



supporting landholders with native vegetation conservation management network

Issue 4 Jan/Feb 08

A Good Season for Pests

Last years rain may not have been enough to break the drought, but in comparison it wasn't a bad year. With some great pre winter rain falls and pretty decent spring follow up the Bega Valley turned green again. Maybe even shades of yellow or purple!

As it has been so long since decent rain, it's also been a while since we have seen some weeds really taking hold. I know on our property Paterson's Curse has made a come back. There were a few plants around last season that I didn't get on top of and now with the good rains over winter about 30% our river flat paddock is covered in it.

So while it's quite easy to look out over the paddocks and see changes, it's not all that easy to notice what's going on in your native vegetation remnants, especially if you've got a lot of understorey. I'd suggest that now is a good time to get out for a walk to see what is going on. Leaving it much later and you may find it's too late for some weeds, particularly grasses, a lot of which are flowering now or already seeding.

From the contact that Vickie and I have with so many landholders we can certainly say that fireweed is not just a problem in pasture anymore. More and more we are hearing people say they are now finding it popping up in the bush. It may not be as rampant but with good weather like we've been having it is bound to be on the increase.

Another part of your property that may be experiencing an increase in weeds is in drainage lines or perennial creeks. These will have been mostly dry over the past few years but even if not flowing at the moment may be moist. With the heat of summer these areas are perfect conditions for an insurgence from seed that has been waiting patiently in the soil.

Probably the other most concerning pest problem on the rise is rabbits. They are benefiting from the good season also. Through our Local Link program we've found that rabbits are a vegetation management issue

for residents in Brogo and Kalaru, but I'm sure they're not alone. Controlling rabbits in open farmland can be more straight forward than in not so accessible bushland. There are many methods for controlling rabbits and you'll want to make sure you create the least amount of soil disturbance in doing so. Working with your neighbours is really the best approach, going alone can be tough and self-defeating. If you can get a group of locals together the CMN is happy to help organise a control program in conjunction with the Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB). The RLPB can help landholders by providing advice and assistance in eradicating declared pest species which include rabbits.

So as the peak growing period is underway it's time to get out and survey your emerging pest and weed threats. The CMN is set up to support landholders to manage their native vegetation better so if you're unsure where to start or how to tackle the problem get in touch with us. We may not have the answers but can point you in the right direction or find the right person to contact you.

Dan Williamson - CMN Facilitator



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Coordinators Column

As we push into dry January and humid February we hope you were able to get the bulk of your weeding jobs done in the cooler weather. The upside to the longer days is that any plantings should show good growth if the heat doesn't get too extreme.

In this issue we review the seed collecting workshop which was held in November. Notes from the workshop are also on the CMN website. The next workshop in the series will show you how to propagate local species. See Events on page 7 for more details, you can book now.

Our Local Link activities are developing with the latest being in Kalaru. The focus for Kalaru was to highlight the local fauna that are threatened by increasing development. About 60 residents came along and enjoyed meeting old and new faces. One of the key messages was that Kalaru is part of a vital wildlife corridor that runs between Mimosa Rocks and Bournda National Parks.

We've had a number of concerns pass to us about changes to Voluntary Conservation Agreement (VCA) valuations. From our discussions it seems there are moves to fix the situation and we are pushing for it to be swift. Unfortunately policy amendments can take a long time. We'll keep you informed when we hear more.

A focus for us this quarter is to develop the CMN website to better service members. If you have anything to share with other members or if there is something you'd like to see on the website please let us know.

Hopefully your Xmas and New Years celebrations were fun and you were able to find some time to rest and enjoy the land that you work so hard on.

We hope to see you at an event soon.

Dan and Vick

Your CMN, What do you want?

The Far South Coast Conservation Management Network supports landholders with native vegetation on their property and caters to all types of vegetation and all types of land holders. The CMN is about you so we'd like to hear how the network can best support you to manage your vegetation.

The network will provide information and activities to help landholders decide the best way to manage their vegetation to get the outcomes they want. This includes:

- Field Days and Workshops
- Web site at www.fsccmn.com.au
- Regular email updates and event reminders
- A bi-monthly newsletter
- Display and trial sites



The FSCCMN is funded by the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority.



Kalaru Local Link **November 07**

Our Local Link program is still only new so we are experimenting with different approaches. In fact, each area needs a different approach as issues, landscape and community also differ. What was particularly different about this gathering was that it was instigated by members of that community. A resident of Strathmore Crescent near Blackfellows Lake came to us with concerns about the increase in clearing for development surrounding the lake and the fragmentation of its critical wildlife corridor value.

