

Macleay Landcare Network News

Summer edition 2009



This is the newsletter of the Macleay Landcare Network covering the Macleay Catchment
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East Kempsey Island Project in Full Swing



Despite February's working bee being washed out by the recent heavy rains, works at East Kempsey Island are in full swing. During January, weed control continued and a new fence has been erected to separate the Council land from the project site. A healthy attendance at the January working bee enjoyed training from Ali Bigg (ex-Greening Australia) in weed identification and control. Chaddies Store staff were perplexed by the band of sweaty folks who showed up for a cool post-working bee during. Volunteers were too eager to wait until February to get stuck in again, so led by Vanessa Standing, works were completed on the fence to exclude stock from the site.

The above photo of the project site was taken by local Nick King, brother in law of volunteer Mark Thomas, from Nick's ultra light aircraft. It shows great detail and emphasizes the value of this remnant as a demonstration site for the Macleay River.

MLN has recently received welcome news that a Green Corps team has been approved to work on the site. The team will be undertaking a major project at Telegraph Point building a community garden adjacent to the Waste Management Centre and will spend 4-5 weeks working at East Kempsey Island. Their efforts are sure to provide both diversity to their training program and give our project a major boost. If you are 17-20 years old, applications close on March 20. For more info call 1 800 671 078.

Community interest in the project is high including good coverage by local media. Even the Kempsey Dragon Boat team have heard about the project, have written a letter of support and are expected to don their paddles to join us occasionally.

Next working bee is scheduled for Saturday, March 14th 9-11 am., all welcome.

It is also rumored that, in addition to good healthy work, pleasant morning teas are expected to become a regular feature of this project.

Upcoming events

Game Council NSW staff visiting the Macleay to develop Indian Myna Management Plan

Mon-Fri, March 9-13

East Kempsey Island Lowland Floodplain Rainforest Restoration Project.. Weed control and planting at this iconic site has begun. Contact Vanessa on 6566 9169. Regular monthly working bee.

Saturdays: March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13.... 9am-11am.

Macleay Valley Afforestation Association Tree Fair—State Forests Car Park and Green, West Kempsey (opposite Macleay Landcare office).

Saturday, March 28 8am-1pm

What Does Your Garden Grow workshop—CWA Hall South West Rocks

Thursday, April 2, 9.15—1.30

Caring for our Country—Expressions of Interest for funding closes

Friday, April 3

Soil Testing—Making Money for Macleay Landholders with Harry Rose

Lower Macleay—Fri April 3
Upper Macleay—Mon April 6

Round 53 Green Corps Team commences

Monday, April 6

Riparian management training with NRCMA's Laurence Radin.

Thursday, May 21

Breakfast with the Birds on World Wetlands Day

In partnership with the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and Macleay Landcare Network, Council co-hosted a community environmental education event at Boyters Lane Wetlands to celebrate World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2009. Titled 'Breakfast with the Birds', the event kicked off at 6am with an early morning bird watching session utilising the newly constructed 'Bird Hide' to base bird observations from. A variety of shy waterbirds were identified, including the Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*), a rare migratory wader from the Americas. Attendees were then invited for a free BBQ breakfast and listened to a few talks on local wildlife and native plant gardening. The

event wrapped up with a number of water-watch activities, such as water quality testing, identification of water bugs, and a stormwater wetland walk and talk, all to help raise awareness about the importance of wetlands. As the photos show a good crowd of enthusiastic participants enjoyed the chance to get out and interact with nature on the day. World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on 2 February. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971. Based on the success of the day, further community based activities are planned ahead – stay posted!



Office volunteer: Helen McNeil

If you stumble into the MLN office, you might meet with our talented office volunteer—Helen McNeil. Helen has been assisting in maintaining the membership database, producing the newsletter and general office duties; just so she doesn't miss her life in administration at the Canberra Hospital. ☺

Helen and her husband Colin have recently made the leap from a life as public servants in Canberra to breeders of Galloway cattle at Turners Flat where they raise this ancient breed for their unique marbled meat and ability to adapt to just about any climate and environment.

