

Landchat

Landcare in the Southern New England, No. 120, July - December 2021



Southern
New England
Landcare

Our mission is to **lead, connect** and **enable** our communities to reach their sustainability goals in a changing environment.

Welcome

Welcome to Landchat Number 120!

Once again, we showcase the great work being done in our region, in what is turning out to be a bumper season of flooding rains!

We hope you enjoy reading about all the great achievements of community Landcarers!

Weedy Wasteland to Wildlife Wetland at Dumaresq Creek

A two-decade campaign to restore Armidale's Dumaresq Creeklands is about to move into its most ambitious phase yet, with Northern Tablelands MP Adam Marshall announcing a \$290,030 State Government grant to regenerate a 450 metre long section of creeklands off Douglas Street.

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Below - University of New England's Dr Sarah Mika, Armidale Urban Rivercare Group member Dave Stellar, Chairman Bruce Whan, Bryan Johnston, Northern Tablelands MP Adam Marshall, volunteer Angus Adair, Southern New England Landcare's Struan Ferguson and Armidale Regional Council General Manager James Roncon.



New Ideas and a New Mother of Ducks Lagoon Landcare Group!

Twenty-eight community members gathered in Guyra on a very wet afternoon on Wednesday 1st December to focus on a special place in our Northern Tablelands landscape.

Mother of Ducks is a threatened ecological community, like a threatened species, but with protection for the whole habitat.

Southern New England Landcare's Executive Officer and the event organiser, Karen Zirkler said, "Mother of Ducks Lagoon is special because she is an upland wetland, underlain by peat, and depended upon by a myriad of native plants and animals – a rare kind of ecosystem indeed."

Participants at the event were welcomed to country by Darrell Ahoy from NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), who noted that the lagoon sits on the border of both Banbai and Anaiwan traditional lands, an area of great significance to both communities.

Darrell also talked about some of the history of the area from an indigenous perspective, sparking a significant number of interesting questions from participants.

Deb Bower is a Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Zoology at UNE, and Chief Investigator for the environmental trust funded

Dynamic Lagoons Project, led by UNE.

Deb explained the reasons why Mother of Ducks Lagoon, and others like it in our region, are so special ecologically.

"These upland wetlands are important because of the unique habitat they form, supporting all kinds of plants and animals that rely on shallow wetland habitat," said Deb.

Deb noted that Mother of Ducks Lagoon is not listed as a RAMSAR site, because representatives of each wetland type are listed, and Little Llangothlin Lagoon was chosen for upland wetlands.

Various modifications to the lagoon began in the 1960s, and have included drains, levees and overflow pipes, which have significantly altered the natural values of the lagoon.

Douglas Smith (aka Smurf) from NSW NPWS presented some of this history in his presentation.

The final part of the event saw participants get involved in an interactive brainstorm led by Karen Zirkler, around the focus question: 'How can we help Mother of Ducks Lagoon to Flourish into the future?'

We wanted the community to suggest what kinds of activities might attract participation in a

new Landcare group if one were to form," said Karen.

"We also wanted to know what community members would like to see such a group doing or achieving in relation to the Lagoon," she said.

In a matter of just 15 minutes, 62 ideas were generated in an enthusiastic response.

"We were very pleasantly surprised by the number of ideas – clearly participants were motivated by our presenters and the information they shared," said Karen.

When asked if formation of a group around caring for Mother of Ducks Lagoon is something the community would like to see happen, the overwhelming positive response was 'yes'.

World Wetland Day on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 has been flagged as the date for a second community gathering lagoon-side, to hear from another guest and to take next steps in forming the group.

Anyone interested in being involved should become a member of Southern New England Landcare (free) at <https://snelandcare.org.au/membership/become-a-member.html> so they receive regular eNews updates about coming events.



Kentucky Public School Creates New Native Planting

Students and teachers at Kentucky Public School donned gum boots and gloves on Wednesday 24th November to plant stage one of a large native planting adjacent to the school grounds.

Planting has begun in the old pine forest area, which was originally planted by members of Harnham Landcare group many years ago as a potential income source for the school.

Having come of age, and because some of them had begun to fall over, the pines were recently felled.

The planting day was

coordinated by members of the school P&C, who are also seasoned, second-generation members of Harnham Landcare Group.

Hamish Caddy, member of both the Kentucky Public School P&C and Harnham Landcare Group, said the area will be planted in a number of stages over the coming few years.

"We'd like to keep the area accessible by the kids for learning and play activities, and we intend to recreate the bike track the kids have used for many years among the new

plantings," he said.

Kath Caddy said, "All the teachers at the school are one hundred per cent behind the project and it wouldn't be happening without their enthusiasm."

Mrs Kahla Chaffey, a teacher at the school, submitted a successful grant which paid for the trees.

One thousand seedlings were sourced from Chris and Maria Eveleigh at Kentucky Tree Nursery, and support was provided on the day by Southern New England Landcare team members, Struan Ferguson and Karen Zirkler.

"There is so much scope for learning activities in an area like this," said Struan.

"We'll help the school ensure there are koala food trees and species suitable for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater among the new plantings, and there's also scope for including some bush tucker species," she said.

A big vote of thanks is made to local community member Faye Lullham for providing a delicious morning tea on the day, to Janeen Robb from Armidale for volunteering her assistance, and to all the kids who got involved in creating a second Landcare legacy on the school grounds!

Left - second generation Harnham Landcare group member and past Kentucky Public School student Michael Taylor, with current student Charlie Zirkler, enjoying the wet planting conditions.





Above: Boys! L-R Matthew Fittler, Bailey Whitton and Charlie Zirkler.

Right: (L-R) Janeen Robb, Jordon Archibald and Struan Ferguson take a break from guarding and staking the seedlings.

