



*Supporting landholders
with native vegetation*



Photo by Kristian Golding

Potoroos in Paradise

by Ali Rodway

Landholders are making a big difference to the survival of potoroos in our coastal forests. Where there is monitoring and fox control, long nosed potoroo numbers are on the increase. Potoroo Project Officers, Cathy Thomas and Olivia Forge are now hoping to expand the project to more areas and fill in missing links in the landscape and are inviting landholders to participate.

Since 2010, Potoroo Project Officers, Cathy Thomas (NPWS) and Olivia Forge (Local Land Services) have been assisting landholders in coastal forests to monitor potoroos and foxes and participate in community led fox baiting programs. So far, the project has covered Tanja, Wapengo, Wallaga Lake, Tilba and Dry River.

Whilst the project primarily aims to assist potoroos, other native fauna like long nosed bandicoots and shorebirds are also benefiting. "As fox numbers decrease, we are seeing a rise in the number of potoroos and bandicoots, and we're finding them in more areas than before" said Olivia.

"There are so many benefits to this project. Landholders know more about which animals are living on

their properties. Thanks to Cath, there is also better understanding of the cultural connections that the local Aboriginal community has with potoroos. Landholders are also saying this is the most successful they've been at controlling foxes in many years. This is likely to be a result of the regularity of baiting which happens each quarter and the



Cathy Thomas - recording tracks on sand pad

coordination between neighbours across large areas" said Olivia.

There are a number of ways landholders can get involved in the project. "One tool we use extensively is infrared movement sensitive cameras. These allow us to have a really good look at all the

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TICKS

The Australian Association of Bush Regenerators has recently put all the information they have gathered about ticks into one document. To find out about effective tick removal devices, insect repellents, tick borne diseases and how to contribute to research, see:

<http://www.aabr.org.au/aabrs-tick-guide-now-available/>

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Coordinator's column

Greetings landholders. The longer nights and cooler mornings we experience in late summer and early autumn are already bringing thick blankets of fog to our river valleys. It's such a beautiful time of year in this part of the world; perfect weather for walking, harvesting crops and swimming in warmer sea currents.

Although we've welcomed a small amount of rain across the Shire over the last week, it hasn't been enough to think about planting into anything but the moistest parts of the landscape like drainage lines and wetland fringes.

Some of you will be aware that the CMN is now supported by

Local Land Services, a new organisation that unites many of the functions of the former Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, South East Livestock Health and Pest Authority and some functions of the Department of Primary Industries.

The CMN will continue to provide workshops, field days, a website and information about events to support you to look after and improve the native vegetation on your place. I look forward to seeing you at one of the events this year or hearing from you if you need assistance or information.

Ali



Another visitor to one of the Potoroo Project's monitoring stations

What is the CMN?

The Far South Coast Conservation Management Network (CMN) supports private landholders in the Bega Valley Shire to recover and manage native vegetation on their properties.

The CMN aims to inspire and motivate landholders, increase knowledge about native vegetation management and develop the skills to do this work. The coordinator produces quarterly seasonal newsletters, organises workshops and field days, manages a website and keeps landholders up to date with relevant events and information via a mailing list.

The CMN is funded and supported by South East Local Land Services and Bega Valley Shire Council.



Local Land
Services
South East



Where have all the Yamflowers gone?

The once-abundant plants that sustained the first inhabitants of the Monaro have been disappearing fast over the last century. This is particularly true of the Yam Daisy, otherwise known as Nyamin or Murrnong.

A research crew for the Bundian Way project is calling for public support to help map the remaining plants across the Monaro and coastal regions.

It has long been known that one of the first plants sheep will eat when they are turned into a new paddock is the Yam Daisy. Its palatability to stock, combined with pasture improvement and superphosphate have contributed to its demise. Drought and trampling, especially compaction of the old swampy areas, has taken away some of its last strongholds.