Helen explains... "Colin and I like to be involved in our community and this is a great way to meet like-minded people"

Helen's experience and skills are very useful in the office and she has a welcoming manner to all our visitors. Thanks Helen!



Landholders funded to re-store riverbanks

15 Macleay landholders recently received funding for works to restore their river and creek banks.

Under the Riparian Management Incentives Scheme managed by Macleay Landcare, grants of up to \$5,000 have been distributed for fencing, planting, off-stream watering systems and weed control. The quality of application was high and it will be good to see these works progress in the coming months.

Funds have been provided through "Caring for Our Country" from the Australian Government.



CARING
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COUNTRY

Koalas in the Macleay Valley face extinction

A recent koala study commissioned by the Kempsey Shire Council for the eastern part of the Shire has indicated koalas are few and far between. They seem to have disappeared altogether from the north-eastern part of the Shire despite the presence of suitable habitat.

Koalas are an ancient species that evolved from koala-like animals about 14 million years ago when Australia was still mostly rainforest. As the climate and landscape changed they adapted to living in eucalyptus trees and their diet (food and water) became almost entirely the leaves of a relatively small number of eucalyptus species.

European settlement of Australia has had a huge impact on koalas. Millions were shot for their skins, their primary habitat has mostly been cleared for agriculture and their food trees are cut

down for timber. Koalas now live in less than optimal habitat and their primitive immune

system cannot cope with the stress of continual habitat disturbance and relative or absolute malnutrition. This has made them vulnerable to several diseases that cause infertility and/or premature death.



The biggest threats to the remaining koala population in the Kempsey Shire are:

- Bushfires.
- Clearing of koala habitat for agricultural, residential and industrial development.
- Continual logging and clearing of large food trees, particularly Tallowwood.
- Dogs- many koalas are injured and killed by domestic dogs.
- Roads-The Pacific Highway passes through Koala habitat and many koalas are killed trying to cross it, particularly in the Kundabung area.

Trees important to koalas in the Macleay Valley

1. Preferred food trees:

Tallowwood (*Eucalyptus microcorys*); Forest Red Gum (*E. tereticornis*); Swamp Mahogany (*E. robusta*); Grey Gum (*E. propinqua*); White Stringybark (*E. globoidea*) - recently identified as koala food tree.

2. Secondary food trees - used at certain times for short periods:

Scribbly Gum (*E. signata*); Blackbutt (coastal) (*E. pilularis*); Red Mahogany (*E. resinifera*); Flooded Gum (*E. grandis*).

3. Non-eucalypts:

Broad-leaved Paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) - important in drought; Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) - secondary food tree; Brush Box (*Lophostemon confertus*) - used for shade and shelter; Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*); Forest Oak (*Allocasuarina torulosa*).

What you can do to help koalas.

Find out if you have koalas in your area. Contact Macleay Landcare Network or Kempsey Shire Council.

Learn about their preferred trees and how to recognise koala scats under trees.

Do not cut down koala food tree species - use alternative species if you need timber.

Do not allow logging contractors to take koala food trees from your property especially large Tallowwood, Grey Gum, Forest Red Gum or Swamp Mahogany.

Protect koala habitat on your property with a Voluntary Conservation Agreement or Property Vegetation Plan.

Fence off koala habitat areas from livestock to protect the soil from impaction and to promote regeneration.

Plant koala food trees along creek flats and drainage lines.

Encourage your neighbours and friends to do the same.

Confine your dogs, particularly at night. Obedience training is also recommended.

Be aware when driving through koala areas particularly between 10pm and 4am.

Koalas need time to recover.

They need consideration and kindness but most of all they need their trees.

Report all sick/injured koalas to the Koala Hospital Port Macquarie - 6584 1522

The Pandanus People

The Pandanus People are an award winning Landcare group of mid NSW north coast Aboriginal community members who have chosen the symbol of the quintessential Australian plant of the northern coastline.