Below (L-R) Hanna Hull with baby Iris, Willa Street, Olive Hull and Craig Zirkler.

Images courtesy of Karen Zirkler.



NSW DPIE Koala Experts Visit Southern New England Region

On the 30th of November Southern New England Landcare hosted the NSW DPIE Koala Team on a visit to plan and discuss a five-year Koala management plan for the region.

The team visited various project sites including koala habitat that has suffered severe drought and dieback, koala drinker sites, areas hit by the tornado, a Landcare rehabilitation site and a property at Black Mountain with significant koala habitat.

The team was represented by John Turbill (Senior Project Officer) Dr Billie Roberts (Team Leader, Koala Program Northern NSW), Alana Burley (Koala Habitat, Conservation Policy and Strategy), Brendan Taylor (Northern NSW Koala Partnership) and May Whittall (Western NSW Koala Partnership).

The team met members of our own Koala team, including Des Andersen, Struan Ferguson, and Brooke Robertson, as well as key stakeholders in our project including Southern New England Landcare board members, landholders and the Armidale Tree Group, who are propagating native koala feed trees.

The visit enabled Southern New England Landcare to showcase the first year of our Northern Tablelands Koala Partnership project, sharing our experiences with the visitors.

Liverpool Plains and the North Coast projects have recently been established under the NSW Koala Strategy, and team members are looking to the Southern New England Landcare Koala Partnership Project model, to assist them to develop a blueprint for their project frameworks.

Below: Visiting 'Winterbrae', a property with significant koala habitat. (L-R) Des Andersen, Billie Roberts, Dennis Wright, Brooke Robertson, John Turbill, Brendan Taylor, May Whittall and Teesh Wright.



Below (L-R): Gary Slocombe, Brooke Robertson, Des Andersen, Billie Roberts, David Steller, Brendan Taylor, Alana Burley, and May Whittall meeting at the Armidale Tree Group.



Koala sightings on the rise

With the help of our great community, Southern New England Landcare has received many reports of koala sightings this year.

Reports have been made via the Armidale Regional Council through the Council's online sightings register (www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/self-service/report-it/koalas-in-armidale) and the "I Spy Koala" app (available from the App Store or Google Play).

"These platforms allow users to enter information about the location and condition of the koala, as well as photos and other information," said Des Andersen, Koala Project Officer at Southern New England Landcare.

The New England is recognised as a region of significant conservation value for the koala as the area does not face the same development pressures as the coastal populations and the local koalas are more protected from the impact of climate change.

However, they are not without their challenges in our region.

"Koalas in the New England area



face a range of key threatening processes including motor vehicle strike, dog and livestock attack, habitat loss and climate change," said Des.

"Reporting koala sightings is crucial to the program, which relies on help from the community to engage in various koala conservation activities such as reducing threats and increasing functional habitat by planting native species," said Des.

Data from the app is available for public access through online platforms such as BioNet (<https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset/nsw-bionet-data-collection-koala-sightings>) and the interactive NSW Government Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) portal (<https://www.seed.nsw.gov.au/>).

The SEED Portal was developed with and for the community of NSW and provides public access for everyone to find data about the environment.

This information contributes to research and will help to develop tools to better conserve the New England Koala populations.

The Northern Tablelands Koala Partnership Program aims to secure the survival of koalas in the wild throughout the Northern Tablelands region for at least the next 100 years.

For more information about the project, please visit <https://snelandcare.org.au/landcare-projects/current-landcare-projects/942-koala-conservation-project-officer.html>.

Left: a koala sighted on the Rockvale Road this year.

How to Re-Create Koala Habitat

On Friday 29th October, Southern New England Landcare hosted an interactive webinar to demonstrate how to re-create koala habitat.

Des Andersen, Koala Conservation Project Officer at Southern New England Landcare said "We've been looking at koala population trends, which indicate our local area is becoming a climate refuge for koalas."

"The Northern Tablelands provides significant koala habitat, but in some areas of our region, we'll need to re-create it," he said.

The webinar provided insights into the theory and practice of recreating *functional habitat* that will serve local Koala populations into the future.

"It also covered known and practical methods to ensure revegetation or enhancement efforts are successful," said Des.

John Lemon, a local ecologist from JML Environmental Consultants, spoke on Koala feed trees, dietary preferences, and the importance of a consistent vegetation community structure.

"We've learnt a lot by researching Koalas on the Northern Tablelands in the last few years, and it's time to assist landholders to re-create Koala habitat on their properties," he said.

Peter Metcalfe, local botanist and accredited Master TreeGrower, provided advice on recreating functional habitat that will serve

local Koala populations into the future.

Footage from a local film produced by Southern New England Landcare in 2020 called 'Planting Survival – Successful Revegetation' was shared (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSwjvd-AyZo&t>), along with where to hire equipment to make large scale tree planting projects easier.

"The community can become involved in the Northern Tablelands Koala Partnership Program in a number of ways," said Des.

"Landholders are able to seek financial assistance to recreate Koala habitat on their properties," he said.

Creating koala habitat on farm provides additional benefits to production as a result of increased biodiversity.

"Community members can also report koala sightings, help reduce koala injuries or deaths through vehicle strikes and dog attacks, and assist sick or injured animals by reporting cases to wildlife carers," he said.

"By getting involved, community members can contribute significantly to helping Koalas survive in this area for the next 100 years," said Des.

The NSW and Australian Governments are currently supporting a number of koala conservation partnership programs across many regions of the state, all of which provide very significant information, data and activities to assist the survival of koalas in the wild.

The Northern Tablelands Koala Partnership Project is supported by the NSW Government.

Peter Metcalfe Named Coordinator's Choice

The 2021 annual Coordinator's Choice Award recipient has been announced as Dumaresq Landcare Group member Peter Metcalfe.

