



NEWSLETTER

www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare



B U S H C A R E

WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 66

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE

by Gareth Debney
Bushland Management Coordinator



Caption: (L to R) David Yip, Andrew Hall, Lyn Fryer, David Bell and Kim Ryan – North Sydney Council Bushcare volunteers at Polblue Swamp for Barrington Tops National Park Scotch Broom Control on Saturday 22 February. Photo by Andrew Scott.

In late February, five intrepid Bushcare volunteers (David Bell, David Yip, Kim Ryan, Lyn Fryer and Andrew Hall) joined Council's Bushcare Officer Andrew Scott and more than 30 other volunteers from around NSW to help control Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) in Barrington Tops National Park. This was the third year that Council has supported the National Parks and Wildlife Service coordinated project, which began after the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires. The four-day activity targeted Scotch Broom in Polblue Swamp – a montane wetland listed as endangered under the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act*. In recognition of our volunteers' participation in this challenging, but highly beneficial activity, the group (represented by Kim Ryan) received a Highly Commended award at the Greater Sydney Regional Landcare and Bushcare Awards on 24 May at Sydney Olympic Park. Well done team!

In other news, the Bushland team has been busy selecting bushland contractors to help implement our bushland rehabilitation plans over the

next five years. The tender for bushland rehabilitation and infrastructure services attracted 15 submissions from interested providers. A panel of eight qualified contractors was established after a rigorous evaluation process. Once adopted by Council, these providers will support our Bushcare volunteers and Bushland team in delivering whole-of-reserve ecological recovery.

The popular Gore Cove walking track in Wollstonecraft, which connects Smoothery Park with Berry Island and Badangi Reserves, has just received a mini makeover. Six educational signs, funded by a NSW Government grant, have been installed at various points along the track. The signs highlight unique features of the walk including its connection to Traditional Owners, the Cammeraygal people; fire ecology; estuarine ecosystems; transitional ecotones; European heritage; and the value of riparian (waterway) zones.

Feeling adventurous? Take a walk down the Gore Cove Track and if you're lucky,

you might also spot one of two Swamp Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*) that have been seen in the area lately. Previously known to live in the Cammeray-to-Cremorne bushland corridor only, the presence of these iconic native animals is a great endorsement of Council's bushland rehabilitation program and 30+ years of partnering with our community through the Bushcare program.

The Bushland team and 35 volunteers recently returned from our annual planting trip to Boorowa, where we planted nearly 2,500 locally native trees and shrubs across four sites. Stay tuned for a more detailed update in the spring newsletter.

Lastly, I encourage you to join our National Tree Day community planting event in Hamilton Reserve, Cammeray on Sunday 27 July. Expanding on our 2023 National Tree Day site, this year's riparian-focused plantings will improve habitat in this important reserve buffering Tunks Park, the most species diverse piece of remnant bushland in North Sydney. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Dire Situation for Our Flying-Foxes

by Sandra Guy – Community Education Coordinator and Bat Coordinator, Sydney Wildlife Rescue Central Branch

So, what's a flying-fox? It's a bat, the only mammal to have developed true flight. About 20% of mammal species are bats: either microbat or megabat. Microbats are tiny, echo-locating insectivores. There are around 20 species in Sydney, but they are so small and silent, they go almost unnoticed. Flying-foxes or fruit bats are a keystone, umbrella species of megabat: loud, proud, large and obvious. They use sight, smell and sound to navigate the world, just as we do, and feed largely on fruit and nectar.

Sydney has three flying-fox species. The ubiquitous Grey-headed Flying-fox is Australia's largest. The Black Flying-fox is a more tropical species and less frequent locally, and the Little Red Flying-fox is an inland bat seen very occasionally in the western suburbs.

Flying-foxes have an intelligent, gregarious personality like a domestic dog, especially the orphaned pups who are hand-raised by wildlife volunteers. They perform a unique ecological role – pollination and seed dispersal for the pioneer tree species that form the scaffolding of our native forests. These trees evolved a symbiosis with Flying-foxes. They only produce fresh, viable pollen at night, ensuring their genetic material is dispersed over a vast distance by Flying-foxes, our sole significant nocturnal pollinator. Moving pollen across the landscape ensures our forests retain genetic diversity; remain healthy, robust and resilient; and can better withstand stresses and disease.

The Grey-headed Flying-fox was listed as a threatened species 'vulnerable to extinction' in 2001. But they're common, so why is this? Not all threatened species are rare, and population trends show the Grey-headed Flying-fox is in trouble. Their numbers are already down to around 5% of pre-1788 levels, and the listing came after a study showed a decline of around 30% in just one decade. Intervention was required.

