



*Supporting landholders  
with native vegetation*

## Black is Back

by Alison Rodway



Glossy-black cockatoo alights on Black she-oak

Black she-oaks are fast growing, nitrogen fixing trees up to 12 metres tall. Their range extends south from the tip of Cape York Peninsula in north Queensland to southern parts of Tasmania. They are most common east of the Great Dividing Range and grow in a wide range of shallow, well-drained soils. They are considered an excellent fuelwood, make a useful windbreak or shelterbelt species, have good erosion control potential in sandy sites and tolerate salty coastal winds.

Most importantly, they are the preferred feed tree for the Glossy-black cockatoo which is listed as 'Vulnerable' on Schedule 2 of the *NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

In this area, the cockatoos feed almost solely on *Allocasuarina littoralis* seeds that they extract from closed cones, leaving characteristic feeding litter called chewings beneath favoured trees. The cockatoos breed in winter, nesting in tree hollows of large eucalypts. They raise their young on *A. littoralis* seeds, foraging for most of the day and returning to roosting trees at dusk.

**Autumn is not usually known as a season full of flowers but one species that stands out now is *Allocasuarina littoralis* or the Black she-oak.**

Great swathes of rusty coloured flowers can be seen growing on the branchlets of male trees. Female plants can be identified by their small, fluffy, red flowers and seed bearing cones (see photo on next page).

Cones can be collected during May to August. Seeds will be released several days after cones are removed from the tree. Seeds start to germinate in about seven days if grown at 25°C.



*Allocasuarina littoralis* - male

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Photos: Michael Fiedler

## Property Walk



**Explore two different properties in Brogo with botanist Jackie Miles**

**Sat 22 June 2013**

Register interest by contacting Ali (details below)

## Contact the FSCCMN

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# Coordinator's column

Thanks to the generosity of CMN members, there has been a great response to the call for places where we could host a property walk. The first of these will be in Brogo, visiting two properties that are close together but on different soil types and with different aspects. Jackie Miles will guide us on the walk, exploring the effects of these differences on the type of vegetation.

Later in the year we'll head to the Towamba Valley to visit some excellent examples of the Lowland Grassy Woodland Endangered Ecological Community.

Last autumn we looked at minimising the impact of collecting fallen timber and dead trees for firewood. Another option explored in this edition is to establish a woodlot to meet your future firewood needs or those of the people who come after you.

What I think we share as CMN members is our connection to the land we live on and the sustenance this gives us. Wayne Schaefer's story shows this connection to the land his family has been farming for several generations and I'm grateful to him for sharing it with us. Ali



*Correa baeuerlenii* - Chef's Cap Correa



*Allocasuarina littoralis* - female

Photos: Michael Friedler

## 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 the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and Bega Valley Shire Council.



Catchment Management Authority  
Southern Rivers



# What's in a woodlot?

by Jackie Miles

With firewood season already upon us, Jackie Miles explains how she and Max Campbell established a woodlot on their property in Brogo to meet their own firewood needs.

Our first woodlot planting was in 1993. Although we have a lot of timber on the place we can't get a car anywhere near 95% of it, so a compact, conveniently located woodlot seemed a good idea. We also have a Voluntary Conservation Agreement over about 3/4 of the property, which does allow a certain level of firewood collection, but we prefer not to be pushing the car into the less disturbed parts of the block. I was also working at Bridge House nursery then, and in Bega Valley Tree Planters, so was into growing and planting stuff. From the angle of minimising our carbon footprint, we'd read that growing and burning your own firewood stacks up pretty well compared with other energy sources for heating and cooking.

We began our first planting on the flat because we had a fenced area available from an old vegetable garden that wasn't being used. This determined the size, which is about 30m square. We took the fence down once the trees were established. Success-wise, the initial planting went well. We watered it in the first season but not thereafter. We planted too close together - 2m x 2m I seem to recall, so some of the slower trees got suppressed and will never be any use. Fewer trees at double the spacing would have been sensible I think.

