

Tarcutta Valley Landcare



Landcare
Murrumbidgee

Committee's report

Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group Committee

Tarcutta Landcare is bounding forward, with new incentives and continuing projects.

The season has not been friendly to many land holders, with minimal spring rain (unless under a storm event) and disastrous late frosts affecting cropping products and yields.

The Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group looks at the future of the Local Land Services to continue support and funding

avenues, thus supporting the incentives and information dissemination from Murrumbidgee Landcare.

The Group encourages the young in our community, and welcomes the opportunity to donate \$50 towards a book presentation at each of the Humula and Tarcutta Public Schools.

To everyone in our community, we wish you a healthy and safe Christmas and new year.



*Please join us for the Tarcutta Valley Landcare
Group and Cross Property project*

Christmas party!

Tuesday 17th December at the Tarcutta RSL

7.00 pm, for a 7.30 pm dinner

FREE for Landcare members and their partners, and members of the Cross Property project. All other community members and families are welcome, at a cost of \$20 per person

Come along to have a chat with other community members, enjoy a tasty meal, and hear about the results of recent flora and fauna surveys on a range of properties in the Tarcutta and Humula areas

**RSVP essential by Mon 9 December to Peter McCallum:
(02) 69 289 563**

Summer climate outlook for the Tarcutta Valley and region

**Robbie Lennard, Wagga Bureau of
Meteorology office**

Temperatures: The chances of summer day and night temperatures being warmer or cooler than average are roughly equal. For more information: www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/temp.seaus.shtml.

Rainfall: The chance of receiving a wetter or drier summer are roughly equal. For more information: www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/rain.seaus.shtml.

El Niño: The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) remains neutral, with all atmospheric and oceanic indicators within neutral bounds. International climate models indicate that the current neutral state will persist through to the end of summer. For more information: www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso.

This seasonal outlook is based on data available at the end of November 2013. For further info, and regularly updated predictions, check out the Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook web pages provided.

Humula Public School Landcare area

Ainsley Wolter, Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group

In 1995 Helen Garland, the Principal of Humula School, began to undertake her Landcare vision for the 8 acres of 'pony paddock'. It began with the community planting 850 native lower storey trees within the original surrounding upper storey trees of red gums and yellow box. Since the original planting, it has been an ongoing project, with climate conditions such as drought and flood meaning the area is in constant need of attention.

With the dedication of the school and community, many different areas have now been established within the 8 acres, including:

Frog pond: This mini wetland encourages frogs, tadpoles and water nymphs, which are of great interest to the children. The total supply of water to this area is from a rainwater tank from the school building's roof. A grant from Wagga Wagga City Council is helping with an upgrade to this area.

Snugglepot and Cuddlepie area: This area is used as an outdoor classroom, with chairs and benches cut out of logs so as not to lose the outdoor native theme. The students enjoy this outdoor space, where they can appreciate and learn about the sights and sounds of the native birds and wildlife.

Maze: With funding from Wagga Wagga City Council, the maze is a work in progress. Some shrubs were planted up to five years ago, and now that they are established they have created a guide as to the shape of the circular maze. More shrubs have been planted, but will take some time to grow and become bushy enough to complete the maze. In the centre of the maze there is enough space to create a private, outside class area.



Above: Calin Burne and Izabell Mangan help plant some seedlings in Humula Public School's Landcare area

Orienteering course and cross country course: These courses weave in and around the Landcare area, so students once again can learn and enjoy the Australian outdoors while keeping active and fit.

Umbango Creek: While I was visiting I was fortunate enough to experience the 'Umbango Platypus' who popped up in the creek a couple of times! Unfortunately, during the floods the beach area was washed away. However John the gardener has done a remarkable job of ridding the creek bank of blackberries, making it a great area for students to learn about fish and other water animals.

Other areas and topics featured in the Landcare area include: native grasses, Aboriginal bush tucker, and Aboriginal uses of plants.