Aunty Shirley Doyle has been the driving force to establish this association. Shirley has always loved her gardening and her passion and enthusiasm is contagious. She wanted to create a link to help her family and the members of her community to become actively involved in meaningful land based education. In 2005, her interest led to a joint venture involving the community, TAFE and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with teacher, Terry Flanagan.

Over the next four years, the Pandanus People of South West Rocks have achieved significant outcomes and benefits: both to themselves and to the NPWS and the community.

The Pandanus People have studied Conservation and Land Management and have constructed a nursery where they collect and grow native plants for planting projects within the local catchments area, especially national park areas. They have an ongoing role in caring for Arakoon, but also plant in other places: Smoky Gap; Point Plomer. They work with the local and visiting schools and young people in a mentoring role. Recently they have been successful with a grant to care for places of significance to Aboriginal communities.

Visitors' experiences have been enriched by the Pandanus People's work: not only through the plantings, but also through asking questions and seeing their work in action, particularly in the peak times. There are an estimated 500,000 visitors yearly to Arakoon State Conservation Area and the Pandanus People play an impor-

tant role in reaching out to visitors and educating them about practical caring for our country. Aunty Shirley comments, "We love Arakoon and Trial Bay, we learn about bush plants and how to grow them".

The Pandanus People Project aims to empower and educate the indigenous community, to foster and strengthen partnerships with like minded people in directions that are to the core of Aboriginal Australia. Elders play a key role in this partnership, especially with working with younger people.

Future plans include development of a bigger nursery compound at Arakoon; the establishment of a native plant trail at Arakoon; more work with young people and visitors and learning more about guiding.

The Pandanus people would like to thank all the people who have given them support along the way. They hope their efforts have been noticed and that this cultural exchange may be used as a model of



what a community can achieve when working towards similar outcomes.

Plants excess to requirements for national parks can be purchased from the Pandanus People.

Written by Terry Flanagan



Caring For Our Country funds over \$130,000 worth of projects in the Macleay



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

Three Macleay projects will receive over \$130,000 of funding as part of the Community Coastcare round of the Australian Government's "Caring For Our Country" program.

The Maria River Wildlife Recovery program will receive \$93,920 (gst incl.) to improve 25km of the coastline between Crescent Head and Port Macquarie. Works will include weed control, surveying, feral animal control and revegetation to connect wildlife corridors. Saltair Flora and Fauna Inc. will extend valuable works already done with local landholders.

The Hat Head Sand Dunes Project will receive \$20,130 (gst incl) to establish a revegetation plan and stabilize and rehabilitate the coastal sand dunes between the beach and village of Hat Head.

The Hat Head Community Protection of Significant Coastal Vegetation Project will receive \$16,954 (gst incl) to employ professionals to work alongside volunteers and deliver training in bush regeneration and plant identification skills and for provision of indigenous employment in local works.

Caring For Our Country is now calling for Business Plan Proposals for 2009-10, open until April 3.

For more information on the Caring For Our Country program visit www.nrm.gov.au or call 1 800 552 008.

River Restoration Training

Past efforts to manage Australia's rivers have resulted in mixed success and the Macleay is no exception. A better understanding of rivers can be both a fascinating science and can contribute to better management of rivers for our future.

If you're interested in learning more about riparian processes this workshop is for you.

Topics to be covered include:

- The value of rivers
- Riparian processes
- Practical solutions to managing problems
- Developing a restoration plan; and
- Approval for works.

The workshop will be conducted on Thursday, May 21, venue to be advised. Bookings can be made through Macleay Landcare on 6562 2076.



Biological Farming with Dr. Maarten Stapper

Dr Maarten Stapper visited the Macleay on March 2nd to promote the benefits of biological farming. Dr Stapper is an ex-CSIRO soil agronomist who has gone independent and now promotes the use of living organisms to enhance soil conditions.

Sherwood Hall hosted 40 people for the morning presentation. Dr. Stapper explained methods to reduce dependence on expensive chemical fertilizers and pesticides, increase microbial activity in soil, increase yields, boost soil carbon, improve drought resistance, improve plant resistance to pathogens and ways that farmers can realistically make the shift to biological methods.