So a gathering as held and what a success it was. Around 60 individuals turned up for the Sunday evening BBQ including long time residents, newcomers and children. It was a very social evening however the highlight of the night was the presentations about local wildlife.

Doug Reckord (who was host for the gathering) gave an interesting talk outlining some of the endangered animals that frequent the neighbourhood. These include the yellow-bellied glider, powerful owl, sooty owl, gang gang cockatoo and glossy-black cockatoo. Doug played some of the calls from his laptop to the group and many were quite surprised to hear what a Yellow-bellied Glider sounded like.

Steven Sass, Ecologist with NGH Environmental, then gave some greater details about these animals' particular habitat requirements. The contributing factors leading to the decline of these animals mostly relates to their feeding with either very large home ranges or very specific feeding requirements. There are also a lack of mature hollow bearing trees due to Kalaru's long history of clearing to feed the brickworks kilns. This highlighted the need to protect the vegetation in their area that acts as a corridor between Bournda National Park in the south and Mimosa Rocks National Park in the north.

After a gourmet BBQ, salads, desert, tea and coffee the night finished off with a spotlight walk using Steven's megaphone and playback equipment to try and call in some of the known species. None were spotted but all had a great time.

What are the issues in your area? Can we help? Contact us and let's get a Local Link happening in your area.



Native Seed **collecting** **November 07**

Native Seed Collecting was the first of a series of workshops equipping landholders with the skills to produce their own seedlings for native revegetation projects. The first step obviously is collecting the seed from the desired plants which was the focus for this workshop.



Ten Bega Valley residents attended and were generally amazed at the level of thought and skills needed to collect viable seed. Jock Morse, Far South Coast Seedbank officer lead the workshop which covered seed selection, harvest techniques, storage and record keeping. Jock also outlined the benefits in using local indigenous seed from the area you wish to plant. The plants will be more suited and have a better success rate than non local seed sources.

Most of the day was spent out in the field actually collecting different types of seed from grasses, shrubs, herbs and trees. The hot humid weather made it uncomfortable but all soldiered on and were glad to come away feeling confident about their skills in collecting useful seed for their vegetation improvement plans.

See page 7 for details of workshop 2, native seed propagation.

The up side of weeding by Jackie Miles

Although weekly fireweed patrols are something of an imposition they do have their positive side. Patrolling offers the chance to make interesting observations of what's going on in the natural world. Fireweed is unusual in growing all through the winter which gets me out and about at times when I might otherwise be curled up in front of the fire with a book.

Last winter the interesting observation was the amount of parsley fern (*Botrychium australe*) on my block. I already knew I had this one, but it came up in unprecedented amounts and locations. It looks a bit like a virus-afflicted young bracken frond, with curly tips and a plastic-like gloss. You have to be peering closely at the ground to notice it, as it usually appears with just a single sterile and a single fertile (spore-bearing) frond.

In early spring, following good winter rainfall, there were unusually large numbers of the common greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis curta*) and maroonhood (*Pterostylis pedunculata*). The donkey orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*) were a bit down in numbers on the previous year but with recent good rains, weathergrass (*Hypoxis hygrometrica*), a small yellow-flowered lily with grass-like leaves, went crazy. It looks like being a bumper season for trigger plants too (*Stylidium graminifolium*), and I will be keeping an eye out for Austral ladies' tresses orchids (*Spiranthes sinensis*) a bit later on. They only pop up in a wet summer, usually close to water,

So when you are grumbling about having to get out there again with bag and gloves, think of all the interesting things you might get to see. You can find photos of the plants mentioned at the Bega Valley website <http://thebegavalley.org.au/plants.html>

Blue Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum creticum*)

Potential threat to the far south coast and beyond

Blue hound's tongue is a weed on the Alert List for Environmental Weeds, a list of 28 non-native plants that threaten biodiversity and farming productivity. Currently it occurs on only a few sites in the whole of Australia all of which are in the Towamba River area west of Eden.

Although only in the early stages of establishment, blue hound's tongue has the potential to seriously degrade Australia's ecosystems and farming enterprises. It could cause problems if it becomes established in Australia as its leaves are toxic to livestock and it has burrs that attach to cattle, causing irritation. It has potential to invade grasslands and suppresses native grasses.

