



*Supporting landholders  
with native vegetation*

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## Atlas of Life

by Libby Hepburn

An inspiring 'citizen science' event known as a 'Bioblitz' took place at Panboola Wetlands from 16-17 May, organized by the Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness (Atlas of Life). Expert naturalists worked together with community members to undertake 40 surveys which recorded species from plants, frogs, bats, fish, bugs and reptiles to birds, mammals and fungi.

Panboola is an 82 hectare community-owned and managed wetland near Pambula, maintained for its significant coastal wetland and threatened ecological communities as an education and recreational space for the benefit of the community. It is one of a number of special locations where species lists are being created by the Atlas of Life, which is recording as much of the rich biodiversity we have in our region as possible. Over the last two years more than 8,000 moderated records of 1,427 species



Black shouldered Kite at the Bioblitz

Photo by Harrison Warne

have been entered on the database by 152 contributors and these will in turn contribute to the national *Atlas of Living Australia*.



David Jackson helping volunteers with small mammal identification

Photo by Ross Mannell

A bioblitz is a way of finding out lots of information for a locality in a short space of time. It gives everyone the chance to learn with experts. It also helps us refine different survey methods and offers training to community members so that they can understand more about science and their environment and add more sightings at other places and times.

Some of the survey methods included: Harp trapping for bats (a Chocolate Wattled bat was captured), mist netting for bird banding, Elliot traps for small mammals, scat identification, use of motion sensitive cameras and sand

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Bob Harris from Bournda Environmental Education Centre leading a water bug survey with local students

Photo by Ross Mannell



## Hotspots

Free Fire Management Workshop for Tanja, Wapengo, Bunga residents and landholders. 22 June & 12 July, Tanja Hall. Protect & maintain biodiversity whilst managing fire risk. RSVP to Phil Paterson on 0417 128 815 or [phil.paterson@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:phil.paterson@rfs.nsw.gov.au)

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# Coordinator's column

The days might be getting shorter, but they're so full of beauty at the moment. It's great weather for walks and working outdoors, with the warm sun on your back and the crisp air on your skin. A day out of the Valley at this time of year is a day wasted!

We've seen enough seasonal rain to get some decent planting done before winter. It's heartening to look around at many of the farms in this area and see hundreds of new trees in shelterbelts and around wetlands.

Lately, you may have noticed the blue skies becoming hazy, followed by some remarkable sunsets. This is a peak season for hazard reduction burns in surrounding National Parks with the cooler, fine weather creating a short window of opportunity to reduce fuel loads in strategic areas to reduce the spread rate and intensity of wildfires. Well planned burns can afford wildlife a better chance of survival during wild fire occurrences and minimise

disturbance to their habitat.

And now from fire to water. Water is life and much of the water in our landscape is held in wetlands. There is a wetland theme running through many of the stories in this issue and that's because there is so much wetland action taking place in this area right now and into the near future.

From the recent 'bioblitz' at Panboola Wetlands to funding opportunities through Bega Cheese and Local Land Services and the creation of the South East Wetland Carers' Network (contact Adam Woods at [awoods@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:awoods@conservationvolunteers.com.au) to join), to farmers fencing and planting wetlands for biodiversity and stock health, there are wetland stories or activities for everyone.

If you're not sure who to contact about managing the native veg on your place (and this includes your wildlife, weeds and pest animals) I can help find the right person to assist you, so stay in touch. Ali

## 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.



Australian Government



Local Land  
Services  
South East





# Funding for Wetlands



## Are you a landholder interested in managing coastal wetlands on your property?

Over the next 3 years South East Local Land Services has funds available to support landholders, in priority areas, to undertake works on coastal wetlands including salt marsh, mangroves, coastal floodplain, swamps, lakes and estuarine areas.

Funds can be used to manage, protect, restore and connect coastal wetlands including:

- fencing to control stock and unauthorised recreational access
- off-stream stock watering points
- removal and control of weeds including blackberry, sharp rush, arrowhead, invasive vine species like madeira vine and japanese honey suckle, cape ivy and asparagus fern
- feral animal control including fox, rabbit, deer, goat and pig
- removal of barriers to flow such as removal or modification of floodgates and/or crossings
- revegetation to maintain and connect vegetation buffers, address erosion or improve habitat

To be eligible your property must encompass or be adjacent to wetland areas within the following priority areas (maps available on request or call to discuss eligibility):

Wallaga Lake	Wapengo Lagoon
Nelson Lagoon	Wallagoot Lake
Bega River	Pambula Lake
Towamba River	Wonboyn Lake

Interested?