The announcement was made at the recent 2021 Annual General Meeting of the organisation.

Each year, the staff team at Southern New England Landcare Ltd make this award in recognition of a member, who has shown commitment and support to the team.

Karen Zirkler, Executive Officer at Southern New England Landcare said that in choosing the recipient, the team ask themselves, 'Who has been the most supportive of coordinator sanity this year?'

Karen spoke on behalf of the team to congratulate Peter, saying, "Peter has a quiet, thoughtful wisdom that has a very balancing effect on everyone when things get a bit hectic in the Landcare office."

Peter has been a long-term member of Dumaresq Landcare Group, and has volunteered on the board for several years.

He is one of Southern New England Landcare's Agroforestry Peer Group mentors, and is always keen to help identify vegetation when required.

Peter has a special love of native orchids, and even donates the odd potted specimen for display in the office.

During the last 12 months, Peter has helped the team by being part of the Northern Tablelands Koala Partnership Project Steering Committee.

When asked why he loves to remain involved, Peter said, "I can see the effect Landcare has had on the New England."

"The effect as you drive around is quite impressive when you take note," he said.

Southern New England Landcare congratulates Peter on the award and looks forward to many more years of his involvement.

Below: Peter and Sue Metcalfe after Peter was presented with the Coordinator's Choice trophy at the office of Southern New England Landcare in Hanna's Arcade.



John Winter-Irving Bequest Awarded to Bruce Whan

The 2021 annual John Winter-Irving Bequest recipient has been announced as local Armidale Urban Rivercare Group founding member, Mr Bruce Whan.

Southern New England Landcare has awarded the 2021 John Winter-Irving Bequest to Bruce Whan, with congratulations for his long-term service to the Armidale community, and particularly Dumaresq Creek.

Bruce's first reaction when receiving the award was one of shock.

"I was stunned," he said, "I had no idea!"

Bruce was on the original Armidale Council Creekland Vegetation Committee and his involvement has only increased since then.

While working at UNE, Bruce was involved in environmental flow work on Dumaresq Creek.

He established and participated in the first planting along the creek by a Landcare group around Claude Street in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Landcare was just a fledgling organisation.

As a founding member, Bruce helped establish Armidale Urban Rivercare Group as a sub-group of Southern New England Landcare Ltd, in 2002, and still plays an active role in its management.

Between 2002 and 2018, Bruce's work with Armidale Urban Rivercare Group has been impressive:

- Applying for multiple grants for all environmental works along Dumaresq Creek
- Planting upwards of 80,000 native plants
- Removing in excess of 5500 tonnes of woody weeds across approximately 10 ha of the creeklands

- Rehabilitating 8.9 km of Armidale's riparian corridor
- Facilitating \$250,000 worth of direct investment and more than \$1.15 M total investment in the creeklands.

Bruce is currently actively engaged in grant applications and administration, including group planning and guidance of activities.

He has developed diverse group membership including schools, University students, Scouts and local families.

He gets his hands dirty too, clearing exotic weeds, preparing sites for plantings and organising community working bees along the creek.

And it doesn't stop there... Once planted, these areas require care and maintenance - weeding, and in very dry times, even watering. Bruce does this both as a volunteer and a contractor.

As the results along the creek have gained notoriety, Bruce has been asked to present to visitors to Armidale, including at national conferences held at the University of New England and The Armidale School.

It was with great sadness that the Landcare community experienced the sudden and unexpected loss of the network's highly esteemed and hard-working Chairman, Mr John Winter-Irving, in September 2011.

Left: Members of Southern New England Landcare presented Bruce Whan with the John Winter-Irving Bequest at the Armidale Creeklands. L-R: Bryan Johnston, Jill Moore-Kashima, Karen Zirkler, Bruce Whan, Bev Stubberfield, and Peter Metcalfe. Image courtesy of Alex Hunter.



John died while working on one of the six properties that he ran with the help of his wife Ona, on behalf of the family partnership.

He was in the third year of his Chairmanship of Southern New England Landcare at the time, and had shown dedication to Landcare for nearly 20 years, bringing a perspective that balanced traditional agricultural with alternative environmental approaches.

The Board of Southern New England Landcare Ltd has the honour of administering the John Winter-Irving bequest on behalf of the Winter-Irving family each year.

"My congratulations and appreciation goes to Bruce, for all the hard work he's done over so many years," said Ona Winter-Irving.

"The work he has done with Armidale Urban Rivercare and the Dumaresq Creek is wonderful, an extraordinary achievement, and a marvellous legacy for Armidale and its residents," she said.

The bequest is to be used as a study grant in an activity of the recipient's choosing, in the field of sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, rural or regional development or leadership.

"I'll look towards furthering my knowledge with it," said Bruce.

"But I'd also like to honour John Winter-Irving in some way," he said.

Southern New England Landcare recognises that Bruce is the key to the success of Armidale Urban Rivercare Group's progress, through a combination of leading by example, essential contact with local government, a vision for restoration of the creeklands and the ability to make it happen.

Be on the Look Out for Threatened Birds of Prey

Southern New England Landcare is currently working with local film maker David Waugh of Verso Design to produce two short films on threatened birds of prey.

The first is aimed at training landholders to identify these important species. The second is aimed at raising community awareness of the birds, and assisting community members to identify them, and report sightings of them.



Above: A Little Eagle, courtesy of David Whelan.

The species of particular interest are:

1. The Little Eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*)
2. The Square-tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*)
3. The White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) and,
4. The Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*).

The films will be a useful resource for regional citizen scientists and landholders.

Reporting sightings throughout the Northern Tablelands of these threatened species, particularly during breeding season, will assist UNE to monitor the reproductive success of breeding pairs.

