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The Upper Bidgee Bulletin

The Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Quarterly Newsletter



Upcoming activities.....

Who is living on my land workshop

19 July 2016

Bredbo Landcare & Land for Wildlife

Rabbit Control Workshop

6 August 2016

Michelago Landcare

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Welcome to the Upper Bidgee Bulletin

Welcome to the first edition of the Upper Bidgee Bulletin, the new quarterly newsletter for the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare. We are thrilled to offer this newsletter and hope it provides a useful place for our Landcare community to share information on current activities and upcoming events. We will also include any information or links relevant for the activities in our region. So, if you would like to share a Landcare story or any other information in our newsletter please email to upper.murrumbidgee@gmail.com.

In this season's edition we will have a close look at the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee, explain our Green Army application and hear about some of the exciting activities in our local groups. We hope you enjoy!



Landcare
Upper Murrumbidgee

Welcome from the Chairperson

Tony Robinson

I am very pleased to announce the first edition of the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee (UMLC) newsletter, The Bidgee Bulletin, and to warmly welcome Georgeanna (George) Story, our Landcare Coordinator. George will be supporting Landcare Groups and landcarers in the upper Murrumbidgee

through to May 2018.

Many of you have already met George and will know how fortunate we are to have such an amazingly capable and friendly person to assist us. George has put together this first Bidgee Bulletin, which we hope you will find informative and useful. George will be seeking contributions for future editions of the Bulletin, so please think about what you might be able to contribute. You can contact her at upper.murrumbidgee@gmail.com.

The appointment of George was made possible through a South East Local Land Services Community, Industry and Landscapes Fund (CILF) grant, for which we are very grateful. I would also like to acknowledge the Australian Government's National Landcare Program for providing the funding to NSW Local Land Services and other regional bodies across Australia for initiatives of this kind. The partnership between all levels of government and the Landcare community is a crucial component of the management of our natural resources and for the wellbeing of our communities.



Welcome from the Landcare coordinator

Georgeanna Story

I would first like to introduce myself as your new Landcare Coordinator. My background is in terrestrial ecology and wildlife management and I have worked within government, university and consultancy environments. I bring to this position experience with pest control and project planning that I believe will be useful for supporting UML activities. Over the next few months I hope to visit each group and meet everyone. In the meantime I'm looking forward to learning about each of the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare groups and hearing what I can do to assist in meeting your Landcare goals. I am employed part-time but am contactable at most times through the email or on 0429 779928.

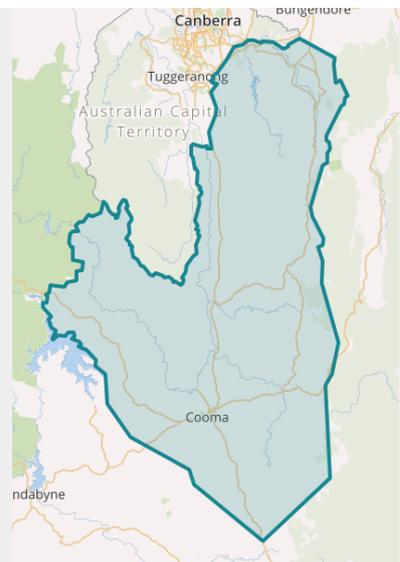
Introducing the Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee

Georgeanna Story

As the newest member of the UMLC I have recently explored the history and objectives of the committee, so as to better understand the role that UMLC plays in the Landcare community. So for those that are also new to the Landcare in the region, let me share with you some of the information that I have learnt. Some of the facts, the UMLC was formed in 1995 as an umbrella group for the Landcare groups located within the upper part of the catchment. The UMLC covers an area of 6,500 square kilometres, from Nimmitabel in the south to Queanbeyan in the north and Adaminaby in the west to Numeralla in the east. The Committee comprises of representatives from most Landcare groups and

other regionally affiliated associations, with the primary goal of encouraging strategies that improve the land and overall environment of the Upper Murrumbidgee. By working with the Landcare groups, regional NRM organisations and the community, the UMLC promotes the sharing of information, skills and experience to improve education and support on-ground projects.

The needs of Landcare groups within the UMLC are varied and the land for which they care is just as diverse. We range from small rural residential holdings to large agricultural properties, each with a different land management objective. Such diversity offers members a smorgasbord of activity and experiences. So while many of the projects within the Upper Murrumbidgee are concerned with weed invasion, erosion and declining remnant vegetation, there are numerous other subjects and issues covered. To stay up to date with what is happening in yours and other groups within UMLC keep an eye on our website and FaceBook page!