Dr Stapper analyses the soil at the Lahey's property

The afternoon included a visit to Ed and Kim Lahey's property where biological methods have been engaged. The health of the Lahey's stock and the condition of their paddocks clearly demonstrated how biological farming (as part of a suite of good management strategies) has helped the Laheys boost productivity.



Ludwig Mueller tests the penetrometer at Lahey's

Soil testing – making money for Macleay graziers

To help mid-north coast landholders get the most from soil testing, NSW Department of Primary Industries together with Macleay Landcare and Nambucca Landcare, are running three field days in early April.

Harry Rose, soils information officer with NSW DPI will jointly conduct the field days at Gladstone on Friday 3 April, Bellbrook on Monday 6 April and in the Nambucca Valley on Wednesday 8 April 2009. All days will run from 9.30am to 2.30pm.

Mr Rose said soil testing is a very useful tool to help landholders identify soil nutrient and structural problems.

"However, many things can go wrong between collecting the soil and getting recommendations," he said.

"Using the wrong tools and methods can lead to 'rubbish in – rubbish out' and a lot of wasted money."

Mr Rose said the field days will concentrate on many factors which landholders often don't consider when getting a soil test and which are rarely mentioned on the internet or in soils publications.

Do you need to come along to the field day? If you can't confi-

dently answer the following five questions, then the answer is yes:

- Why is a spade not the best way to collect soil samples?
- How does a change in soil texture affect fertiliser recommendations?
- Why should testing laboratories be accredited?
- Why are some testing laboratories involved in proficiency programs?

Why do some advisors use the cation sufficiency method for soil test interpretation and others use the balance method?

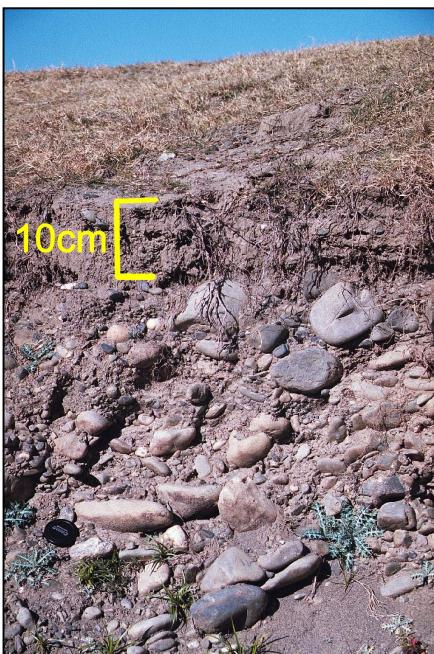
The field days will cover: What plant species can tell you about your soils; How to collect soil samples and what tools to use; Why a soil test isn't enough for making fertiliser decisions; What needs to be measured to make fertiliser decisions; The reliability of soil testing labs; What soil tests you do and don't need; Benefits of tissue testing and fertiliser strips; The rights and wrongs of using an advisor.

Landholders will be provided with the NSW DPI publications "Grasses of the North Coast of NSW" and "Fertilisers for Pastures".

These are hands-on field days, so participants can expect to get their hands dirty. Landholders will need to bring a chair, their lunch, sun protection, several handfuls of their soil and a soil test result (if they have one).

To register and get more information on the Macleay valley days, contact Macleay Landcare on 6562 2076. To register and get more information on the Nambucca valley day, contact Nambucca Landcare on 6564 7838.

Photo: Soil testing the top 10cm is only part of the picture...



Alpacas for sustainability— article by Alistair Smedley



2009 is The International Year of Natural Fibres. Amongst the aims of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the promotion of efficiency and sustainability of natural fibres industries.

Alpaca produces one of the most magnificent fibres in the world, much sort after by the makers of Italian suits and the manufacturers of luxurious knitwear. There are more than 250 recognised shades from black, through grey, brown and fawn to white. The use of these natural colours often requires no dying, avoiding the use of chemicals and large amounts of water.