Breeding season is generally between July and February each year.

Contact details for the reporting of sightings yet to be confirmed. In the meantime, contact Steve Debus on sdebus@une.edu.au or phone 0409 779 766 or for further information about the project contact Euan Belson on enquiry.northerntablelands@lls.nsw.gov.au or phone 0408 623 839.

You can also join the Facebook group "Raptors of Northern NSW" to share in some great information and updates!

The films are funded by the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and are part of the 2021-2022 Birds of Prey Monitoring and Stewardship Project being conducted in partnership with the University of New England.



**Local Land
Services**
Northern Tablelands

Southern New England Landcare Membership is now FREE

At Southern New England Landcare's 2021 Annual General Meeting, members of Southern New England Landcare ratified new membership subscription categories and prices, making memberships for Individuals free.

"There are now only two categories, Corporate and Individual, making the membership subscription process more streamlined and easier to understand," said Karen Zirkler, Executive Officer at Southern New England Landcare Ltd.

"Corporate memberships still attract a small fee, and gain greater opportunities to become more significant sponsors of the organisation,"

"Members who still wish to contribute financially - and there are quite a few - can do so by making a donation on our membership sign up page," said Karen.

Tax Deductible donations can be made by using the Landcare NSW DGR Status. See box on this page for more information on how.

The Board of Southern New England Landcare is keen to increase membership numbers, and has workshopped ideas and consulted with members during the last 12 months, before making a recommendation to members at the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

The recommendation was met with great enthusiasm.

"A strong membership base creates a strong and resilient organisation, which is more impactful around issues that

are important to our community, agriculture and the environment in our region," said Karen.

"In recent years, our regular eNews has alerted to upcoming events and opportunities, while the very popular full-colour hard-copy Landchat newsletter has been reserved for financial members only," said Karen.

"It's exciting that we can now offer Landchat to a larger audience as a result of free memberships, because Landchat is such a showcase of the amazing work done by members of our community.

"Everyone needs to know about the great work being done in this space," she said.

In addition to Landchat, other benefits of membership include access to resources such as tools, pest animal traps and library resources; access to news and information about upcoming events, subsidised entry to certain events, and connections with industry experts and like-minded locals.

Members also have access to the latest grant information and assistance from staff members to apply.

Anyone who previously held a Family, Volunteer or Affiliate Membership are advised that they have been automatically provided with a free Individual Membership.

Those wishing to add family or group members to the database can sign them up at <https://snelandcare.org.au/membership/become-a-member.html>.

Existing members or members

whose subscriptions have expired in recent months (or years) can renew their subscription or update their contact details by navigating to "Update My Profile" under the Membership menu at www.snelandcare.org.au. If you can't remember your login, use the prompts on the page to reset. Alternatively, email mail@snelandcare.org.au or call 02 6772 9123.

To sign up as a new member, visit <https://snelandcare.org.au/membership/become-a-member.html> and follow the instructions. If you need a hard copy form, please call the office on 02 6772 9123.

Donate to us using the NSW Deductible Gift Recipient Status

Making a tax deductible donation to Southern New England Landcare is possible using the Deductible Gift Recipient Status (DGR) of Landcare NSW.

Donors should email fundraising@landcarensw.org.au, requesting that their donation be provided to Southern New England Landcare Ltd.

Every donation over \$2 is tax deductible. Donations incur a 1.5% administration fee.

For more information, contact Samantha Stratton, Landcare NSW Inc on 0487 767 955 or email ssstratton@landcarensw.org.au.

Around Our Groups

Groups Reps Gather at 2021 Annual General Meeting

Sixteen Landcare, Rivercare and Interest group representatives gathered at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 10th November 2021 for the 20th Annual General Meeting of Southern New England Landcare Ltd.

Due to Covid-19, the meeting was held online for the first time ever.

Re-elected President, Richard Daugherty said, "We were unsure how many would attend the AGM as an online meeting, given members usually love getting together to network in person, but it was a great success and ran very smoothly."

In addition to the usual Annual General Meeting items, each group representative shared a short (2 minute) update on their activities, challenges and future plans in what's called 'Around Our Groups'.

Karen Zirkler, Executive Officer at Southern New England Landcare, said, "I love the Around Our Groups section of these meetings.

"It's inspiring to hear how much work is being done, quietly, consistently across our region, to improve community, environment and agricultural outcomes.

"Our group members are so passionate about their local area and they use their initiative, passion and local resources to solve local challenges," she said.

The following is a summary of the

Around Our Groups segment of the meeting.

Bruce Whan (Armidale Urban Rivercare) – currently doing some work for the St Peters pre school area, plus a river rock path for the kids to walk down to the creek under supervision. Another corporate planting with Goodyear in the new year. A major clean up effort at Ken Jones Park (2002 planting) to prepare a planting site. Next year, 20th anniversary and planning a major anniversary public event at this area.

Bryan Johnston (Armidale Urban Rivercare Group) – planning a meeting with council. Creeklands are well hydrated and so the weeds are too!

Richard Daugherty (Balala-Brushgrove Landcare) – were unsuccessful in a grant application this year. Hosted the Greener Grazing event (virtual field day) at Lana with Tim Wright, Judi Earl and Mark Gardner as presenters. Landcare Australia Landcare farming benchmarking program involved 12 landholders from the area forming up two groups – carbon accounting program and natural capital accounting program.

Steve Harvey (Dangarsleigh Landcare) – a few signs that the group may rejuvenate due to a visit and sausage sizzle from the Koala project officer Des Andersen and Struan Ferguson. This brought out some of the old members. A lot of the original pine trees planted in the district are now dying and falling over, so need dealing with.