The second planting was in 2005 and was only protected by individual guards. This didn't



Max Campbell harvesting firewood

really work (maybe 10 trees remain out of about 30) as most succumbed to wombats. The third was in 2010 after the drought broke, and was scattered more naturally rather than planted in a block, individually guarded but with much more robust guards. Despite this a wombat has managed to kill one or two by burrowing under them and demolishing the roots, rather than flattening the guard and tree. I think in future we'll go with this method, waiting till trees are big enough to survive without guards, then using those guards to do the next planting.

We chose *Eucalyptus botryoides* (Bangalay) as it is fast growing, reasonably local (not on our place, but it is in gullies up the end of the road), and friends who have it on their place said it was reasonable firewood, which most of the species on our place naturally are not. We also planted *Eucalyptus tereticornis* (Forest red gum) as a longer term thing as although it is slow growing we thought it might be

ready by the time we'd run through all the botryoides. We'll probably leave a few uncut to establish a population down there.

On the harvesting, we are so far nibbling around the edges, as the trees on the edges have tended to be the faster growing ones anyway. We've had no problem felling them, and the stump works great as a chopping block for splitting the rounds. I'm not sure what will happen if we decide to go after one of the larger internal ones. It could be problematic if they get hung up but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. I just lay the branches inside the woodlot after felling to feed the remaining trees and they mulch down pretty quickly and don't impede walking around in there too much.

We could eventually press the whole flat into service as a woodlot - maybe 4 times the area currently in use.



Space on the flat for future planting with existing woodlot behind

# A Voice for Farmers in the Bega Valley

Wayne Schaefer

**Wayne Schaefer took on the job of coordinating the Farmers' Network last year. Since then, 20 commercial/ large scale graziers from across the Bega Valley Shire have joined up and are looking at ways of making farming sustainable for the long-term. Wayne tells us why he became involved.**

My great-great-grandfather Schaefer sailed from Germany to Eden in the early 1850s. His family worked on farms and in the timber industry, later becoming squatters at the Murrah, and then at Tuross on the Monaro.

My father was born in Cooma in 1912 and came to Yowrie in the late 1930s, looking for grass for sheep on the coast. He bought 1000 acres for 1000 pounds and spent long days trapping rabbits, stripping wattle bark for tanning and developing the farm.

In 1947 Dad married my mum, who was a Tarlinton. Her family were selectors who had been in the Cobargo area since the late 1820s. Mum grew up in Yowrie, grazing cattle and dairying in the days where milking 10 head was a lot!

The mid 50s and 60s was the time to ride on the sheep's back and sheep is what the Schaefers had. Wool reached a pound for a pound. The monthly bill at the local store was about three pounds, keeping in mind that the garden was always producing, the chooks laying, and fresh meat and milk were at hand.

In the late 60s the farm was using new methods to grow better pastures and crops to produce

more wool, and now cattle (Mum's passion) became necessary as the costs of the family and modern conveniences, like the car, began to increase. I grew up helping Dad improve the farm: better pastures, more fertiliser, better genetics, and weed control as the blackberries began to invade.

After school I took off to work in the bank and travel around the world, and when I came home I realised that farming and life in the Valley was something I wanted to pursue.

Unfortunately, the late 80s and early 90s was when farming began to change. Prices for cattle had gone down, wool was not worth anything, and costs of maintaining the farm were increasing. And then came the drought that went on for years. The farm was going backwards and could not support both my parents and myself. As we tried to sort out the family succession plan we began to dabble in subdivision. Mum and Dad semi-retired and moved into town; I was married to Helen by

now, thankfully we both had full-time jobs off the farm and it looked like we needed to keep them!

This meant less time on the land, no more garden, no more eggs or any home-grown produce. My dream to farm had become just that, a dream. Before he died, my father said to me, "The farm is no longer an asset but a liability." The time came either to commit or to sell, and I just couldn't let the farm go on my watch.