Upper Murrumbidgee Local Landcare Group Health Check 2016

Health check report

To keep up to date with the needs and activities of Landcare groups, periodic surveys are conducted in what Landcare terms 'Health Checks'. Early in April UMLC distributed one of these health checks to each Landcare group. This survey covered topics like group statistics, management history and desired future activities. The completed surveys are slowly coming in and I would encourage those who have yet to complete theirs to do as soon as possible. Once compiled, the results will be available through the UMLC website and used to best direct activities and resources towards the needs of the groups. Thanks in advance!

Green Army update

The Federal Government Green Army Programme is now open for Round 5 of their funding. For this round most applications are required to be overarching multi-project proposals with priority given to projects that target threatened species and their habitat. Under the hosting organisation, ACT NRM, UML is combining with Bush Heritage and Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach in an application targeting the promotion of endangered ecological communities (EEC) within the region. Our specific project proposal is concerned with the restoration of riparian health and the conservation of habitat and condition of EECs. The types of activities covered under these projects include weed control, revegetation, erosion control and habitat management activities. Site-specific activities will also need to have existing and/or proposed community support over the longer term to be eligible. If successful, projects will look to begin from July 2016 and must be completed by 2017. If you have a new or ongoing activity that falls under these categories and are interesting in sourcing Green Army team assistance please contact us on upper.murrumbidgee@gmail.com.



Rabbit control update

Many of you would have heard through the media that the new Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease strain, RHDV1 K5 is set for release next autumn. The Invasive Species CRC PestSmart called for expressions of interest for potential release sites and several of our Landcare groups have responded. To help identify the ideal sites for the upcoming release, the community based mapping program *RabbitScan* is available. RabbitScan is a free resource for landholders, the community and pest controllers to record and map rabbit activity, warrens, rabbit damage, and control activities in their local area. To participate, you can register with RabbitScan as an individual through the link or within the UML RabbitScan community group. To register within the UML group email upper.murrumbidgee@gmail.com and we will send through an invitation. Once registered you can record your sightings and upload onto the website (web address) or you can do it all in the field with the RabbitScan App (website).

Irrespective of how you register, all records will contribute to our understanding of rabbit numbers and impact within the region. This is great opportunity to contribute to a nationwide collaboration between researchers and the community towards the common goal of rabbit control. I would encourage everyone to participate.

To learn more about using RabbitScan and the release of the RHDV1 K5, Michelago Landcare and UMLC will be hosting a rabbit demonstration day in late winter, with representatives from the RHD Boost team available to answer all your rabbit questions. Details will be provided closer to the date. For more information on rabbit concerns within Australia go to Invasive CRC website.

August is Platypus Month

Did you know that August is a great time to see platypus in the Cooma region?

Platypus can be found in many of our local rivers and even in the Cooma Creek! Water watch is running a range of activities in August to help everyone understand more about these marvellous monotremes. Waterwatch is encouraging everyone to head down to their local waterway and report any platypus sightings to Antia at antia@coomawatch.org.au or call Cooma watch on 0429 778633. Information such as date, time, location and number of platypus need to be noted.

Take part in a platypus group survey

Join Waterwatch for early morning surveys at 8am every Saturday during August and early September - no experience necessary, just warm clothes and a watch. Contact Antia to book a spot.



Communities Caring for Catchments



Platypus Surveys

- 5 Aug - Murrumbidgee River
- 12 Aug - Cooma Creek
- 19 Aug - Numeralla River
- 26 Aug - Murrumbidgee River
- 3 Sep - Cooma Creek
- 10 Sep - Numeralla River



Landcare happenings...

Royalla Landcare have been successful in sourcing \$1000 from the Landcare Australia Support Grant 2016 for the 'Royalla sugar glider habitat restoration & nest boxes'. Congratulations to Maryke and all her team! If you would like to be involved with this project please contact Royalla Landcare at royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au

Royalla Landcare also have Royalla Landcare have 300 Drooping she-oak, *Allocasuarina verticillata* trees available for sale. This species is a good food source for Glossy black cockatoos, a nitrogen fixing tree and is a useful windbreak species. Seedlings are available for \$2.60 each and can be sourced through royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au.