A quarterly census count of Flying-fox camps has been held since 2012. Counting methodologies have changed and the program has been interrupted by COVID and bushfires, so there is no unanimous opinion about population trends, but it is generally accepted the species is still in significant decline. You can help by volunteering for these counts.

High mortality plus low fecundity equal extinction. The Grey-headed Flying-fox birth rate is probably below replacement levels. Environmental risks and pressures are both more severe and frequent. While experts are considering how to mitigate threats and stresses to the Grey-headed Flying-fox, habitat loss and the changing climate remain two of the hardest to address. The threatened species listing introduces protections that may help slow this population decline.

When a population declines to a point that the species cannot perform its ecological role, it is deemed ecologically or functionally extinct. Some estimates suggest the Grey-headed Flying-fox may reach this point by mid-century unless we reverse the decline. If we can't, the forests they help to maintain will suffer, and there will be a cascade of extinctions across our landscapes as we lose habitat for hundreds of thousands of species.

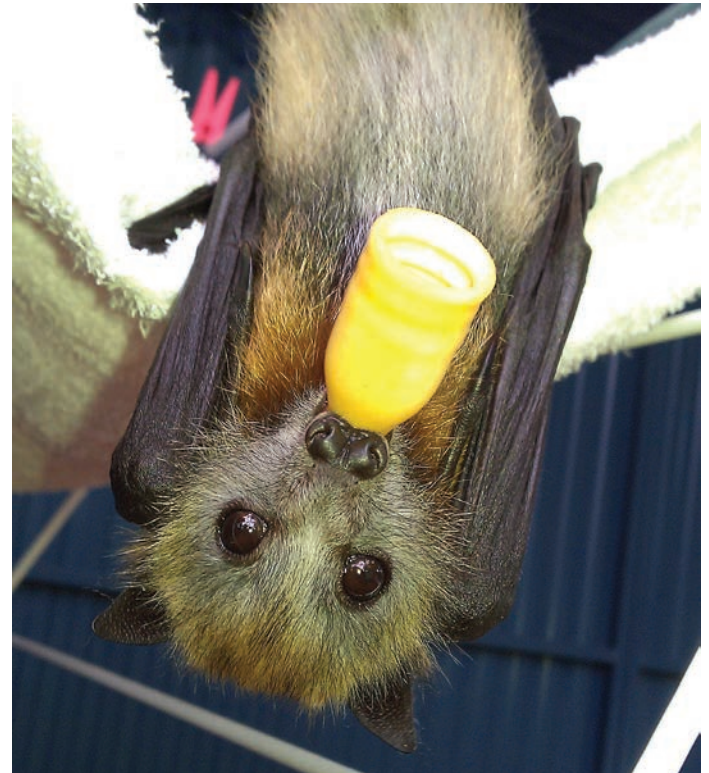
How can we help?

Spread the word that Flying-foxes are essential. Flying-foxes roosting alone or low to the ground may need rescue – you can report them to wildlife rescue organisations. Report dead Flying-foxes on powerlines immediately – a dead mum may have a live pup that can be rescued and hand-raised. Delay = death. Use only wildlife-friendly netting on fruit trees to avoid bats (and other wildlife) becoming entangled. Become a wildlife carer offering hands-on rescue and care. Support wildlife rescue organisations with donations – they have no government funding.

Every little bit helps, and we can all do something.

See more information at www.LittleAussieBat.com.au

Caption: Dreamy baby Grey Headed Flying fox with dummy on airer by Marina Tretiach.



BAT COUNT

North Sydney and Hunters Hill Council Bushcare Officers and volunteers conducted a Bat Count at Riverglade Reserve along Tarban Creek, Gladesville after dark on Saturday 17 May under the guidance of Sandra Guy from Sydney Wildlife Rescue.

We counted 4,853 Grey-headed Flying-foxes at this relatively small camp during a spectacular flyout at dusk. Our estimate falls within the range of previous counts eg 6,500 (Aug 2018), 2,650 (April 2021) and 8,000 (April 2023). This data will contribute to the National Flying-fox Monitoring Program and help gauge the health of this vulnerable and vitally important keystone species.

A big thank you to Sandra and Jacqui Vollmer from Hunters Hill Council for coordinating the event.

WILDLIFE WATCH UPDATE

(MARCH TO MAY 2025)

There were sightings of wildlife both outdoors and in this season, including a variety of invertebrates gathering around lights at night, and a Green Tree Snake sunning itself on an indoor windowsill (this was safely put back outside by a trained handler). We were blessed with more Buff-banded Rail sightings, as well as Swamp Wallabies in the north and west of the Council area.