Call Sonia Bazzacco on 44751006 or email [sonia.bazzacco@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sonia.bazzacco@lls.nsw.gov.au) to discuss opportunities available in the first round of funding.

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trays to pick up tracks. The spotlighting survey found three Feathertail gliders. The Fungi survey recorded an impressive 28 species. Jackie Miles surveyed 10 flora habitats in the 30 hours so we expect a large



*Omphalotus nidiformis*

Photo by Liz Allen

plant species list. The bird surveys were great as always, with some lovely photographs coming in. Our marine surveys included a canoe survey of Pambula River, a photographic Shell Midden survey along the tidal stretches of Pambula River, scuba surveys and Climatewatch beach surveys. Data will be entered over the next two weeks and results will be displayed with some of the best photos at a Panboola Bioblitz Exhibition in June.

Another Bioblitz will be held in Mimosa Rocks National Park on 7-8 November so keep an eye on the website for how to join in. If you have any areas of special interest let the Atlas of Life know and surveys can be created. The Atlas of Life is also able to set up a "My Place" survey which allows you to build up a biodiversity list for your own property or favourite locations.

For Bioblitz results and for information about upcoming Atlas of Life events, visit [www.alcw.org.au](http://www.alcw.org.au)



Photo by Eli Badger



Photos: Ali Rodway

# Apps family: farming for the future

**The Apps are a multi-generational dairy farming family who farm the Bega/Brogo River floodplains on the north side of the Bega River, milking around 850 cows in two herds. They have embarked on a program of wetland and riverbank protection, starting by fencing off and revegetating 10 hectares of wetland and river frontage and creating a one hectare shade and biodiversity plot with around 5,500 native plants.**

Ron Apps moved his growing family from a 20 acre dairy farm in Turrumurra, Sydney, to Bega in the 1950's. He bought 'Yarranung', one of the original dairy farms in the Bega Valley and the site of the original township of Bega, before it was moved to higher ground on the southern side of the River. Ron moved with his family into the original house built on the property in the 1850's. Ron still lives and farms there. "Nowra and Bega were the only south coast dairy towns with a high school at that time and this was important to us" said Ron.

Ron and his wife Nancye raised seven children together and Ron now has 25 grandchildren.

Four of his sons and three grandsons are dairy farmers on adjacent farms. "We've gradually increased the size of the farm over the years and have been able to keep the family close by" said Ron.

Ron's youngest son Chris lives on 'Corridgeree', in Tarraganda with his wife Cindy and their three children. Chris says he is most like his dad in his enjoyment of farming, his interest in birds and the river. "It's a great way of life" said Chris. "Where else can you work and see your kids three times a day? It's also a beautiful spot."

Fencing off the lagoons and wet gullies on the farm is something Chris has wanted to do for some time. Chris had already started fencing and planting and, with assistance from Bega Cheese and Local Land Services (LLS), has taken the works to a much bigger scale. Ron is also fencing off a large wetland on 'Yarranung'.



Ron, Chris and Shannon at Bega River revegetation site

These works are in line with Bega Cheese's long standing BEMS (Bega Environmental Management Systems) program and its new Sustainability Program, where participating farmers receive a significant up-front payment to help them improve their long term sustainability.

For Chris and Ron, benefits to production and herd management are important reasons for the works. "The trees will provide shade and shelter. It's also easier to manage the herd. On hot days they'd wallow in the water and it was hard to get them to move. The water would get stirred up and muddy and this increased the chances of cows getting mastitis." Ron added that "pugging of the wet areas made the ground uneven and really rough to cross".

There are convincing economic reasons for keeping cows out of wetlands. Mastitis poses a serious threat to profits. Cows with mastitis produce less milk. High bacterial cell counts in milk attract significant penalties, treatment of cows with antibiotics is expensive and milk with antibiotics present can't be sent to the factory. Cows with ongoing mastitis issues may need to be culled, and these tend to be the higher productivity cows.