Peter Metcalfe (Dumaresq Landcare) – not a lot happened during the drought but lots of

regeneration is now taking place post drought. There has been a little bit of planting, but the latest event was the cyclone which did a lot of damage in the Dumaresq group area. People are still tidying up and expect to do lots of replanting. Along Boorolong Road, a number of places have been damaged.

Helen Stokes (Friends of Angophora Bushland Reserve) – the reserve is used by lots of folks wanting a quick walk on an accessible piece of bushland. Had a couple of working bees in Autumn with neighbours of the reserve. Lots of weeds but also some lovely native grasses. Some of the Angophoras are getting quite old and a bit battered from storms. Helen commented on the South Armidale Walking Track project/group where work is being done by a single contractor at the moment.

Peter Barkley (Friends of Barry Munday Reserve) – the group got a grant to finish the tennis courts which are now playable, another grant from Uralla Co-op to help with admin costs, have remodelled the old brick barbecue, changed the tank stand into a timber table, benches under the pine trees, a bird watch, and an equipment shed. Planning a koala planting, redoing the 125 year old fence, erecting a sign at the front gate, and a community BBQ, tennis, cricket and outdoor film night as a Christmas party. Thanks to all the office staff for their help and encouragement.

Sara Schmude (Friends of Black Gully) – HiCUB plantings occurred around 2011, and the last lot were a virtual planting during covid with live music. Holding a

festival in March, and Sara will plan a membership drive at that time. The native plantings are doing well, with lots of wildlife evident. The riffle and pond structure is working well.

David Mailler (Harnham Landcare) – planting of 400 trees on David's property but unfortunately frost has decimated them, pleasing to see how much regeneration there has been with the wetter weather. Covid has had a significant impact on the ability to get together as a group.

Bill Perrottet (Malpas Catchment Group) – a few group meetings coordinated by Rachel Lawrence.

Three large grant proposals were not funded which was very disappointing. Looking forward to working with 2rog on the ARC catchment water quality plan in the near future.

Michael Taylor (New England Agriwoodland Network) – has been fairly inactive in the last 18 months due to covid restrictions (although there was one recent site visit by peer group mentors). Hosted Silvopasture event which was delayed by a year and then went online as a virtual event due to covid, so a smaller event than originally planned. Speakers included Rowan Reid from the

Otway Ranges, Nick Reid from UNE, Michael presented from in the paddock. A number of members are involved in the Thunderbolt project for threatened woodland birds. Andrew Hugget has been monitoring bird species as part of that project. Znet is helping Uralla Shire be net zero carbon by 2030, which involves rural landholders. Potential submission to Harnham Landcare group to look back over their data from the last 30 years. Proposal from Prof Martin Toms (riparian restoration) to pull together a monitoring project for riparian zones. Focus on Salisbury Waters catchment. Working with NT LLS.

Arding Landcare's Lockdown Leisure Achievements

During Covid lockdown, Arding Landcare Group constructed a shelter, with a table and seats underneath, at Arding Reserve on the corner of Arding and Thomas Lagoon Road.

They also constructed seating around a fire pit adjacent to the shelter. As a picnic area, it is now proving popular with locals and visitors alike.

The group held their Christmas community gathering at the reserve on a cold and wet Sunday afternoon.

Despite the weather, about 40 enthusiastic and dedicated members and friends came along to enjoy some Christmas cheer and the Annual General meeting, held after lunch.

One property is organised to plant trees as soon as the country is dry enough, and the group is very committed to some new ideas in 2022 for works near Thomas Lagoon, including a prospective bird hide.

Below: The new shelter and fire pit at the picnic area at Arding Reserve.



Helen Webb (People's Park Group) – a small group that look after maintenance of some of the HiCUB sites on Dumaresq Creek in Armidale, which this year have been affected by flooding and soil scouring. Have been weeding these sites. Different sites have different weed problems e.g. privet, Chilean Needle Grass. Delightful to see all the plantings of ATG, HiCUB and Rivercare being enjoyed and appreciated by the residents and the small birds. Helen gets a lot of comments.

Arleen Packer (Save the Regent Honey Eater Group) – attended Greener Grazing and the Koala event at Newholme. Noted the wonderful efforts of staff member Struan Ferguson who has been helping the group. Haven't been as active this year due to covid but still had 5 meetings. Attended Sue and Peter Metcalfe's place to learn seed collection – a great day. Peter assisted Arleen to identify trees on her property. Attended the field trip to the Bundarra Common to look at habitat. Kingstown school planting happened despite all the problems due to covid. Have a little money left over. Have enjoyed the year. Thanked Struan

and everyone at Landcare.

Jill Moore-Kashima (Soil Health Forum) – plans for an event were impacted by covid. Raised some money with a street stall in Uralla. We're going to run an event with David Hardwick and David Carr. Recently put together a plan for a different event, which will apply for grant funding. The event will concentrate on soils under natural systems. Hoping to bring in peri-urban folks with small areas of bushland, and what to do the enhance and repair native system soils. Hoping to make it happen in Autumn, based at Jill's place near Retreat. Jill has managed to involve some other locals who have never been involved before.

Kate Boyd/Helen Webb (Sustainable Living Armidale Inc) – Helen is now the SLA Convenor, and working with Armidale Regional Council to get a biodiversity strategy that builds on some of the work by the Koala project. Also looking at a strategy for how the community benefits might be gained through the renewable energy projects in the region, and how this might play out. There could be a strategic approach regionally.

Bev Stubberfield (Uralla Rivercare Group) – Uralla and Kentucky Creeks have both flooded several times this year. With all the rehydration they have had the return of blackberry, honeysuckle and bamboo along the creek. Most of the seven sites are looking quite good. Some riparian zones looking better than others. 2022 the group will be 21 years old – would like to plan an event to celebrate the achievements that are looking so good. Need a lot more pollution traps in future plans. Would like to look at another 10 year plan next year. Bev noted she has really enjoyed the board

meetings. Bev thanked the staff and congratulated staff for all the success in funding.

