

BELLINGER LANDCARE INC ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

As presented at the Annual General Meeting 9 November 2019 at Dandarrga Landcare Nursery, Dorrigo and then updated to provide additional details.

In 2018/19 we have received funding from both the NSW state government Landcare program and Bellingen Shire Council which we especially appreciate. This funding has covered the coordinator position for 2 days per week. Significant grant funding was also received to deliver projects which have been managed by a separate contractor.

The core funding for the coordinator enables us to respond to enquiries, visit sites with landholders, develop funding proposals, distribute newsletters, maintain our website and facebook pages, complete governance requirements and complete required reporting. We now have over 500 members and over 60 landholders who have expressed interest in participating in projects. This means we can submit funding proposals based on their needs.

BLI and Local Landcare groups have improved over 436 hectares of Bellingen Shire land and have planted over 3,700 trees. There has been the equivalent of over \$350,000 in kind contributions from volunteers in the local groups, from our management committee, and from financial and time commitments from private landholders involved in projects. In 2019/20 we have been funded \$304,767 cash for our core business and projects.

We're pleased that we've just become the Land for Wildlife provider in the Bellingen Shire. This means we can assist landholders who want to make a public declaration of their intent to protect native flora and fauna on their property and also consider organizing formal conservation covenants over vegetation on their land. Please keep an eye on our newsletters for further details.

LOCAL LANDCARE GROUPS IN THE BELLINGEN SHIRE

Bellingen Island Landcare Group

For over 30 years now volunteers have been weeding Bellingen Island each Tuesday morning. With no major floods this year and low rainfall our work has been unusually productive. Bellingen Island is the most sizeable lowland rainforest remnant in the area; it is also the nursery camp of Grey Headed Flying Foxes. They seem to have been in lower numbers this year (at peak times they can reach 30,000). It has been a hard year for them but conversely this has encouraged growth of native trees on the island. This year Bellingen Council has started a new project – weeding and planting the river back-channel which borders the island. This has not only reduced the weed load but has also improved access to the island and visual amenity to the public.

Dorrigo Mountaintop Landcare Group

Formed in 1992, the objectives initially were to plant trees along the roadsides for windbreaks. This rapidly expanded to farm windbreaks, farm plans, dairy laneways, weed control, cattle creek crossings, fencing and planting riparian zones, introducing dung beetles and encouraging other Landcare groups. We ceased our incorporation and formal structure in 2005. Members still carry out work on their own properties and roadsides. We have continued to slash and maintain the Rocky Creek Reserve. Funding from the Bellingen Shire Council Environmental Levy Community Fund of \$4,545.00 was granted in 2018 to spray and control weeds and for additional plantings. With assistance from contractors, members and Dandarrga members we have completed most of the work. Tree planting will happen when it rains and follow up spraying is required.

Mylestom Landcare Groups

Mylestom Landcare continues to work within the Alma Doepel Reserve in Mylestom, Tuesdays from 8-10am each week. For this year we worked without funding and was an opportunity to do follow up weeding and planting. Our active membership is steady with our Tuesday's having from two to five workers and we continue to grow our own tube stock. Weeds are still present but we've made significant progress and may benefit from more funding in the future.

Urunga Landcare Group

During 2018/19 Urunga Landcare group completed the Hungry Head Community, Environment and Arts Project with funding from the Bellingen Shire Council Environmental Levy Community Fund, a generous donation from the Urunga Mylestom Chamber of Commerce and the Urunga Medical Centre. Substantial in kind contributions from group and community members contributed an equivalent of \$44,500 value. The project aimed to build community cohesiveness, create behavioural change and raise visitor awareness in regard to the unique natural and cultural values of Hungry Head. This was achieved through community consultation and education, erecting interpretive signage referencing the adjacent ecological communities, and installing a gateway to the area sculpture of a totemic bird of significance to the local Gumbaynggirr community. A letterbox drop of invitations to all properties in Hungry and Wenonah Headland area, followed by a neighbourhood gathering for community input into the project, and on-going consultation with the indigenous community. There also was a nocturnal fauna spotting event (oversubscribed) following flyer display, second letterbox drop of invitations to 53 properties, and promotion through Landcare membership database, website and Facebook posts. A local ecologist led the walk on private property adjacent to Hungry Headland in October 2017. Interpretive signage with commissioned artwork affixed to locally sourced and crafted wooden posts (x4) installed along the cycle way, coinciding with the completion of the current stage of the track. The public sculpture was installed following cultural preparation of the site and an opening ceremony held in April 2019 with smoking and a welcome to country.