Chris has also started work



along a 500 metre stretch of the Brogo and Bega Rivers with the help of Shannon Brennan, Rivers' Officer for LLS. They are fencing off the riverbank, removing weeds and replanting with native species. The works are opposite the recently improved main public reserve at the end of Auckland Street and are a key part of the much larger 'Bega Bridge to Bridge Project'. The project will enhance natural regeneration of a remnant River Oak community and improve wetland connectivity along a 46 hectare urban stretch of the Bega River and create a pedestrian and bike path which follows the Bega River from the Bega Bridge to the Tarraganda Bridge.

Funded for six years by the NSW Environmental Trust, Community Bush Regeneration Program, the project is a partnership between government, industry and community (LLS, Council, Crown Lands, Bega Cheese and the Bega River and Wetlands Landcare Group).

It's clear Chris has a longstanding interest in keeping the river healthy, being involved in the Brogo Rivercare Group back in the 1990's. He is a keen observer who watches how vegetation in rivers affects their behaviour during



Chris and Ron Apps at 'Corridgere' 'with new plantings and a view of Mumbulla Mountain

floods. He knows the deep rooted River Oaks, grassy banks and a low shrub understorey are important for keeping banks stabilised but has watched over the years as thickets of willow, privet and box elder catch 'rafts' of debris that build up against trees and divert floodwaters onto banks, often with destructive impacts.

Like his dad, Chris knows his birds and is making sure that weed removal along the river is staged so that birds that have come to rely on the thickets of weeds for shelter and nesting are not displaced. As the native plantings become established, more weeds will be removed downstream. As

we stood near the river, Chris pointed out a flock of Red-browed Firetails or 'Red Heads' and said he'd seen the Azure Kingfishers there recently.

For Chris, this part of the project isn't about improving production outcomes. He grew up along the Brogo River and spent much of his childhood swimming and playing along its banks. He feels real gratitude for the good life his family has had here. "We were all schooled here, our families are all here and we just want to give something back to the community". Ron added "Bega's everything to my life. We owe it to the town to leave the land better than we found it."

## Health Issues for Stock in Wetlands



Helen Schaefer at Bega Saleyards

Helen Schaefer became our District Vet in January this year after 24 years in private veterinary practice. Her role is primarily to diagnose and advise on herd/flock health issues and manage threats to biosecurity, notifiable diseases and exotic disease outbreaks. Helen took a moment out of her work at the saleyards this week to talk about animal health benefits of keeping stock out of wetlands.

Helen explained that stock that spend time in wet areas on farms, particularly stagnant areas like wetlands, lagoons, swamps and drainage lines, are more susceptible to a range of diseases, including mastitis, liver fluke, bovine footrot and salmonella (spread by waterfowl). These can affect an animal's overall condition and milk production. Fencing off wet areas can help reduce the incidence of these diseases and have production benefits for farmers.

# Barrabaroo Landcare Group by Steve Hudson

Barrabaroo Landcare Group formed in late 2012 when 17 landholders from the Barrabaroo Creek catchment area gathered to talk about shared challenges on their properties. This year the group has agreed to focus on stopping the spread of African Lovegrass.

Barrabaroo Creek catchment commences just north of Christopher's Road, Quaama and runs through to Narira Creek at Cobargo on the Eastern side of the Princes Highway. There are around 35 landholders in this area with a broad range of agricultural and other interests. These include beef, sheep, goat, dairy, poultry and hobby farming, retirees, farm stay accommodation, excavation, plumbing and absentee landholders.

Several meetings and field days at local properties have galvanised the group into a better understanding and awareness of the area's environmental issues. Some of these are riparian weeds, African lovegrass and erosion.

The Group is developing a catchment plan with the help of David Newell from Local Land Services to assist the group in creating a priority plan of works. At a recent field day, each landholder present provided the geographic location of possible weed problem areas affecting their own properties. This has helped define the scope of remedial works to be carried out and indicated where clusters of invasive weeds are concentrated and where mitigation should be prioritised. This approach not only enabled landholders to be



Field day participants inspect Barrabaroo Creek vegetation for identification and management ideas

proactive but also to effectively communicate together which has enormous benefits for resourcing and overall effectiveness.