As these Australian food plants disappear, they are being superseded by a range of broadleaf and other weeds, including the similar-looking dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)



Photo: Jackie Miles & Max Campbell

The edible tubers of the Yam Daisy form over summer and are ready for harvest in autumn

by John Blay

and, most commonly, catsear or flatweed (*Hypochaeris radicata*).

Yam plants were a staple of the old Aboriginal people. They were well-looked after and plentiful. In the 1950s, pioneering ecologist Alec Costin found the Yam Daisy species *Microseris lanceolata*, for example, distributed all across the region, including tableland, montane, alpine and subalpine areas.

But the daisy, outside of the sub-alpine and alpine areas, appears to be almost extinct. It is by no means the only yam plant. Others, such as the lilies and orchids, produced the thickened roots or tubers that were such a delicious staple of the old Aboriginal people. Some of these, such as the yellow flowered bulbine lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*) and delicate vanilla lily (*Arthropodium milleflorum*) appear to be still relatively common.

Not only is the Bundian Way project seeking information to map their distribution across the region, but its research team is working to find the best ways to sustainably manage the remaining plants. The team is led by Dr Josh Dorrough, grasslands ecologist and manager of Natural Regeneration Australia, and includes Aileen Blackburn, an Aboriginal woman with strong connections to the local landscape, intimate knowledge and understanding of traditional management and John Blay, project officer with the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council.



Photo: John Blay

Aileen Blackburn with a yam stick which she used to dig the tubers of the Vanilla lily carried in a coolamon

Areas are being surveyed and study plots established to assess the impact of influences such as fire, grazing exclusion and soil decompaction. This will be important if the yamfields are to be used for educational purposes, and as a cultural part of the Bundian Way walking track which will follow one of the old routes used by Aboriginal people to travel between the mountains and the coast.

The team has already discovered one site along the route, deservingly described as a yamfield, where close to a dozen yam species and other Aboriginal food plants are still present in high density.

Landholders and bushwalkers with information about the location of Yam Daisies or those wanting to assist the research team as volunteers are invited to contact John Blay at info@bundianway.com.au or on 0433 110 165.



Photo: RFS NSW

Let's 'Like' the Bega Valley RFS

The thick haze of smoke which blocked the sun and obscured views of mountains around the Bega Valley Shire over the last couple of weeks prompted many landholders to contact the local Rural Fire Service (RFS), keen to find out where it was coming from and whether their properties were at risk. There are a couple of other easy ways to keep track of fire in our area.

Marty Webster, Community Safety Officer from the NSW RFS confirmed that the smoke we have been experiencing is coming from the East Gippsland area in Victoria where 140,000ha west of the Cann Valley Highway has been burning for several weeks.

"Smoke from these fires has affected our shire when the wind is light or from the south-west" said Marty. For more information about fires in Victoria you can visit the Country Fire Authority (CFA) website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

Some landholders may not be aware that the RFS has a website and a Facebook page for the Bega Valley which provide up to date information on current incidents which the RFS brigades are attending, schedules of hazard reduction burns, updates on major fires and advice on what you can do if fire is in your area or approaching your property. The RFS website address is www.rfs.nsw.gov.au or find the Bega Valley Rural Fire Service on Facebook and 'Like' it to follow posts.

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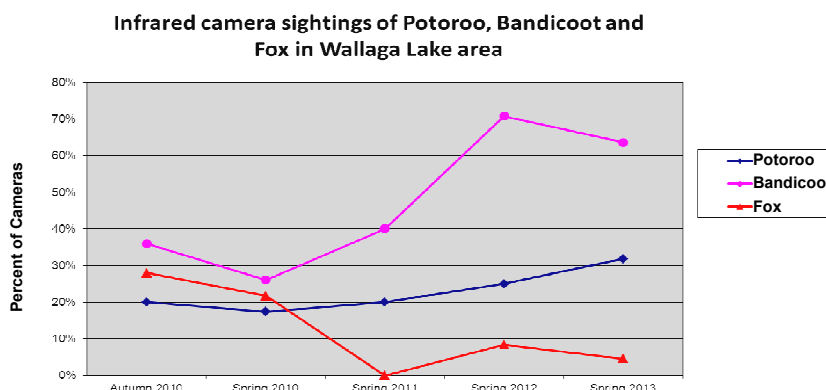
animals, small and large, that live in the bush on properties around the area. We also use sand monitoring pads to show the tracks of animals. If you are interested Cathy and I can come and set up a camera on your property to see what we can

find" said Olivia.