I really enjoyed my visit to the Humula School, and would like to say a special thank you to Julie Adams for showing me around and sharing her vast knowledge. Well done to the Humula School staff, students and community for their commitment to this area. We encourage all community members to support the School in their fantastic efforts to create this wonderful environment for local kids to learn and enjoy.



Left: Humula Public School students enjoy their outdoor classroom!

Preparing for the bush fire season

James Smith, Community Safety Officer, NSW Rural Fire Service Wagga

With the onset of the bush fire danger period, summer approaching and harvest commencing, it is timely to consider the preparations we should have in place. Have you:

- *Drawn up a Bush Fire Survival Plan that all the family understands?* Download one from the NSW Rural Fire Service website at: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au
- *Checked fire fighting plant on your property, ensuring everyone knows how to operate it?* A regular run of this equipment will ensure all family members are familiar and confident in using it
- *Prepared Asset Protection Zones around your home, sheds, and important infrastructure?* Removing or reducing bush and grass fire fuels in the critical 10-20 metres around these will reduce the flame impact on your property
- *Considered stock refuge areas?* For example lucerne paddocks with reduced fuel
- *Decided if you will leave early or stay and defend your property?* It is unsafe to leave once a fire has started.

COMPLETE YOUR BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN NOW.

PREPARE.

ACT.

SURVIVE.

RFS.NSW.GOV.AU



1800 679 737

First aid for fire burns

Annette Pontin, First Aid Instructor & Assessor, NSW Rural Fire Service Wagga

For the initial first aid treatment of burns, follow the following steps:

1. The principles of first aid should always be followed:

Danger

Response

Send for help

Airway

Breathing

Compressions

Defibrillation

Evacuation

2. Cool the burnt area with cool, running water. The application of Glad Wrap over the burnt area - but NOT

around the limb - before the application of cool water helps to decrease the pain, and also keeps the burn clean

3. If the burn is larger than the palm of the hand, a doctor must review the burn

Important points to remember:

- Do not apply ice, ointments or antiseptics
- Do not break blisters or remove skin
- Do not remove dirt or clothing. However if the burnt area is a hand or arm, jewellery should be removed.

If you would like more information, please contact the NSW Rural Fire Service at Wagga on (02) 69 315 855, or visit the website at: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

"Thumbs down"

Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group

The following is a copy of the "Thumbs down" article written by the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group, which appeared in The Leader newspaper in September this year. It is disappointing to see this sort of malicious damage to our Landcare project's, and a reminder to everyone to keep an eye out for any damage (natural or man-made) to our project sites.

"Down to the person who removed 50 metres of barbed wire and 100 metres of plain wire from the perimeter fence of the Tarcutta Valley Landcare site, opposite Borambola fitness camp. This revegetation project was funded by Toshiba, the RTA and Australia Post, with Australia Post employees volunteering their time to do the tree planting.

The site runs parallel to the Sturt Highway, with the trees assisting in lowering the water table, which helps prevent damage to the surface of the road. By removing a section of the perimeter fence you greatly increased the risk of stock straying onto this busy highway. Hopefully the barbed wire you removed will regularly prick your conscience every time you approach it."

Cross Property Planning project update

Jacinta Christie, Murrumbidgee Landcare

The Murrumbidgee Landcare Cross Property Planning project involves 64 landholders across Tarcutta/Humula, Kyeamba Valley and Illabo/Junee. Property maps have been produced for the majority of the landholders and a baseline survey has been completed by most over the last few months.

Family night stalks, and flora & fauna surveys

On the 11th, 12th and 13th of September, enthusiastic landholders and their families attended our series of free "Family Night Stalks", which were held in Humula, Eurongilly and Book Book.

The nights were designed to inform landholders about the flora and fauna surveys which were being conducted as part of the Cross Property project throughout September and October. The Night Stalks included a barbeque, and presentations from:

- Alison Elvin (from Natural Capital) who explained how the current flora and fauna surveys will be conducted
- Dr Fiona Christie (from the Uni of Melbourne), who discussed the equipment that is used to monitor fauna, including the use of remote sensor cameras
- Mason Crane (from the Australian National Uni), who discussed what has been found in past surveys in the area, and led the spot-lighting after dark.