A problem weed in Argentina and Chile, blue hound's tongue was first recorded in Sydney in 1898. In 1933 a naturalised population was noted in Eden and its presence was confirmed up until 1976. The two new infestations in Towamba were recorded in 2004

Blue hound's tongue is a biennial plant which grows up to 600 mm high. Its stems are densely covered with fine hairs. It has dark-green leaves, up to 200 mm long and 25–35 mm wide, covered with long coarse hairs. The base of the leaf is heart-shaped and clasps the stem. The leaves are alternately placed and decrease in size up the stem. In the first year of growth, blue hound's tongue forms a rosette; this is followed by one or more tall flowering stems during the second growing season. The flower, a 10–11 mm long tube, is pink to blue and has darker hairless veins and stamens growing from the base of the tube. Each flower produces four 'nutlets' covered with short, hooked

or barbed prickles when mature. The seeds are oval and 6–8 mm long, and their outer surface is thickly covered with prickles, each mature plant can produce several hundred seeds.

There is a native look-a-like, *Cynoglossum australe*. Photos can be viewed at <http://thebegavalley.org.au/plants.html>

More info about blue hound's tongue can be found at www.weeds.crc.org.au Use the search function to find specific links.

If you think you've seen this weed elsewhere, rather than trying to control it yourself, the best course of action is to contact Ann Herbert, Bega Valley Shire Council Noxious Weeds Manager for assistance. 6499 2288 AHerbert@begavalley.nsw.gov.au



Biodiversity Corridors on your Property By Dan Williamson, CMN Facilitator

Clearing of land for agriculture, urban development and many other changes to the natural environment has greatly reduced the amount of habitat available to flora and fauna on the far south coast. The fragments of natural vegetation that remain in farming areas are often small and isolated from one another.

Wildlife or biodiversity corridors are corridors of remnant or planted vegetation which allow flora and fauna to move across a wider landscape. This allows the wildlife to:

- Respond to environmental variability - move from scarce to plentiful food/water sources
- Respond to population pressure - move from over-populated to under-populated areas
- Access a wider range of breeding partners, preventing inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity

Have you ever thought about wildlife corridors on your property? Most likely you've considered where your remnant vegetation is, maybe even prioritised high and lower quality biodiversity. But what of the connectivity of your remnants? Firstly there is the connectivity to other remnants on your property and secondly to the wider landscape.

If you haven't already done so, having an aerial map or photograph is the best tool you could get your hands on. Try using the free software Google Earth www.earth.google.com You'll need to download the program and unfortunately need broadband. If you don't have broadband we would be happy to save a few images of your property if you contact us.

Having a look at your landscape from above gives you a great perspective of size, shape and linkages between remnants. Drainage lines, waterways, areas adjacent to roads, rocky hilltops and along fence lines are all places where habitat corridors might be created in cleared land. Co-operative action between several landowners

may be necessary to link habitat areas.

Aspects of a corridor should include:

- Be continuous and link areas of wildlife habitat
- Try to represent all forms of vegetation where natural to the area (trees, shrubs, ground cover, fallen logs and leaf litter);
- Wide enough and have suitable habitat for the animals to live in as well as to move through
- Also be wide enough so the corridor is not all 'edge'. Edges of remnants are exposed to weeds and expose fauna to predation as they move through. Incorporate an edge 'buffer' to help prevent this.
- Have other benefits e.g. wind breaks, shelter belts for stock, nutrient soaks from intensive agriculture, act as barriers from wind blown weed and insects etc.

There are many opportunities to incorporate corridors into your property plan. They may benefit not only wildlife but also the ecological balance that supports your farming system.

If you think there are options to build biodiversity corridors into your property, contact us as a first point of call. We can then talk to different project officers from the various government agencies in the region to see if there may be some financial or management assistance available for you.

The photo below shows a biodiversity corridor linking a national park to riparian vegetation. This allows fauna to access water and utilise the riparian corridor as a highway linking up other nearby national parks and reserve systems.



Hollow-bearing Trees

Tree hollows are cavities formed in the trunk or branches of a live or dead tree. The importance of tree hollows for a range of animal species is well documented with some 179 animal species occurring in forests of NSW that are hollow-dependent. These animals include 46 mammals, 85 birds, 32 reptiles and 16 frogs.

Such hollows are usually more characteristic of older, mature to over-mature trees but may form in earlier growth stages depending on tree species. Trees with hollows are termed 'hollow bearing trees' or 'habitat trees'.

Hollows usually take a long time to form, and in particular, large hollows may only occur in very large, old trees (100 – 150 years plus in age). Hollows in trees are usually formed as a result of wind breakage, lightning strike or fire and/or due to termite, insect or fungal attack.

They may vary in size, both in cavity opening diameter and cavity depth and volume, from small openings of 2 – 6 cm to very large with entrance diameters of 18 – 30 cm or more.

Such diversity caters for the wide range of animal species which utilise tree hollows from small insectivorous bats weighing less than 10 grams to large animals such as the powerful owl, glossy black cockatoo, yellow-bellied glider and greater glider.