Cathy and Olivia are now expanding the project into surrounding areas and filling in missing links in the landscape. They have started talking with landholders in Bunga, Murrah, Coolagolite, Brogo and Cuttagee.



Long-nosed bandicoot family attracted to a bait station containing peanut butter and truffle oil



If you are a landholder in one of these areas or surrounds and would like to find out what animals you have on your place or to talk more about the project, contact

Olivia Forge on 0457 542 439 or email olivia.forge@lls.nsw.gov.au

Summer Frog Nights

by Ali Rodway

Frogs are fascinating creatures which give us clues about what is happening in our local environment. They respond to changes in weather, seasons, vegetation, presence of predators and chemicals. They are an important link in the food chain, helping to keep insect populations under control and providing food for reptiles, birds and other animals. Forty people had a chance to learn more about our local frogs at two CMN frog field nights in Panboola this summer.

Steve Sass, our guide and local ecologist, said the most reliable way to identify frogs is to learn their calls. It is worth listening to these until they become familiar (either in real life or from the excellent Frogs of Australia website http://frogs.org.au/frogs/ofNSW/The_South_Coast).

The first frog we found living in reeds at the water's edge and on surrounding tree trunks at Panboola was the Peron's Tree Frog (*Litoria peroni*). Sometimes



Peron's Tree Frog (*Litoria peroni*)
with cross-shaped pupil



Oscar Campbell releasing a Peron's Tree Frog

known as the Maniacal Cackle Frog due to its distinctive call, it is also known as the Emerald-spotted Tree Frog as it has small (sometimes indistinct) emerald green spots on its back. An easy way to identify this frog is to check for its cross-shaped pupils.

We also found the Eastern Common Froglet (*Crinia signifera*) in a shallow, grassy roadside depression filled with water. This is a small ground dwelling frog whose cricket-like chirping can be heard all day and all year round.

One Southern Brown Tree Frog also known as the Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria ewingi*) was spotted at the shallow, grassy edge of the wetland. These are also common in suburban areas and can be heard calling a long way from water. The adults have pale fawn, cream, orange, or light brown sides and their call is a series of rapid harsh, whirring pulsing notes (Creeeee, cree, cree, cree...).

One landholder described how he has attracted frogs by creating artificial refuges. A series of PVC pipes are driven into the ground, leaving a section of pipe above ground. Male frogs climb inside and use the pipes to magnify their calls. Pipes can also be hung from trees.

Steve made sure we minimised the chance of spreading a *Chytrid* fungus which threatens frog populations by disinfecting our footwear and wearing disposable gloves when we handled the frogs. We used sandwich bags to contain the frogs whilst we observed them, releasing them in the same place we found them. This served to protect them from handling and made them more calm.



Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria ewingi*)

The key to a great frog night is to make sure you have children on board. They proved to be the best frog finders on both nights and were the most reluctant to finish the adventure. Others showed obvious joy and delight when they found frogs. Have a go at identifying frogs at your place, setting up refuges and following what your frogs get up to over time.



Photo by Matt Gilfedder

Rats of the Sky

Indian (Common) Mynas

by Andrew Morrison

The Indian or Common Myna has been rated by the World Conservation Union as one of the world's 100 most invasive species. Thanks to the continuing efforts of a dedicated team of landholders, Mynas are being kept at bay across the shire.