Struan Ferguson (representing staff) noted that it's a great team to work with, especially with a

couple of new team members for Koala and Malpas coming on board now.

Z-Net Uralla's Elephant in the Woodlands

One of our most proactive, affiliated Landcare groups, Z-Net Uralla, recently completed their "The Elephant in the Woodlands" project, a three year sustainable firewood project funded by NSW Environmental Trust.

The group worked across the firewood supply chain – from biodiversity assessments with landholders to look at the importance of leaving benchmark levels of dead wood in the environment, to training workshops with firewood collectors, to home energy reviews and curtain making to improve thermal comfort in our homes and reduce the amount of wood needed for heating.

Z-Net Uralla did 18 biodiversity assessments, helped 12 firewood collectors demonstrate the sustainability of their wood, conducted 60 Home Energy Reviews, held nine curtain making workshops and delivered activities with four schools.

In total, the Z-Net Uralla volunteer community put in nearly 1700 volunteer hours to contribute their skills, support project activities and learn about wood and sustainability.

It is estimated nearly 700 tonnes of firewood used in Uralla was sustainably harvested.

The 'elephant' is still in the woodlands, but at least we are now talking about it, and taking steps to reduce the impact winter heating has on our precious woodland ecosystems!

Below: Participants in a sustainable fire wood collection event coordinated and hosted by ZNet.



Climate Change Challenges Addressed at Member Musters

Southern New England Landcare recently finalised the delivery of a two-year National Landcare Program funded project that assisted 200 landholders in our region to adapt to the challenges being presented by climate change.

Executive Officer, Karen Zirkler said, "the project, Mustering Members 4 Climate Change Challenges, aimed to build awareness, knowledge and skills among members and friends of Southern New England Landcare, around four topics that align with natural resource management and sustainable agriculture priorities identified in our organisation's Strategic Plan".

The events hosted special guest speakers and delivered interactive workshops that focussed on the challenges associated with climate change around each topic.

They also provided a forum for land managers, extension and nursery staff, and local and state government representatives to exchange ideas, knowledge and techniques, and design ways forward that will be more successful given changing climatic conditions in our region.

Focus on Ferals Forum

Specialist guests with expertise in pest animal management were invited to present at an interactive one-day workshop to enable participants to explore and address together, emerging issues relating to pest animal management, including the impact of climate change.

Although the event was promoted widely, drought conditions and bushfires, meant that only 25 participants, including graziers,

urban community members and pest animal specialists gathered at Uralla Bowling Club on 4 March 2020.

When asked to what extent the Feral Forum enhanced their ability to embrace new ideas, innovate or transform their practices relating to pest animals, one participant said, "As I'm an environmental consultant, it improved my potential to better communicate with people working in this field".

Eighty three per cent of participants said the information presented at the Feral Forum was either extremely or very useful for their situation, and that they were very likely or likely to implement the ideas in the near future.

Another participant said, "I feel more comfortable with aerial shooting and baiting strategies since learning about the extent of the issue relating to introduced/invasive species."

Saving Soil Health and Hydration

During Activity two, we investigated 'variations' on Natural Sequence Farming, and demonstrated what some local landholders were doing to improve on-farm results, through two events attended by 70 local farmers:

1. 'Regenerating Rural Landscapes Bootcamp' with David Hardwick and Damon Telfer on 16-17 September 2020.
2. 'Rehydrating Roumalla Creek Catchment, an Introduction to Natural Sequence Farming' with Stuart Andrews on 22 October 2020.

Restoring hydration to farms comes from supporting

healthy, diverse perennial plant communities on all areas of the farm, and using management practices to slow water flow naturally, especially high in the landscape.

Participants saw first hand demonstrations of how supporting diverse and healthy perennial plant communities restores hydration to farms. A diversity of plants builds soil during good times and protects soil during difficult times.

"Groundcover, grass and more grass" and "slow water at the top before it creates a problem at the bottom" were common reflections among participants.

In the New England, we can strive to maintain 100 per cent ground cover and substantial herbage mass, so that rainfall infiltrates rather than running off.

Conditions in 2019 were challenging but the higher the diversity of plants, including unpalatable ones, the more likely there are strong perennial grasses that respond quickly when rain falls, slow overland flow, holding water in the landscape.

Participants learnt to see their farm as a mosaic of patches: "Even though I had divided my place into a patchwork of systems, I hadn't really noted it, and so by noting it, it is easier to see the benefits and use those benefits to improve further," said one participant.

People were enthusiastic about some of the more physical interventions, but recognised they need more knowledge and experience before implementing.

There exists a clear desire for deeper understanding in group settings, perhaps through demonstration sites.

"Landscapes can be regenerated, and it's not as expensive as you think," said one participant.

Species Selection for Revegetation Success - Silvopasture

The Silvopasture 2021 webinar series was the confluence of two goals.

It marked the 29th anniversary of 'TreeFest', when 6000 attended the Taylor property 'The Hill', at Kentucky. It also delivered information on Species Selection For Revegetation Success, a key activity of this project.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event pivoted to an online event, and attracted 34 participants on 6 & 13 May 2021.

Participants heard from the following keynote speakers:

- Rowan Reid, author of 'Heartwood', founder of the Australian Master Tree Grower program and the Australian Agroforestry Foundation, on Silvopasture theory, practice and species selection.
- Professor Nick Reid co-author of 'Nature and Farming: Sustaining Native Biodiversity in Agricultural Landscapes' on biodiversity benefits of silvopasture under a Changing Climate.
- Scott Hall, advocate and educator for Syntropic Agriculture Maintenance/ Succession.
- Michael Taylor, The Hill, who runs the Taylor's silvopasture enterprise on harvesting. Andrew Gardiner, research technician in seed collection/ database management, Fields Environmental Solutions, Uralla on seed collection.
- Chris Eveleigh, Kentucky Tree Nursery on planting techniques.