Friends of Wonga Forest

Wonga Forest Volunteers Landcare group formed in October 2017 and now has 8 active members. They meet on the first Sunday morning of the month and carry out hand-weeding around trees that were planted and around good native vegetation. They also raise some tubestock and plant those on the banks of Frenchmans Creek. This year they contributed 124 volunteer hours to the site, not counting the hours it takes to write a funding application. EnviTE and NSW Forestry Corp are project partners with Bellingen Landcare at this 20ha site, a former eucalypt plantation between the Bellingen township and Frenchmans Creek. The fourth consecutive year of funded support was gained from the 'Terrestrial Ecosystems Program' administered by the Jalligirr Biodiversity Alliance. Under that program, EnviTE continue to do bush regeneration. In addition, we received a small community grant from Bellingen Shire Council's Environmental Levy for professional bush regeneration within the cemetery reserve, where camphor laurel, Rous tree and small-leaved privet grow along the edges with Wonga Forest.

Dandarrga Landcare

The inspiring Dandarrga Landcare group has a paid membership of 50, including 16 BLI members, and an email list of 80. They administer Work for Dole Host agreements with job agencies, Centrelink mutual obligation volunteers over 55. With a core team of 15 or more active volunteers there has been ongoing volunteer activity over 2 years, four mornings a week. The ages of active volunteers are 18 to 88. This has also included Woofers from overseas, people from interstate, campers, festival attendees. The group has contributed extra hours for Plant Fairs, FBG Festivals, Dorrigo MID and community markets, Markets and RFS fundraiser at Dundurrabin. They carry out Blinks River bush regen two mornings a week, ongoing landcare on Deep Ck, Rocky Ck and Bielsdown River, as well as bush regeneration involving weed control, tree planting and follow up maintenance. They act as Landcare Site consultations on private land as well as providing admin and education/promotion.

The Dandarrga Nursery is producing vegetable, herb and flower seed which are also available in the Dorrigo Library in town. The nursery is home to vegetable gardens, food seedlings and plants, rainforest and pioneer plants, shrub, orchid and grass species in hicos, tubes and pots. They also supply tree guards, mulch, compost, worm castings, recycled timber, roofing iron and useful bits and pieces.

There is free local produce on Fridays to share. The group is spreading the word about the benefits of local knowledge of biodiversity, hosting public presentations, free Friday Species ID sessions or site visits, saving seeds, growing food gardens, and planting trees, developing species labelling, video, photos, and posts on the NSW Landcare Gateway, online social networks, and in local print media.

PTO

BELLINGER LANDCARE PROJECTS

Hydes Creek Koala Corridor Project

run together with the Friends of Wonga Forest and Hydes Creek Landcare Group

- 10 private landholders engaged
- 2 local Landcare groups engaged
- 3,600 trees planted
- 28 ha total project area
- 2 tree planting workshops and educational signage delivered

BLI working on this project as part of the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance with funding from the NSW government Saving our Species program, the NSW Environmental Trust, North Coast Local Land Services and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature. The outcome is to establish a crucial link allowing the movement of Koalas across the landscape in the Bellinger Shire. It's exciting to see Koalas using the trees previously planted by the Hydes Creek Landcare Group and to see the corridor being significantly reinforced by the delivery of this project. See attached case study.

Upper Bellinger River Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat Connections

- 10 landholders engaged
- 6 km stream length
- 6 community workshops

The project is improving the condition of and extending the highly endangered Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain Endangered Ecological Community and improving habitat suitability in the upper Bellinger River for threatened species including the critically endangered Bellinger River Snapping Turtle. BLI gained \$100,000 from the NSW Environmental Trust and \$108,000 from the State government Saving our Species program to undertake on ground work and community capacity building. In 2019/20 we have completed two community workshops including one tree planting workshop and one best practice bush regeneration workshop. See attached case study.

Bush Connect

Over the past four years BLI has been delivering the highly successful Bush connect program as part of the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance. The project is improving 322 hectares on private land, including 34 hectares of weed control targeting invasive environmental weeds impacting on ecological processes, a kilometer of fencing and the planting of 2,130 trees. We are engaging private landholders on seven sites funded by the NSW Environmental Trust and administered by the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance. Two of the sites on the Dorrigo Plateau have waterways protected from stock impacts, each site is benefiting from good bush regeneration outcomes with two of the sites having revegetation planting also being undertaken. Two other sites are located on or adjacent to the lowland areas of Dorrigo National Park so contain the Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain Threatened Ecological Community. In 2019 we also commenced work on two additional sites on the main channel of the Bellinger River at Gleniffer.

LANDCARE GROUP AND PROJECT FIGURES

	LOCAL GROUPS	BUSH CONNECT	HYDES CREEK KOALA PROJECT	UPPER BELLINGER RIVER PROJECT	TOTAL
Timeframe	2019/20	2016–21 (6yrs)	Jan 2018 onwards	2019–21 (3yrs)	
Number of site action plans	1	7	10	10	28
Total area (ha)	30	322	92	12	456
Weed control area (ha)	30	34	28	12	104
Number of plantings		2,130	3,600	1,650	7,380
Length of fencing (m)		1,000			1,000
Number of contractors		4	3	2	4
Value of volunteer in kind contributions (\$)	136,000	193,000	181,600	90,000	600,600
Number of grant applications				1	1
Funding amount (\$)		145,000	123,500	208,000	476,500