I was close to 40 when Helen and I moved back to the farm – somehow I had managed to convince my city-slicker wife to come to Yowrie with me! We had two young children, Helen was working outside the home, and I was working long days chasing the dollars to support family and the farm. Some tough decisions had to be made. We could no longer afford to keep feeding the cattle in the ongoing drought, so I sold them all. We were physically, mentally and financially exhausted.



Wayne Schaefer with daughters Hannah and Leah at their property 'Rob's Parlour' in Yowrie



Wayne and Leah sorting lambs

In 1999 we formed the Yowrie Landcare group with a number of other farmers. Our aim was to share concerns and issues and see if we could source funding and advice to address problems such as erosion. It didn't take long to realise, over cuppas and suppers, that our stories and issues were very similar. Although every farm is different, we all felt we had an uncertain future.

With continually increasing input costs, and static, if not decreasing, prices for our products, and many other variables beyond our control, one question has become increasingly important to me, as it has to others: What does it mean to be "sustainable" as farmers in this area? Fundamentally, sustainable farming means good health, in the short-, medium- and long-term, for family, animals and land. For us this involves being happy as a farming family, gaining a sense of satisfaction and being financially healthy.

We have in the last five years explored different methods of farming, trying to understand where to best spend the available dollars. We have restocked the farm with sheep, and installed an extensive water system to take pressure off waterways and dams, with the aim of drought-proofing our water supply. We have installed numerous fences and have endeavoured to understand

the health of our soils. We now focus on grazing management more carefully and try to control our inputs. We are looking at market options to try to maximise returns, minimise the market variables and stabilise, as far as is possible, the future of our farming enterprise.

**We hope to leave our children not only a farm with a history, but a farm with a future.**

I'm certainly not saying this is the answer for all, or even that we're there yet, but it has given us a more strategic approach for the future. Our hope is to increase our production again and have a positive effect on the land, while maximising the return on every dollar. We hope to leave our

children not only a farm with a history, but a farm with a future. If they choose something else, then I can be satisfied that the land will still be healthy for whoever wants to take in on.

Although the lack of rain, the drop in prices of cattle, lamb and wool and the increasing price of everything else haven't been helpful this year, Helen and I continue to stick with the farm plan, have hope and be determined, as my father was, to improve the farm, for the future of the family and the land.

My story is not unique. There is a real need for a farmers' network, so we can share stories and laughs, concerns and problems, and find solutions together. In this way we'll help each other to a better, sustainable farming future. There's a lot to be said for "people power" – be it for getting our voice heard in higher places, sourcing funding to address problems, or for moral support when things are tough - maybe even to enjoy a laugh and a chat with when times are good! My hope is that the Farmers' Network can be a tool through which local farmers can be helped and encouraged in whatever directions we want to go!



Hannah learning farm management on the job

# Cape Ivy at the Coastal Weeds Workshop

by Andrew Morrison



Cape Ivy - in flower

Photo: Jackie Miles and Max Campbell

**Cape Ivy is a climbing plant from South Africa. Once established it can totally smother native vegetation and be very hard to get rid of. Cape Ivy was one of the weeds tackled at a Coastal Weeds Workshop recently.**

On 18 May a keen group of Landcare volunteers and members of the public met up at Pambula Beach with bush regenerator James Cook (Brighter Day Landscapes) and Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) Natural Assets Officer Andrew Morrison to learn how to identify and tackle some of the major environmental weeds that threaten coastal bushland on the far south coast. It was organised through the successful coastal weeds program managed by Helen Davies (Southern Rivers CMA).

Some of the techniques for controlling Cape Ivy are described below, with a focus on hand control techniques suited to volunteer groups and individuals. Future CMN newsletters will look at other coastal weeds covered at the workshop (such as African Lovegrass, Bridal Creeper,

Asparagus fern, Honeysuckle, Stonecrop (*Crassula* spp), Dolichos Pea and Mother of Millions).