Key learnings included:

- Increased biodiversity through Silvopasture is beneficial to pastures and grazing livestock.
- Silvopasture assists with carbon storage.
- Attention to species selection may help manage climate change challenges.
- More research is required to quantify the benefits of Silvopasture for resilient landscapes.

View the Silvopasture webinars at our Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnIB-7ty-VudV9Lxy0IW2yA>

Greener Grazing - Principles, Paddock, Potential

A more variable climate with more frequent, severe and stressful droughts, means that livestock grazing businesses must increase their resilience.

There is pressure on farms to reduce their carbon footprint, and potential for reward if carbon and biodiversity are regenerated.

Going forward, grazing management that supports those goals is essential for business and landscape resilience.

Southern New England Landcare engaged a range of speakers and demonstrate one form of resilient livestock grazing at Tim and Suzanne Wright's property 'Lana', near Uralla.

The event was originally planned for March 2021 during a 'gap' in Covid-19 restrictions. However, due to severe flooding in northern NSW at that time, the event was cancelled at short notice. It then pivoted to a webinar in October 2021.

Tim presented an overview of his management of Lana over the last 40 or so years and illustrated aspects of his property through short videos.

Dr Judi Earl outlined the fundamental principles underpinning grazing management at 'Lana', as well as regenerative grazing management more generally.

Mark Gardner then presented a set of experimental Natural Capital Accounts that have recently been applied to Lana. Guest speakers were followed by interactive Q&A sessions and a short workshop in breakout groups.

The event attracted 52 registrants and 35 participants, and produced a recording that is now available at <https://youtu.be/rImQYxFCE1Q>.

Fourteen participants responded to an evaluation questionnaire after the event.

Three quarters said the event increased their knowledge and understanding of the principles of planned grazing either a moderate amount, a lot or a great deal.

Eighty five per cent said the event increased their knowledge and understanding of the history of grazing management on Lana either a lot, or a great deal, with one commenting it was "Great to see outcomes from an extended period of time under Holistic Grazing Management".

All participants gained knowledge around Natural Capital Accounting.


When asked to what extent it assisted them in their business, 43% said a moderate amount, 35% said a lot and 22% said a great deal.

"Mark spoke to reach a wide audience's level of understanding... It gave us a much stronger understanding of the topic," said one participant.

When asked to what extent they could implement changes based on what they had learnt, respondents ranged from stating 'none at all' (7%) through to a great deal (7%), with 86% of respondents being somewhere in the middle.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES ONLINE COURSE

with Dr. Judi Earl

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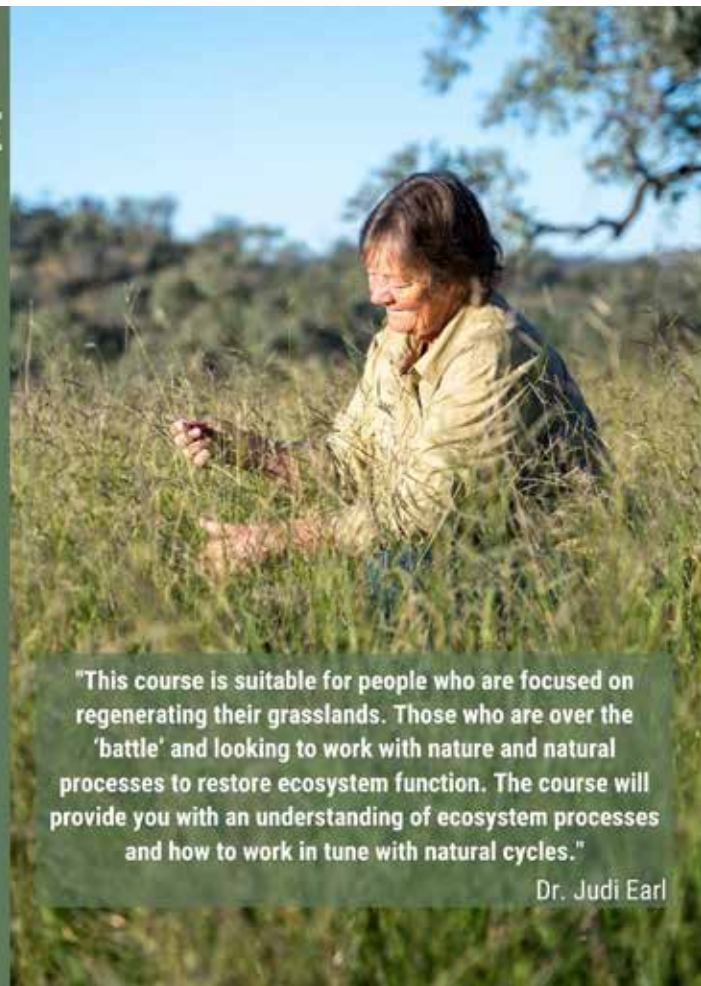
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"This course is suitable for people who are focused on regenerating their grasslands. Those who are over the 'battle' and looking to work with nature and natural processes to restore ecosystem function. The course will provide you with an understanding of ecosystem processes and how to work in tune with natural cycles."

Dr. Judi Earl

However, when asked how likely they were to implement some of these practice in the future, 86% said it was either Very likely, or Likely.

Understanding management principles that support the water cycle, protect soils and optimise nutrient cycling, help create resilient grazing businesses in the face of challenging climate variability.

