairs on the leaves are hollow and silica tipped.

Flower: The male and female flowers are in different trees and are yellow/white in colour, flowering December - April.

Habit: Tall rainforest tree growing up to 30 m.

Habitat: Found in gullies and along creek beds of rainforests, and on fertile soil. In the Illawarra they are found in the rainforests on the escarpment, and Berkeley Hills.

Distribution: East coast, Queensland to Bega, NSW.

Medicinal Use: Aboriginal people boiled the leaves and bark then rubbed the softened mixture into the area affected by rheumatism.



Excerpt taken from Terry Rankmore's '*Bush medicine Plants of the Illawarra*'. To download the full book for free visit the Landcare Illawarra website:

www.landcareillawarra.org.au



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EDIBLE ILLAWARRA

UNANDERRA COMMUNITY Garden... With a youth TWIST!

Megan Rowlatt

Wicked Workshops manager Colin Renton recently embarked on an ambitious project to establish a community garden, from scratch with youth at-risk who have been referred to him under Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets Program.

The space has only been in operation now for 7 months and already the youth participants are harvesting their own produce and even constructing their own 'Old Technology' garden shed from scratch using repurposed VHS tapes.

"I was at an op shop and I saw a stack of old tapes, we really needed a shed at the garden so I thought of using them as a way to keep them out of and to raise awareness about landfill. The community really got on board with the donations, and we are now using them as cladding for the shed and rainwater tank we are installing." Mr Renton said. "We have had wonderful support from the wider community, the land has been supplied by the Youth Off The Streets program, we have had local tradespeople from local businesses come down and give lessons on building and construction, gardening and permaculture and the kids are learning real life skills from all of the activities they are involved in at the site.

"On a typical day we have the groups broken up into teams where they work on horticulture, logistics and building. They rotate through these activities and get a real sense of what it's like to make budget projections, order materials, manage

the team, use math skills in construction activities, learn about plants and different species as well as hands on skills in building and construction. Even I've learnt a thing or two. They learn skills in how to work with each other, manage conflict and communicate more effectively."

But it hasn't been easy getting youth who have had a diet high in take away and highly processed and packaged foods to eat the fruits of their labour.

"When our very first cherry tomato was ready to eat, they all refused to eat it! They'd seen the compost and blood and bone go into the soil and were refusing to put the produce in their system, but were happy to wander down the road to eat a Big Mac. It was very interesting"

Now the group eats a healthy breakfast and lunch they prepare from their garden, they make green drinks and are even showing signs

of better health and cognitive function.

"We have also been working with the local Aboriginal Men's Group and Aboriginal Crisis Kids are also getting involved in the project.

"The site has lots of potential to become a real community asset to help people in need, and an educational space for young people to learn about a diversity of life skills as well as health and nutrition."

Wicked Workshops is a local organisation which uses a therapeutic constructivist approach to leading, mentoring and teaching through games based and outdoor experiences allowing all people to develop in many ways. Wicked Workshops teaches young people how to learn who they are, not who they are supposed to be.

www.wickedworkshops.com

Image: Colin from Wicked Workshops with collected VHS tapes at the garden



LOCAL PROJECTS GET INVOLVED

Feeling motivated? Would you like to get your hands dirty and contribute to a local project? The Illawarra has over 100 active volunteer Landcare and Bushcare groups, and they would all LOVE new volunteers! Here's just a snap shot of some of them...

WOLLONGONG

Illawarra Intrepid Landcare

March 1 Thirroul Beach 8.30 am

In partnership with Beach Clean Ups Illawarra, IIL will be carrying out a beach clean up for Clean Up Australia Day. For more information visit the website.

www.illawaraintrepidlandcare.org.au

Wollongong City Bushcare

There are over 60 Bushcare sites throughout Wollongong from Windang and Dapto in the south to Helensburgh in the north. All Bushcare volunteers are working with Council to conserve our precious natural areas of bushland, foreshore, creek lines and escarpment. Bushcare groups usually meet regularly each week or each month, learning new skills and meeting new people while helping out the environment. Everyone is welcome to join the Bushcare program - every extra hand helps. For information on a group near you, contact Bushcare - 4227 8113 or visit the Bushcare section of the [Wollongong City Council website](http://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au).

SHELLHARBOUR

Friends of Killalea, Killalea State Park. Friends of Killalea State Park is a community volunteer group made up of people of all ages to carry out environmental projects at the park.

Visit the [Friends of Killalea Facebook page](#) for more information.

Shellharbour City Council supports a number of Bushcare, Landcare and Parkcare groups across Shellharbour. Some of the active groups include:

Tullimbar Landcare, Albion Park. Meets at Elizabeth Brownlee Reserve (end of Digby Close), 4th Saturday of the month 9 am - 1 pm. Contact Ruth Jenkins on 4256 2684.