For anyone who believes that sustainable farming practice will play a greater role in the future then alpacas are worth consideration. Alpacas can be stocked at higher rates than cattle or sheep due to their more efficient digestive system. They do less damage to the soil with their soft padded feet and pasture is not grazed as short. Although each animal has an individual character they can be halter trained are generally easy to handle.

For more information contact the Regional Secretary, Sandra Vella (6564 2046) or Alastair Smedley (6566 9403).

Great training Opportunities!!

Green Corps

On April 6, a six month Green Corps project will commence in the Hastings and Macleay with major works at Telegraph Point and East Kempsey Island.

If you are 17-20 and would like to be paid while getting training and working to improve our local environment, check out the Greening Australia—Green Corps website for more information:

<http://greencorps.greeningaustralia.org.au/index.php> or phone 1 800 671 078 to apply.

TAFE Conservation and Land Management Course

Are you interested in knowing more about your local environment and how to restore its natural values?

Kempsey TAFE is proposing to run training in Conservation and Land Management this year (age limit not applicable) and is seeking expressions of interest from potential students.

Contact Paul Smith on 6585 9514 to register or for more information.

What Does Your Garden Grow...



CARING
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Macleay Landcare and Kempsey Shire Council are running a free course aimed at teaching people to be aware of what is in their garden. This workshop has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Caring for Our Country program.

The course aims to increase participants awareness of weeds in their garden and their impact on our unique Australian environment. Participants will learn basic knowledge of how to deal with weeds in the garden including:

- What, where and why of garden escapees
- When is a plant a weed?
- What does your garden grow – Plant identification skills & look-alike natives
- What you can do – tactics for managing weeds in your garden
- Why don't you grow me instead?

There are only 30 places available and all participants will receive a student workbook and common garden escape pamphlet with coloured pictures. The course will be run on **Thursday, April 2nd** in the South West Rocks CWA Hall in Landsborough Street with morning tea and lunch provided. If you are interested in attending this course please register by calling the Macleay Landcare office on 65622076.

More dates for your diary...

2009 National Tree Day. Sunday August 1 (general), Friday July 31 (schools). Visit www.planetark.org for more info and to register a site.

2009 NSW Landcare Catchment Management Forum—Port Macquarie. Wednesday-Friday, Sep 9-11.

Have you seen an Indian Myna near you?

We need to know where right now...

Macleay Landcare and the NSW Game Council are joining forces to target this invasive species.

Game Council NSW staff are expected in the Macleay in the **second week of March.**

We are building a database of "Myna roosts" - locations where the Mynas thrive. We need the contact details for landholders willing to work with the Game Council to develop a management plan and to humanely destroy these threats to our native wildlife.

Please contact the MLN office on 6562 2076 to register your property or significant roost trees or buildings.

Please also encourage neighbours with infestations to register with us.



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2009 Membership Renewals

Were some of you wondering why you hadn't received a renewal notice yet?

Macleay Landcare has converted to a calendar year membership. Anyone who was a member for 07/08 was automatically extended until Dec 31, 2008. Anyone who has joined or paid recently will be valid until the end of 2009. A 2009 membership form is included with this newsletter if your membership is due.

All members are encouraged to include their email addresses for immediate updates on field days, funding opportunities and more—of course, MLN will be considerate not to overload you with info.

The bargain price of \$5 helps to keep you regularly informed and MLN strongly heard as a voice for the community.

Macleay Landcare Network News

Landcare in the Macleay

This newsletter is produced by the Community Support Staff of the Macleay Landcare Network Inc. with support for production and distribution from the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority.

Whilst Macleay Landcare Network Inc. makes every effort to publish accurate and up to date information, the MLN and its employees do not accept responsibility for inaccuracies and or opinions that may be expressed in this newsletter.



MLN Committee Meeting

**Wednesday 25th March - 6pm
Macleay Landcare Network,
42a Elbow St, West Kempsey**

A reminder that ALL members are invited to the Macleay Landcare Network's Committee Meetings.

Come along to find out more about this network and how we are trying to serve the community.

RSVP 6562 2076.