Promoting a diversity of naturally present trees, grasses and herbs through planned rest and recovery, allows for less reliance on purchased fodder and minimal use of applied nutrients. Natural capital accounts accompany financial accounts to enable managers to make 'considered decisions' and understand both the environmental and production impacts of those decisions.

The approach a landholder takes ultimately depends on their business and landscape goals.

"The best presentations are always from the hands-on, practical operators who are good communicators. Couldn't have had a better line-up of speakers." Participant.

The four events were delivered over a two year period from 2019 to 2021.

You can download a case study flier of each of the four events at <https://snelandcare.org.au/resources/publications/878-case-studies-2019-2023.html>

This project was funded by the National Landcare Program Phase 2 Smart Farm Small Grants to the value of \$47,215.



Group Event Promotion Reminder

In order to be covered by insurance when running group events, please state your group name in the following manner somewhere on your promotional material:

"This event is hosted by [Insert Your Group's Name] – a sub-group of Southern New England Landcare Ltd".

PEER GROUP MENTORING SERVICE FOR AGROFORESTRY



FARMER TO FARMER EXTENSION

FOR FARMERS
MANAGING TREES
FOR REASONS THAT
MATTER TO THEM!



WHO ARE THE MENTORS?

- LOCAL EXPERIENCED TREE GROWERS
- MASTER TREEGROWER PROGRAM GRADUATES
- TRAINED MENTORS



WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED?

- FARM VISITS SUPPORT YOUR IDEAS & GOALS
- TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND INFORMATION
- SITE REPORTS



WHAT TOPICS CAN BE COVERED?

- Shade and shelter
- Farm aesthetics
- Natives or exotics
- Tree establishment
- Habitat
- Farm tree planning
- Native forest management
- Species identification
- Trees for timber

HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

Most significant change technique tells the story...

The suggestions and guidance of what species to try, planting locations, when and in what season to plant, as well as planting designs have all been of tremendous value.

Kelton Hine & David Munzies, Cattlebrook, Urala

The mentors passed on valuable insights about the diversity in my forest and helped me see it as a whole ecosystem. They also provided useful practical tips which filled out much of my own opinions on where to go with its management.

Rob Laurie, Brigadon, Nowendoc.



WWW.SNELANDCARE.ORG.AU

A project of the New England Agri. Woodland Network (NEAWN), a sub-group of Southern New England Landcare Ltd. This project is supported with funding from the Australian Government, and in-kind contributions from the Australian Agroforestry Foundation.



Dave & Hannah Ford - How the PGM Program Helped

Hannah and Dave Ford were asked what changed for them as a result of being part of the Agroforestry Peer Group Mentoring Project. Here is what they said:

We have owned the property since November 2013. In the past we would probably have described ourselves as new landholders with broad ideas around tree planting, but without specific goals. Our main focus has been building a house on the property.

Previously from the outskirts of Sydney, we decided to participate in the Master TreeGrower program to develop better ideas of the potential of the property, what could be done, what could be grown and improve our familiarity of the region/climate.

Being involved in the Peer Group Mentoring program has allowed us to generate new ideas, gather feedback on our existing ideas, explore if they are possible, and look at things from a different perspective that we may not have considered.

It highlighted other people's opinions, expertise and made us re-evaluate some of our own ideas. Local knowledge from the group has been useful in looking at what is suitable, what is possible and encouraging us to give some things a try and see what happens.

We started seeing the value in other parts of the property

that we hadn't seen before and gained a better appreciation for what is there, especially the diversity of flora and birdlife. We even saw our first koala recently.

Whilst we are still yet to implement many of our tree planting plans, we are now living on the property in our new house and starting to develop the garden. We have a better appreciation for the land, the value of it, firmer plans of what to plant, where, how and who to call on for expertise and/or advice.

The most significant change has been to consolidate our plans so we are less likely to make mistakes and do random things. The report has been good in providing structure on what we want to do, and provides a good resource to refer back to and review pictures. It will be a good baseline from which we can map our progress.

So ... we have been living in our new house for three months. Our main focus is family, developing a garden around the house site and wind protection. We would love to run some cattle but will need to build more fences and yards first. Looking at grant opportunities, future plantings and linking existing native vegetation corridors will be our next priorities.

We are now more familiar with the land, vegetation, soil, wind and rainfall. Protecting trees from wind and stock is still a bit

of a concern and we are looking at affordable options that can protect large numbers of trees, without losing too much grazing area in the paddock.

At first we were a bit overwhelmed and didn't know where to even start planting, but now we have more confidence and believe it is all possible and achievable.

Hannah & Dave Ford,
Puddledock, 20 February 2016.

How to get help

Southern New England Landcare has six local landholders trained in Agroforestry Peer Mentoring.

All you need to do is contact our office and tell us a bit about what you think you would like to do.

We then contact our peer mentors and set up an appropriate time for a property visit.

The mentors spend 2-3 hours with you on-farm, taking a look around, asking you lots of questions, discussing ideas and taking photos.

The lead mentor will then prepare a site visit report for you, detailing everything discussed, including possible ways forward, with useful links, contacts and even species lists.

You then have access to another 2 visits from your chosen mentor over the next 12 months, to support you in your endeavours.

The cost of the program is \$110 including GST and you must become a member.

We will invoice you when you receive your site report.

For more information or to book a site visit, contact mail@snelandcare.org.au or phone 02 6772 9123.

If undeliverable return to Southern New England Landcare,
Suite 10, 128 Beardy Street, PO Box 85, Armidale 2350.
Tel 02 6772 9123, mail@snelandcare.org.au.

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Landchat presents a forum for the expression of a range of opinions. While every effort is made to publish accurate information, Southern New England Landcare and its employees do not accept responsibility for statements made and opinions expressed in this newsletter.



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