The results from the flora and fauna surveys, which were conducted across 30 sites, will be presented by Alison Elvin at the Christmas gathering on 17th December (see the front page of the newsletter for further details on this), and we will also feature results in coming editions of this newsletter.

Spy cameras available!

Remote wildlife cameras, or "spy cameras" as children at the recent Family Night Stalks liked to call them, will soon be ready to borrow from Murrumbidgee Landcare.

The Cross Property project has purchased three of these cameras, which can be used to remotely monitor the presence and behaviour of mammals in our environment.

The infra-red cameras are simply set-up with some bait in a location of interest, and left undisturbed for a number of days. The camera will take photographs of any animal which comes to investigate the bait.

Two types of bait are generally used (at different times):

- Bait to attract herbivorous or omnivorous species, such as rodents, marsupial mice, bandicoots, and potoroos; or
- Bait to attract carnivores, such as cats, foxes and quolls.

After a number of days in location, the camera can be collected, all photos downloaded to a computer and the species in the photographs identified.

Murrumbidgee Landcare has a remote wildlife camera available for the Humula/Tarcutta Cross Property group to use. Each landholder can use the camera for a few weeks, and then circulate it to the next landholder. The SD card inside the camera can hold between 50,000 and 70,000 images.

If you are interested in using the camera on your property, please contact Jacinta Christie (Cross Property Project Coordinator, Murrumbidgee Landcare):

Ph: 0431 953 778

Email: jchristie@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au

Right: Dr Fiona Christie sets up a remote sensor camera at the recent Humula night stalk



Below: Mason Crane (second from left) discusses the habitat requirements of sugar gliders with landholders at the recent Humula night stalk



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On-ground works

A third of landholders have now received funding for their on-ground works, to complete projects involving biodiverse plantings (planting new areas of native vegetation), protection and enhancement of existing native vegetation remnants, and management of invasive species (pests and weeds).

Specific works which landholders are doing include:

- Fencing out and planting along creek lines and eroded gullies
- Planting tree lines, or adding to existing tree lines

- Works to control erosion
- Controlling foxes and rabbits
- Planting scattered paddock trees
- Fencing off and enhancing existing remnant vegetation patches
- Fencing and planting around dams
- Revegetating with understorey plants in existing remnant vegetation patches.

If you have any questions about on-ground works, please contact Nicole Maher (Cross Property Project officer): nmaher@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au, or 0487 953 776.

Silverleaf Nightshade project

Phil Bowden

Murrumbidgee Landcare and NSW Primary Industries have a new collaborative project, funded by Meat and Livestock Australia, which will target the perennial summer weed Silverleaf Nightshade across NSW, QLD, VIC, SA and WA.

Silverleaf Nightshade (*Solanum* spp) is an introduced weed that can dominate pastures and cropping areas. It reproduces from both seed and root fragments, so can be difficult to control by conventional means. Research over the last few years has shown that a systematic approach using a dual action control over the growing season from spring to autumn is needed.

This new project will work with Landcare networks and farmer groups to build local knowledge and capacity, and to foster the adoption of the research by farm communities. Large scale demonstrations carried out by

local farmers will compare current research with standard farmer practices.

Project officer Phil Bowden from Cootamundra is looking for demonstration sites within the local area.



He will also present a series of workshops and field days throughout the region to raise awareness of the problem and the best practices to control this weed.

For further information about the project or workshops, contact Phil Bowden: 0427 201 946 or silverleafnightshade@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au.

Proposed Tarcutta Creek Walk

Jenny Cowie, Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group

The Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group recently submitted an application for \$5,000 funding through the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal's 'Small Grants for Small Rural Communities' program.

The proposal was to construct a gravel walking track along the Creek and through the village. The walk would be intended to educate residents and visitors about the diverse environments that surround the village, from the riparian creek zone to the top of slope woodland with its understorey plants. A walking path would enable people of all ages and abilities to use and enjoy these environments.