A priority for the Group this year is the control of African lovegrass which is not as widespread in this area as in many other parts of the Shire. Landholders are keen to prevent it spreading and are working with Council to help

achieve this goal. Two field days on African lovegrass control will be held in the Cobargo region in October this year. Details will soon be available on the FSCLA website at <http://www.fscla.org.au/>

To find out more about the Barrabaroo Landcare Group or to get involved, please contact Cheryl Fleming 0417 210 339.

**STOP PRESS**

## Potoroos in new area

Potoroos have been found between Wapengo and Wallaga Lake for the first time in the history of the Potoroo Project.

Project officers, Cath Thomas and Olivia Forge are excited by the footage which was captured on two out of four monitoring cameras placed on a private property off Nutleys Creek Road near Bermagui Nature Reserve this week.

"This has been a missing link in the landscape between populations to the north and south" said Olivia.



Potoroo visiting bait station at Wallaga Lake

Options for landholders wanting to control feral predators of Potoroos will appear in an upcoming issue of the CMN newsletter.

Olivia and Cath are keen to keep expanding monitoring in this area so contact Olivia on [olivia.forge@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olivia.forge@lls.nsw.gov.au) or 0457 542 439.



# European Wasps in The Bega Valley



**Reports of European wasp nests are on the increase in the Bega Valley. In the last fortnight four nests of this potentially deadly pest have been reported to Local Land Services or Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) staff.**

These reports are partly due to the time of year, as the nests are at their most active in late summer and autumn, but may also indicate an increase in the population of this pest in the region.

## Identification

The European wasp is a bee sized wasp with bright yellow and black markings and yellow legs (see photo). Queen wasps build an underground nest (occasionally in roof cavities or tree stumps) which is maintained and protected by numerous worker wasps. Nests can be identified by the constant stream of wasps coming and going from the nest, often just a small hole in the ground. Individual wasps are often seen around rubbish bins, picnic areas, fish cleaning tables and the front of cars (searching for squashed insects).

## Europe vs Australia and NZ

In its home, Europe, this wasp has numerous predators and parasites and nests are killed off during the cold winters. In Australia and NZ the wasps are free of their natural controls and the relatively mild winters (particularly here on the south coast) allow some nests to survive for several years. These nests can reach dangerously large proportions, up to 100 times larger than the nests in Europe.

## The regional situation

In the ACT European wasps have become a considerable problem since they were first detected in the mid 1980's. Originally an issue in the suburbs and central Canberra, the wasps have spread into rural and bush areas, impacting on vineyards and forcing the closure of some picnic areas due to their high numbers and the risk of serious injury to visitors. Low numbers of European wasps have been present on the south coast for several years but they have the potential to build into a serious problem.



## Issues caused by wasps

European wasps pose a threat to local ecosystems, personal safety, recreational values and rural industries on the south coast.

European wasp stings are painful and, unlike bees, a wasp can sting people repeatedly. While European wasps generally won't attack unless provoked, the nests are often hard to see and people can inadvertently step on or disturb them and be set upon by numerous wasps. This is potentially lethal in the case of children or those with wasp allergies (one person in ten is likely to be allergic to the proteins in wasp venom). Wasps may also enter soft drink bottles in search



Photo: Jacquelin Beggs

of sugar which creates a risk of being stung in the mouth or throat.

Environmentally, European wasps pose a significant risk to ecosystems as the wasps prey on indigenous fauna (particularly other insects) and compete for nectar. This reduces food for native birds, reptiles and animals and impacts on species that pollinate plants. European wasps are responsible for large biodiversity losses in New Zealand.

European wasps can threaten rural industries such as fruit growing (particularly grapes) and bee keeping and can adversely impact tourism by invading picnic areas.

## What can we do?

BVSC is keen to determine the extent of the European wasp problem in the Shire and any reports of nests can be made to Andrew Morrison on 6499 2253 or [amorrison@begavalley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:amorrison@begavalley.nsw.gov.au) BVSC advises that landholders contact a pest control professional to treat any nests that are found on their property and warns against attempts to treat the nest themselves as it may be home to many thousands of wasps which will be fiercely protective.

