

BANDICOOTtimes

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A PROGRAM OF



City of **HOBART**

Bushcare Roundup



Lenah Valley Bushcare convenor Yolanda van Rooyen waters in new plants at Ancanthe Park. Photo: John Sampson

Claire Knowles
Bushcare Coordinator

After a very dry autumn – Tasmania received its lowest autumn rainfall since 2017 – climate change is at the forefront of many of our minds. The autumn dry also followed Hobart’s third-driest summer on record.

The Tree Projects lead researcher Jen Sanger told ABC Radio the lack of rain is putting amazing stress on our trees.

“We’re seeing patches of trees dying, which is really distressing, especially in areas that have got shallower soils or rocky soils or north-facing slopes.”

Trees are clearly suffering from the lack of rain in Hobart and it is deeply distressing to see large patches of trees turning brown.

It is a reminder of the importance of our work at Bushcare – by keeping environmental weeds at bay and planting out degraded areas we are helping to keep our bushland forests and woodlands robust in the face of ongoing threats, including climate change.

Lenah Valley Bushcare

You did it Lenah Valley! Our special Bushcare activities in Lenah Valley have been so well supported by the community that Lenah Valley Bushcare is here to stay!

Twenty one volunteers made

light work of weeds in their first Haldane Reserve working bee in April. While small, this reserve has a creek bed and borders urban properties, two conditions that encourage weeds and that will keep our new Bushcare group very, very busy!

In May fantastic roadside planting was done to replace a thicket of thistle at Ancanthe Park with bandicoot habitat.

And a word to the wise, Spanish heath, a declared weed that is easy to spot over winter with its profusion of flowers has a habit of popping up in private land, giving it a launching pad into nearby healthy native bushland.

So keep your eyes peeled!



Cover photo:
Bushcare volunteer
Heidi Krajewsky.
Photo: John Sampson

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Plastics – they're not so fantastic

It's even on the Moon! The term plastic was first used in 1925, but it was not until the 1970s, just after Neil Armstrong planted a nylon flag on the moon, that plastic production took off.

It's durable, flexible, and long-lasting, in the home, in landfill and in the environment.

And who has not been shocked by that photo, taken more than a decade ago by Chris Jordan, of a dead albatross with plastics in its guts? That one photo brought home to the world the incredible level of plastics polluting our oceans.

But plastic rubbish is not just a problem in our oceans, it's found in our waterways, bushland parks and reserves, dumped, dropped or blown out of rubbish bins.

So what can we do to help?

Plastic in the bush

Bushcare sees plastic all too often at our working bees, whether it be a discarded tyre or a deflated balloon from a seemingly harmless celebration.

We always make a point of picking it up and removing rubbish at our working bees, but we'd rather be pulling out weeds than plastic.

At a South Hobart Bushcare working bee we found a bird's nest made up of around 50 per cent polyester stuffing. There is anecdotal evidence synthetic fibres can permanently entangle birds' feet so they can't use their claws to perch or grasp because the fibres are so strong.

An Australian study of historical nests from museum collections



Volunteers were appalled to discover a bird's nest made up of so much polyester stuffing at a South Hobart Bushcare working bee. Photo: John Sampson

showed that the first use of synthetic fibres by birds was identified in a nest in 1956 and by 2018, approximately 25 per cent of the nests studied contained man-made materials.

The same research found a magpie nest beside a building site containing headphones, saw blades and plastic 3D glasses!

Plastic can also affect the temperature in birds' nests and bright colours can affect bird behaviour and expose the nest to predators. Common sources may include Halloween cobweb decorations, housing insulation and soft toy filling as well as string.

In the hills around Hobart we have found ingested plastic that has been eaten and excreted by carnivores such as quolls, devils, cats or raptors.

This can happen anywhere scavenging animals and birds find food wrapped in plastic. More of a concern is the plastic we don't see, and which stays in animals' intestinal tracts, and possibly accumulates.

Avoid, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

It can be easy to feel helpless, especially when confronted by dumped rubbish, including plastics, in our favourite bushland parks and reserves.

But by making small changes such as being more diligent with our waste separation and being better at using the Avoid, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle principles we can have a significant, positive impact on our local environment.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

A 10 000 nautical mile sailing trip from Vancouver Island in Canada to Tasmania brought Bushcare volunteer Heidi Krajewsky and her husband to Hobart eleven years ago.

Like so many who come for a visit, the forests and seascapes of the apple isle stole her heart, and Heidi and her husband Stephen Anstee now call Hobart home.

"We didn't plan on living here permanently, but quickly fell in love with Tasmania," Heidi says.

One of the biggest drawcards of living in Hobart for Heidi was just how close you can be to a bush track while still living within walking distance of the city.

"In the first year of living here, I was going for a long walk to explore this new city I found myself in," she says.

"I started in Sandy Bay, because at that time I was still living on the boat. I headed uphill and eventually found myself in Lambert Gully and saw the sign along the track saying a Bushcare group meets once a month to look after this reserve."

"I was intrigued, and so I showed up the next Sunday. I didn't know where to meet, I just wandered around until I found the group at one of the park entrances."

The first two people Heidi met at the working bee were convenor Ingrid Colman and Bushcare team leader Bec Johnson.

"They were of course incredibly welcoming and it made me feel like I had met some like-minded people in this new place."



Heidi has worked on expedition ships in both the Arctic and Antarctica.



Heidi likes to spread her Bushcare time across a number of groups.