The proposal included the installation of signage, and the publication of a walker's booklet, to be made available from various businesses throughout the village. The signage and booklet would identify points of interest, and include a vegetation guide to allow walkers to better understand the importance of these areas, and the need to protect them.



Above: Tarcutta Public School students, with Principal Ray Davies, identify plants in the Tarcutta Creek reserve on the eastern hill of the Tarcutta Village (photo from 1998)

We keenly await the outcome of the application, and hope to see this proposal become a reality!

Biological control of blackberries

Barry Sampson, Weedbiocontrol

In August this year, a field day was held at Humula on biological weed control, with Barry Sampson of 'Weedbiocontrol'. Barry spoke about the different forms of biological weed control which are available for a range of weed species, how they work, how effective they are, and how best to use them.

One topic which was of great interest to many locals was the potential for biological weed control of blackberries. The leaf rust fungus that affects European blackberries was initially introduced to Australia in the mid-1980s, with improved strains released in 2004. All of the released strains of rust fungus are harmless to native blackberry and commercial berry varieties.

How does the blackberry rust work?

The leaf rust fungus defoliates the blackberry plants over spring and summer, attacking the younger leaves, flower buds, unripe fruit and green parts of the cane.

The rust appears as small (2-3 mm) purple-brown blotches on the upper surface of the leaves, with powdery yellow or sticky black spores on the underside of the leaf.

How effective is the blackberry rust?

The rust infection usually affects up to 40% of a plant's leaves, however this is enough to reduce the vegetative spread of the plant, and to deplete the plant's root reserves. Slashing of plants in summer can enhance the effects of the rust, as the regrowth stimulated by slashing is very susceptible to the fungus.

The rust infection causes the plant to produce fewer fruit and seeds, and almost no daughter plants. Over a number of years, the rust reduces the overall biomass of canes, roots and root crowns.



Biological control alone will never eradicate blackberry, but in areas where it thrives it is a valuable control option within an integrated weed management approach. It can be especially useful where thickets are inaccessible to machinery, or where there is a risk of damaging sensitive native vegetation.

Upcoming blackberry rust field day

In late January or early February 2014, Barry Sampson will be holding a free blackberry rust field day, in conjunction with Paul McPherson (Weeds Officer at Tumbarumba). The field day will allow people to:

- See the effects of the blackberry rust, at a time when the rust is active
- Identify the symptoms to look for
- Learn how to inoculate plants on your property with the rust.

Barry will also have the rust available for purchase. If you are not able to attend the field day, you can contact Barry Sampson directly to purchase the rust. The cost of purchase will be reduced for those attending the field day.

If you are interested in attending the field day, please contact Nicole Maher at Murrumbidgee Landcare:

Email: nmaher@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au

Phone: 0487 953 776

Further information

If you would like any more information about biological control of blackberries, or a range of other weed species, please contact Barry Sampson of 'Weedbiocontrol':

Web: www.weedbiocontrol.com.au

Email: weedbiocontrol@bigpond.com

Phone: 0401 197 035

Acknowledgement

The information on biological control of blackberry in this article has been reproduced with the kind permission of Bundle Lawson and the Kondinin Group. The original article contains an excellent analysis of the full range of control options for blackberry, and is available online at: www.weedbiocontrol.com.au/media-publications/80-blackberry

Left: The new strain of blackberry rust, on a plant near Tumbarumba

Tarcutta Creek selected for priority funding

Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority



Catchment Management
Authority
Murrumbidgee

The Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority (MCMA) selected the Tarcutta Creek region for priority funding under their 'Sustainable Agricultural Landscapes' investment project this year. This is exciting news for local landholders, and a reflection of the value of the local landscape. The Tarcutta Creek was selected as the priority sub-catchment based on several community measures, including:

- The amount of existing Landcare activity
- The level of current and past natural resource management projects undertaken by landholders
- The potential for natural resource management activities to improve soil condition in the area.

The funding offered by the MCMA is for activities including fencing to land capability (see article below); restoration of erosion and saline sites through fencing and stock exclusion; and fencing and revegetation of riparian zones.