Those of you that have spent time in Melbourne, Canberra or Sydney would be familiar with the sound and sight of the Indian (Common) Myna. These introduced birds can be found in high numbers picking through rubbish bins, foraging in parks and causing declines in native species across these cities and surrounding areas. This is not the case here in the Bega Valley Shire due to the work of landholders, led by the Far South Coast Birdwatchers club and

supported by the BVSC. This group needs more help from landholders to keep this species under control.

The Problem

Mynas have been classified as an Extreme Threat in Australia and won the dubious distinction of receiving the Pest of Australia award in the Wild Watch Quest for Pests 2005. It beat the cane toad and feral cat to get this award!

These birds are bad news for our native birds and other small animals. During the breeding season they take over tree hollows from native birds and small animals (such as sugar gliders). They kill chicks and destroy the eggs of native birds. In areas that Indian (Common) Mynas have been controlled there

has been an increase in the numbers and diversity of native species.

The Indian (Common) Myna was introduced to Australia in the 1860s and occurs in many cities and towns along the east coast. The species currently occupies only a fraction of its potential distribution in Australia and is spreading. Once established, numbers can be very high, for example, it has been estimated that there were 250 Indian (Common) Mynas per km in Canberra prior to a successful community myna control program starting there.

Identifying Indian (Common) Myna

There can be confusion in the identification of Indian (Common) Mynas as the native Noisy Miner and Bell Miners have a similar name, are of a similar size and can cause problems for other native birds when they occur in high numbers. However Indian (Common) Mynas are quite distinctive when seen or heard and have a chocolate brown body with black head and white wing patches when flying. The native Miners are predominantly grey (Noisy Miner) or green (Bell Miner).



Photo by Peter West

Indian (Common) Myna occupying tree hollow

Mynas in the Bega Valley Shire

Indian (Common) Mynas are continuously spreading into the shire from the north and west and the local Myna control group has removed an estimated 800 Indian (Common) Mynas over the last 6 years, helping to make sure that populations don't become established.

Most of the birds trapped have been from around farms and dairies. Landholders are helping with the trapping process by reporting bird sightings or assisting members of the group with trapping on their properties. Indian (Common) Mynas have been found in areas such as Bega, Bemboka, McLeod Hill, South Wolumla, Coolagolite, Brogo, Yurammie, Kalaru, Lochiel and Wyndham. However people should keep an eye out as they may turn up anywhere in the shire.

Local Action

When Indian (Common) Mynas are located in the Bega Valley Shire the local control group will liaise with the landholder and place specially made cage traps in the area. The trapping methodology has been developed by the Australian National University and is widely used in Australia. The trap design and procedure ensures the ethical treatment of the birds, minimising any stress to the Mynas and impacts to non-target species.

This spring the Far South Coast Birdwatchers along with the BVSC will be organising some public meetings to inform communities of the Myna problem and what can be done locally. Bill Hanke, president of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc. will visit to share the experiences of the successful, nationally recognised community control operation that has been run in the ACT.



Bruce Lindenmayer, Vice President of Canberra Indian Myna Action Group with an Indian (Common) Myna trap

Photo by Geoff Dabb

There will be a talk about Indian (Common) Mynas at the 10th of April meeting of the Far South Coast Bird Watchers. Contact the group at fscbirds@bigpond.com or at their website www.fscb.org.au/ for further information.

To report any Indian (Common) Mynas sightings, to arrange getting a trap or if you would like to become part of the volunteer

group please contact Andrew Morrison at amorrison@begavalley.nsw.gov.au or on 02 6499 2253 or Far South Coast Bird Watchers at fscbirds@bigpond.com

For more information on Indian (Common) Mynas have a look at the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc. website: www.indianmynaaction.org.au/



New Website for Far South Coast Landcare

The Far South Coast Landcare Association (FSCLA) launched its new look website in January 2014. The website will be used for keeping interested groups and individuals abreast of the latest news, distributing information about upcoming events and training, as well as acting as a resource hub for publications, useful links and contacts. The website also includes a page dedicated to the recently established Far South Coast Farmers Network. For more information visit the website at www.fsccla.org.au