"I volunteer with the Hobart Rivulet group, as it's the closest to my home, but I also dabble on the hills either side, both in Knocklofty and in South Hobart," she says.

"Knocklofty has been going the longest I think, of any Hobart Bushcare group, and many of the volunteers have been part of the group for decades.

"They tell stories of the tracks in the reserve being tunnels running under massive thickets of gorse.

"Now of course Knocklofty Reserve is a beautiful bushland

park and our working bees mostly focus on follow-up weeding.

"Seeing this bushland reserve in such superb ecological condition must feel incredibly rewarding for the group's longest-serving volunteers."

Heidi also loves her work with Hobart Rivulet Bushcare, which is restoring riparian vegetation on the Hobart Rivulet and encouraging healthy habitat for the rivulet's platypus and other aquatic wildlife.

"Being there at the beginning and knowing that I live in this part of the city and can watch it change with a bunch of dedicated people is really inspiring," says Heidi.

"Definitely come along and join a group near you. The people are wonderful to work with and it is very satisfying to help look after these special places that we are lucky to have here in Hobart."



Heidi loves being part of the Hobart Rivulet Bushcare group, restoring creekside vegetation and platypus habitat. Photo: John Sampson



Saplings planted along the Hobart Rivulet Track are stabilising the embankment.

Feathered friends

Heidi has always been a great lover of the bird world, and plays an important role as a volunteer with BirdLife Tasmania.

"I have been enjoying birds and watching them for as long as I can remember," she says.

"There's so much to learn about them, their identification, their behaviour. It adds a lot to my

appreciation of any place that I find myself in."

She says there are a number of ways people can get into bird watching in Hobart and some great resources to get you started.

BirdLife Tasmania has just published a guide to Hobart bird walks, listing our best birding locations and the types of birds you might see in each location.

BirdLife also holds monthly walks guided by volunteers. The best way to find out about them is to follow their Facebook page.

"Waterworks Reserve is one of my favourite places in Hobart to go bird watching," says Heidi.

"It's only a bike ride away for me and with the reservoirs and the bush habitat, there is usually a good variety of birds to see.

"I get excited whenever I see or hear yellow-tailed black cockatoos overhead or in my yard. I also love watching the Tasmanian native-hens, or 'turbo chooks', along the rivulet, their behaviours and antics can be very interesting!

"But most importantly, get outside with a pair of binoculars and a field guide and just spend time in your local reserve.

"Be patient. It takes time and practice to learn all the local birds, but it is great fun."

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DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

Councillor Bill Harvey, Dr Sally Bryant and Rob Watchorn inspect open woodland on the Queens Domain. Photos: John Sampson

The Queens Domain is one of a number of bushland reserves across Hobart being targeted by wood thieves destroying habitat by chopping down trees for firewood.

Renowned wildlife ecologist Dr Sally Bryant describes the Domain as Hobart's woodland gem.

She said the Domain is not only a wildlife corridor, allowing native species to move through the landscape, but also a permanent home for many of our native plants and animals.

"The Queens Domain is home to many of Tasmania's critical weight range mammals, including bandicoots and quolls," she said.

"It has a fantastic array of

woodland species that are declining all over Tasmania. So as a wildlife refuge and as a wildlife habitat, it's so important."

Dr Bryant warned wood thieves are nibbling away at forests through death by a thousand cuts.

"Wood theft removes habitat needed by all species and destroys the integrity of our woodland communities.

"Every tree, whether living or dead, is vital to the ecosystem and provides not only a carbon store and oxygen to the environment, but shelter and food for wildlife.

"So many of our native birds use this area and we're getting records and sightings of new species all the time.

"So it's a living, breathing, wildlife habitat and corridor for movement nestled in a capital city that really needs our protection."

Anything but dead

Dead trees and tree limbs that have fallen to the forest floor are anything but 'dead'. They remain integral to the forest lifecycle.

They continue to provide perches and homes for wildlife, often through the formation of tree hollows, and are a source of organic matter that feeds microbes, soil organisms and our great decomposers, fungi.

They are insect breeding sites – native bees use small holes in plants – and they help store soil moisture, which is so important to



the living trees and plants around them.

Dob in wood thieves

The City of Hobart is now urging residents to help protect our wildlife and forests by reporting people cutting down trees or stealing fallen timber from our bushland parks and reserves.

Last year a walker tipped off City of Hobart staff after noticing trees cut into firewood-sized pieces in Ridgeway Reserve.

The tip-off led to an investigation and apprehension of the offender. Hobart Councillor Bill Harvey said this is a perfect example of how public awareness and reporting can help us catch wood thieves.



Dr Sally Bryant with one of the trees illegally cut down on the Queens Domain.

“Our council employees and contractors always operate with appropriate safety gear, including personal protective equipment, hi-vis clothing and clearly marked vehicles,” Cr Harvey said.

“If you see someone operating a chainsaw without these safety measures, it should be an instant red flag.

“We need your help to dob in wood hookers. Our forests and wildlife are under threat, and we can’t protect them alone.”

Anyone with information about illegal firewood gathering is urged to contact police on 131 444 or

report anonymously to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or crimestopperstas.com.au.

Do not approach suspicious individuals. Report them to the authorities.

If you need firewood please source it from operators using sustainable harvesting methods.

Together, we can ensure our natural habitats and wildlife are protected for future generations.

For more information on sustainably sourced firewood, please visit the Sustainable Timbers Tasmania website.



Lenah Valley Bushcare volunteer Ross Stephens. Photo: Megan Harris