Maintaining hollow-bearing trees is something you may want to consider when selecting timber or firewood trees from your vegetation.

This information is taken from www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pnf/pnfadvisorynotes.htm This site has a number of good brief fact sheets about managing habitat and biodiversity in remnant and plantation vegetation.

Introducing BRAWL

The Bega River and Wetlands Landcare Group (BRAWL) formed in 2006 and now has around 20 members. Our focus is on Bega's Urban Wetlands including the Bega River close to the town centre. We hold working bees on the last Saturday of each month between 9am and 11am.

What we've been up to during the year:

- Planting 2000 Bega Dry Grass Forest species above the junction of the Bega and Brogo Rivers (BRAWL worked with CVA and Jock Waugh to fence, lay weedmat and plant out the .75 ha of degraded Crown Land)
- Flora and fauna survey work around Spence's Lagoon (behind the Bega Old Wares site)
- Drafting a management plan for Spence's Lagoon and initial weed clearing for access
- Further planting of the BEND anabranch to stabilize its banks
- Water quality monitoring of our 3 primary sites through Waterwatch
- Submission to the Bega Town Planning process

What we're looking forward to this year:

- A community Frog Monitoring event in cooperation with FSCCMN
- Finalising the Spence's Lagoon Management Plan
- Submitting a DA to BVSC for a walking path and birdhide from Gipps St Bega, around Spence's Lagoon, across the BEND land to the Bega River
- Rehabilitation work around the Lagoon including weed removal and planting
- Protecting banks of the Bega River through bollard construction
- Providing a historical/cultural information shelter in Council's reserve at the Bega River
- Lots of other exciting urban wetland adventures!

For more information about BRAWL or to help out, contact me on 6492 0518 or visit our website on the www.thebegavalley.org.au/begariver.html

Ali Rodway

Project Officer, BRAWL



Resources for Veg Management

* Other CMN's

See what other CMN's are doing around Australia.

www.gbwcmn.net.au

www.egrainforest.org.au

www.southern.cma.nsw.gov.au/monaro.php

* Endangered ecological communities

Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) is a term referring to a plant community that is under threat. There are 12 EEC's in the South East Corner of NSW. www.esc.nsw.gov.au/Environment/ThreatenedSpecies/index.html

* Grasslands

Living in the Bega valley, chances are you may have some native grassland. If you're keen to know more about native grasslands contact Friends of Grasslands www.fog.org.au

* Weeds

Regional information and photos of environmental weeds can be sourced at www.esc.nsw.gov.au/weeds and for noxious weeds see www.southeastweeds.org.au Photos of a wide range of native plants and weeds of the south coast are at www.thebegavalley.com/plants.html

* NPWS private land conservation publications

Some great publications related to managing native vegetation www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/content/conservation_partners (sorry about the long address!) Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on publications

* Threatened species

If you want to improve or create habitat for a threatened animal or plant, a very comprehensive web site is www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au/tsprofile

* Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research

Great database of web sites related to plant research and identification. www.anbg.gov.au/databases/database-table

* Fire and vegetation management

The Nature Conservation Council sponsored the 'Hotspots' fire project. Their website has detailed information to help you understand fire management www.nccnsw.org.au (look for Hotspots Fire Project under campaigns)

VCA rates update

Most landholders with a Voluntary Conservation Agreement (VCA) on their land would know about the changes to how VCA properties are charged rates. We have been following this issue since it came to our attention and are in full support of landholders. From our inquiries, positive amendments are in the process but may take a while yet.

Landholders wishing to seek clarification on the matter can contact:

Stuart McMahon

Manager Community Programs Unit, NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, ph: 02 6298 0327 stuart.mcmahon@environment.nsw.gov.au

Upcoming Events

Native seed propagation

Saturday 8th March, 10am-3pm

Part two in the 'Grow Your Own' series looks at propagating native plants for your revegetation projects at home. The workshop will cover soil preparation, seed preparation specific to native plants, equipment, hygiene and seedling care.

Tulgeen Riverside Nursery

All food (and treats) provided

RSVP necessary, Dan & Vick

6492 5558 or info@fscm.com.au



CMN Website

www.fscm.com.au

Local Vegetation Management Services

A list is now available on the CMN web site that outlines businesses or individuals on the far south coast that provide services in vegetation or landscape management.

Examples of services include bush regeneration, native plant propagation, flora and fauna surveys, ecological advice, vegetation management planning, weed management etc.

If you provide such services and have not been added to the list, please contact us and we'll happily include your details. Likewise if we have misrepresented your service or details.