Blackbutt Bushcare, Blackbutt. Meets in Blackbutt Forest, 3rd Sunday of the month 9 am - 12 pm. Contact Tony Hepworth on 4297 6490 for directions to the meeting site.

Oakey Creek Bushcare. Meet at Oak Flats on the Boulevard end once a fortnight on Wednesdays 9 am - 12 pm

For more information and a full list of groups working in the area visit the [Shellharbour City Council Website](#).

KIAMA

Kiama has a number of active groups working on a mixture of public and private land. This includes:

Bombo Headland Landcare. Meet on the last Saturday of the month from 2-4 pm. Contact Megan for more details on 4229 7526 or communitysupport@conservationvolunteers.com.au

Seven Mile Beach Landcare. Meet on the first Sunday of the month at 9 am. Contact Megan for more details on 4229 7526 or email communitysupport@conservationvolunteers.com.au

You can view a full list of active groups for this area on our website by visiting the 'local groups' section of www.landcareillawarra.org.au

What do I bring?

Wear sturdy closed in shoes, long pants and long-sleeved shirt to avoid insect bites, sun burn and scratches from vegetation. Wear a hat and sunscreen, bring gloves if you have some, plenty of drinking water and snacks if you need them.

There are many more groups to get involved with in our region. For more information about all of the active Landcare groups across the Illawarra visit www.landcareillawarra.org.au or contact Local Land Services Officer - Megan on 4229 7526 or communitysupport@conservationvolunteers.com.au



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ILLAWARRA WOODLAND & RAINFOREST PROJECT

Herb and Grass Pizzas

Richard Scarborough

On many bush regeneration sites there is already an understorey of native plants associated with vegetation remnants. Ground covers such as Kidney Weed, Native Violet, Basket Grass and the various Pennyworts are quite common on farms. Ironically, mowing or brush cutting can keep the annual weeds down to ground level and with good management the native ground cover will spread and assist with the suppression of the germination of these weeds.

In areas lacking in native ground cover, the usual practice is to dig up small 5 cm diameter patches from other parts of the site and translocate them. This method has been taught at TAFE for many years for use on regen sites. It works especially well with rhizomatous species that spread horizontally.

Alternatively, in the same way as you can buy punnets of Kidney Weed or Violets from those big chain supermarkets, native ground cover can also be harvested from sites and sown into trays with potting mix, either the flat A4 size seedling trays, or the baker's trays. After it has grown on and the roots bind, they can be served up as slices to be placed on the ground to



spread. You can put many species in simultaneously, thus the new name of Herb and Grass Pizzas.

This is not an original idea, although I have done this for many years as a consequence of having my

nursery over-run with Basket Grass and Native Mint etc. It is not uncommon for some of our suppliers to leave ground covers in the tubestock they provide too. When you plant the tree you get the bonus of a spreading ground cover too.

Watch this space: this Pizza delivery system for native ground cover will be used in some of the plantings in the Foxground Berry Bypass. The landscape design is set to feature a road reserve where the whole planting can be accessed later for seed harvest, canopy and understorey included!

Images: Herb and Grass Pizzas with a diversity of ground cover species



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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Green Army Projects ROUND 3 NOW Open

Applications close Tuesday December 9, 2 pm

The Australian Government is providing additional opportunities for community organisations, environment groups and local councils to apply for Green Army projects in their region.

Projects must have a clear environment or heritage conservation focus and offer participants valuable practical experience, while supporting a safe work experience. Projects will be guided by local community needs and contribute to Australia's national and international environmental priorities and obligations. A full list of eligible activities is provided in the Green Army Round 3 Project Guidelines.

For more information visit:

www.environment.gov.au

Yates Junior Landcare Winter Vegie Challenge NOW Open

Applications close April 5

The Yates Junior Landcare Winter Vegie Challenge is back for 2015, with registrations for seeds now open! The vegies we'll be asking you to choose from this year are: carrots, cauliflower, lettuce, red onion, radish and spinach.

www.juniorlandcarechallenge.com.au

NORMAN WETTENHALL FOUNDATION - SMALL ENVIRONMENTAL GRANT SCHEME

Applications open April

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation supports biodiversity conservation projects Australia-wide. The objectives of the Small Environmental Grant Scheme is to support biodiversity conservation projects in Australia that are concerned with one or more of the following:

- monitoring and recording data
- community education
- community capacity building (training)
- research and science
- sustainable land management (NSW only)

www.nwf.org.au

If you need any assistance in applying for funding contact your Local Land Services Officer 4229 7526 or communitysupport@conservationvolunteers.com.au



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