On the whole the Bega Valley Shire is relatively free of Cape Ivy compared with areas further north along the coast so big gains can be made by taking out infestations before they become established.

Cape Ivy's seed is wind dispersed and a single plant can send out tens of thousands of seeds to infest surrounding areas so if flowers or seed are present make sure to collect them rather than leaving them to ripen in the canopy even if the stem has been cut.

As far as weeds go, Cape Ivy is quite pleasant to handle as it has no prickles and even has a nice sweet smell. It can be successfully hand weeded if care is taken not to be too rough, making sure broken sections of stem aren't left behind as these can reshoot and form new plants.



James Cook cuts out the crown of an Asparagus fern

James demonstrated the technique of following runners through the native vegetation to find the main root system of the plant which can generally be pulled out easily. Be prepared to revisit your site several times as it is almost impossible to get rid of Cape Ivy in one hit.



Cape Ivy - *Delairea odorata*

James showed areas of infestation (for example larger areas) that would be better managed by an initial spray with herbicide and then followed up with hand weeding. For more information about when and how to use herbicide seek the

advice of BVSC or a contractor.

A local Landcare group has had success in reducing Cape Ivy infestations using a herd of well-managed goats. The goats preferred the weed to many of the native plants on the site, pulling it from the canopy, reducing its bulk and allowing the Landcare group to follow up with hand weeding and spot spraying.

Further information on the identification and control of environmental weeds can be found through websites such as <http://www.weeds.org.au> or by contacting BVSC on 6499 2222. If you'd like any information on local Landcare-type groups in your area or are thinking of starting your own group please contact Andrew Morrison at BVSC on 6499 2253 or David Newell from Far South Coast Landcare on 6491 8204. If you would like a similar workshop held in your area, tailored to your local weed issues contact Andrew Morrison.

# Native Plant Propagation

by Alison Rodway

On a glorious sunny morning in April, Karen Walker led fifteen CMN members through the steps of growing native plants from seed. Many participants left the workshop with the goal of collecting seed on their own properties and growing their own tubestock for planting projects.

The benefits of doing this are: minimising revegetation costs; ensuring plants are genetically adapted to local conditions; and a deep sense of satisfaction. For those without a source of seed,



CMN members planting seeds

Karen is able to provide a wide range of local seed in her role as coordinator of the Far South Coast Community Seedbank.

As a first step, we treated seed in a number of different ways, including soaking in hot or boiling water, scarifying the seedcoat with sandpaper and washing seeds in soapy water. These helped to break the seed dormancy which is present in some species and enhance rates of germination.

We washed our reused plant pots



Andrew Morrison filling forestry tubes

using a diluted bleach solution (suggested rate is 20ml/L of water) which kills many of the pathogens that could harm our emerging plants. We then filled the pots with native potting mix which generally has a lower level of nitrogen and phosphorus than standard potting mix as many native plants are adapted to lower levels of these nutrients in Australian soils.

We chose from a range of local seeds, including those we had pre-treated, and planted them in our pots at twice the depth of the

seed, then labelled and watered them. Karen explained that they would be ready to transplant once they had developed their second set of true leaves.

We learnt how to prick out seedlings from seed trays, filled with a growing medium of river sand and coconut fibre (coco-peat). We made sure their roots didn't bend up in a J shape when we planted them into our forestry tubes. We did this by either holding the seedling gently in the pot and backfilling around the roots or by using a 'dibble stick' which makes a hole for the roots in the previously filled pots and then is used to guide the roots into the hole nice and straight.

After six weeks of watering the seed pots and keeping them in a warm, sheltered place, participants have reported that many of their seeds have germinated and are ready for thinning out or transplanting into more pots.

For more information about growing native plants from seed, see the notes from the workshop on the CMN website [www.fscmn.com.au](http://www.fscmn.com.au) or contact Karen Walker on 6491 8224.



CMN members choosing seeds to plant at the workshop