Our UMLC Facebook page is up and running, so keep an eye on our page for information and activities in and around our region. Don't forget to like us!

Species in the Spotlight...

Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*



As their name might suggest, the Little Eagle is the smallest of Australia's eagles and one of the smallest in the world. They only measure 45 to 55cm in height, however, with their 'booted' or heavily feathered legs and small crest, the Little Eagle is a powerful stocky looking bird. The Little Eagle also has an impressive wingspan of up to 1.35m with dark fingered wing tips. From underneath they have a compact looking body with long, broad wings that display a distinctive 'M' pattern.

The habitat for Little Eagles is wooded and open forest and they rely heavily on mature trees in open woodland or tree-lined watercourses for nesting. Adults are generally sedentary and build a shallow nest of sticks lined with leaves. A pair will lay 2 eggs in late August or early September and young will fledge approximately 13 weeks later. Little Eagles are the most vocal during this period as they actively defend their nesting territory.

Birds will cover many kilometres when foraging and while the Little Eagle itself weighs less than 1kg, they are capable of taking prey of up to 1.5kg. They feed mainly on rabbits, when available, but also birds, small mammals, reptiles and insects. Like all raptors, Little Eagles regurgitate pellets containing the indigestible components of their prey. Searching for pellets under eagle nests and identifying the contents is a great way to monitor eagle diet.

Little Eagles are relatively widespread across Australia but are uncommon within their range. Across the upper Murrumbidgee region, the number of eagles has steadily been declining to a point where, in 2012 in the ACT, only a single breeding pair were known. The species was listed as vulnerable in NSW and the ACT in late 2000, with habitat loss and degradation the major threat.

So what can we do to help conserve the Little Eagle? Since only nine per cent of the species range is in conservation areas, community based conservation is essential. From a Landcare perspective, maintaining the extent and quality of remnant woodland and riparian areas is important for both the availability of nesting sites and suitability for prey species. Control of weeds in these areas, especially dense exotic grasses, will help increase structural complexity and species diversity. We can also target revegetation activities towards expanding smaller remnant patches (<10Ha) and isolated mature trees. By doing this we increase the mosaic of wooded and open areas and provide the habitat most favoured by the Little Eagle.

In the news....

Coolatai grass *Hyparrhenia hirta* Biosecurity Alert: Coolatai grass is an invasive drought, fire and herbicide tolerant tussock forming perennial grass. It has become a major invasive species in northern New South Wales (NSW) and southern Queensland, dominating pastures over a range of soil types and conditions. An infestation has been discovered along the Monaro Highway between Michelago and Bredbo.

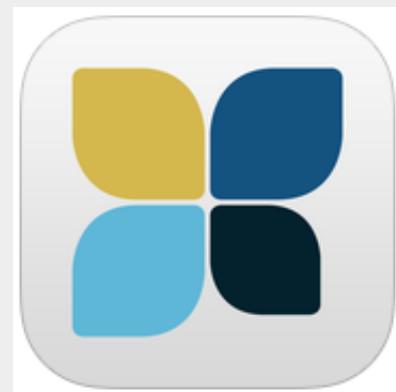
Coolatai grass is a long lived summer-active perennial growing to 1.5 m. It produces short rhizomes that form a dense grass tussock. Its greyish-green leaves turn orange-red in winter, particularly after frost. The leaves are harsh to touch. Leaf sheaths are usually hairless and keeled. The leaf blade is flat and 2 - 3 mm wide with the ligule 2 - 3 mm long and minutely toothed. The seedhead is a 'false panicle' consisting of paired racemes with 5 - 8 awns per raceme. The paired racemes are up to 35 mm long and arise from 3 - 8 cm long flower bracts. Half the flowers are male and therefore sterile.

Report all sightings of Coolatai grass InvasiveWeeds@act.gov.au or phone: 13 22 81.



Landsmart App

LandSmart is a free mobile application that provides information about land management practices on rural properties to help land managers in NSW, particularly city-based landholders, look after their land sustainably and responsibly. This app helps landholders look after their land by providing useful information at their fingertips. Topics include soil, groundcover, pest animals, weeds, native vegetation, conservation, farm biosecurity and other information on being a responsible rural landholder.



You can also find your nearest Local Land Services (LLS) office to receive further

information and support, and nearby Landcare groups.



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Website



Email

Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare, Upper Bidgee Bulletin Winter Edition

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