For further information, please contact Rob Kuiper (Land Services Officer with MCMA): 0428 493 187, or rob.kuiper@cma.nsw.gov.au.

Managing land within its capability

Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority

Land capability is the ability of an area of land to sustain a type of land use without causing damage, or reducing long-term productivity. Features such as slope, soil type and erosion risk will all affect land capability.

Classifying land according to land capability involves recognising the natural limitations imposed by soil type, slope, aspect, etc. The main land capability classes are described below. The numbers refer to the areas shown in the photograph at the bottom of the page:

1. *Arable land* (not shown on photograph): This is considered the best farming country, with a wide variety of production uses
2. *Cropping or grazing land*: This is very good cropping land, with low sloping fertile soils and little erosion hazard
3. *Sloping cropping or grazing land*: This is sloping cropping country that can erode when cultivated if runoff is not controlled
4. *Mainly grazing land*: This is land with good coarse textured soils, suitable for occasional cultivation but better grazing land
5. *Steeper mainly grazing land* (not shown on photograph): This is very similar to class 4 but with greater limitations such as steeper slopes and more erodible soils
6. *Grazing only land*: This is steeper grazing land that

has to be managed carefully. It is not capable of cultivation, and generally less productive grazing

7. *Tree cover*: This is unsuitable for both cropping and grazing because of its physical limitations. It is land best protected by trees
8. *Unsuitable for agriculture* (not shown on photograph): Like class 7 land, this land is unsuitable for any type of cropping or grazing because of its physical limitations, such as cliffs, swamps or other lands it is impractical to farm.

Fencing to land capability involves dividing your property along boundaries between land classes, where practical. Often this will be along drainage lines (which form along weak points in the landscape, such as boundaries in geology and soil types). Additional factors to take into account when fencing to land capability include enterprise, terrain, accessibility and management preferences.

Fencing to land capability allows you to undertake activities on each section of land that match its capability, with many flow-on benefits such as reduced erosion, increased productivity, reduced runoff and improved grazing management.

For more information about fencing to land capability, please contact Rob Kuiper (Land Services Officer with MCMA): 0428 493 187, or rob.kuiper@cma.nsw.gov.au.



Coming events

Native grasses identification field morning

Thursday 5th December, 9.30 - 11.30 am, near Binalong. Harden-Murrumburrah Landcare Group, together with the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority, invite you to a field morning to learn basic plant recognition skills, along with the attributes and management of those plants. Cost is \$10 for the "Grasses of the NSW Tablelands" manual. Please RSVP by Tuesday 3rd December to Louise Hufton: (02) 63 863 954, or louise.hufton@cma.nsw.gov.au

Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group and Cross Property project Christmas party

Tuesday 17th December, 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm dinner at Tarcutta RSL. Free for all Landcare members, and Cross Property Project members, along with their partners, \$20/person for all others.

RSVP essential by Monday 9th Dec to Peter McCallum (Tarcutta Landcare Treasurer): (02) 69 289 563

Biological control of blackberry field day

Barry Sampson of 'Weedbiocontrol' will run this field day in late January/early February 2014, at Tumbarumba. The day will allow people to see the results of the blackberry rust, learn how to inoculate, and identify the symptoms to look for. The rust will also be available for purchase.

For more information, or to register your interest, please contact Nicole Maher (Murrumbidgee Landcare): nmaher@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au, or 0487 953 776

Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group meeting

Tuesday 25th February, from 7.30 pm at Tarcutta RSL. All community members are welcome!

Please note there will be no regular Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group meetings in December or January.

Key contacts

Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group

Bob Schofield, Acting Chair:

Ph: (02) 69 289 561

Richard Eggins, Deputy Chair:

Ph: (02) 69 289 550

Jenny Cowie, Secretary:

Ph: (02) 69 288 238

Peter McCallum, Treasurer:

Ph: (02) 69 289 563

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Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority

www.murrumbidgee.cma.nsw.gov.au

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If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter, or would like to contribute any ideas, please contact Nicole Maher (Newsletter Editor):

nmaher@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au, or 0487 953 776.

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