The usual contenders, such as Noisy Miners and Rainbow Lorikeets, were out in abundance, some chasing other birds and some looking to nest. Tawny Frogmouths were seen roosting during the day in odd places and Ringtail Possums were found both alive in trees and dead on the ground. Lizards sunned themselves on rocks, Whipbirds called to one-another, and White-browed Scrubwrens were seen foraging together with Variegated Fairy-wrens.

Autumn 2025 sightings included:



Caption: Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*). Photo by Michael Doe. This bird is often mistaken for an owl, but is more closely related to a nightjar. They eat a range of things, from moths and cockroaches, to spiders, snails and the odd mouse. During the daytime, you may struggle to see them, as they can camouflage very well against the bark of many trees. Tawny Frogmouths mate for life.

- **Australasian Figbird** (Grasmere Reserve) feeding on ripe Camphor Laurel berries.
- **Orange Spider Wasp** (Gore Cove Reserve) captured a Huntsman spider and dragged it off to its nest.
- **Green Tree Snake** (Cremorne) found inside home and safely moved outside by a trained handler.
- **Laughing Kookaburra** (Cremorne Point, Coal Loader, Waverton urban) fearlessly hunting lizards in gutter; stealing food from plate at a cafe; harassing Australian Ravens.
- **Ladybirds – Tortoise-shelled and Variable** (Cremorne Point, Brightmore Reserve) on Eucalyptus and a Sandpaper Fig.
- **Grey Butcherbird** (Cremorne Reserve) sitting on nest in Brush Box tree.
- **Teddy Bear Bee** (Neutral Bay urban, Waverton urban, North Sydney urban) feeding on a variety of flowers including Salvia and Westringia.
- **Orchard Swallowtail Butterfly** (Primrose Park) perched on a privet.
- **Australian Raven** (Waverton urban) in Plane Tree being harassed by Laughing Kookaburras, Pied Currawongs and Noisy Miners.
- **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** (Cremorne urban) feeding on the seeds of *Magnolia grandiflora*.
- **Australian Brush-turkey** (Gore Cove, Neutral Bay urban) roosting in trees; feeding on *Monstera deliciosa*.
- **White-faced Heron** (Cremorne Point) foraging on the sandy foreshore at low tide, finding quite a lot of things to eat!
- **Galah** (Waverton Park, Cremorne urban) one excavating the end of a dead Angophora branch (possibly to make a hollow) while the other perched on a nearby branch; being chased off the nature strip by territorial Australian Magpies.
- **Australian Magpie** (Cremorne Point) two adults with a juvenile who kept running up to a person (likely asking to be fed, thankfully they didn't oblige).
- **Sod Webworm** (Neutral Bay urban) found inside building.
- **Long-nosed Bandicoot** (Camberay urban) sitting in the gutter, before running off into bush when observed.
- **Noisy Miner** (Neutral Bay urban, Waverton urban) feeding on Bottlebrush flowers, harassing White-faced Heron; harassing Australian Ravens.
- **Rainbow Lorikeets** (Cremorne urban, Cammeray urban, Bradfield Park) feeding in flowering paperbark street trees; feeding on Red Bottlebrush flowers; pair pulling vegetation around the entrance to a hollow when an animal inside showed itself and hissed at them... but this did not deter!
- **Tawny Frogmouth** (Neutral Bay urban, Berry Island) roosting on top of fallen palm fronds in Crepe Myrtle, sheltering from rain on top of hot water heater; one found dead, resting in a Casuarina.
- **Powerful Owl** (Wollstonecraft) perched in a dense weedy habitat zone.
- **Pied Currawong** (Lavender Bay urban) drinking from a bird bath.

For a full list of species, or to enter your own, go to northsydney.nsw.gov.au/WildlifeWatch or search for Wildlife Watch on our website and click on 'Submit or view sightings'.

You can also contribute sightings by contacting us at Council. We would love to hear your wildlife stories! Contact Council's Bushland Project Officer on 9936 8100 or email council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

by Karina Hanemann
- Bushland Projects Officer

NATIONAL TREE DAY

Established in 1996, Planet Ark's National Tree Day is the most popular tree planting event in Australia. Each year, about 300,000 volunteers help to plant trees to address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. An estimated 28 million plants have been planted by over 5 million volunteers to date.

North Sydney Council's Bushland team has supported National Tree Day since 1999, although community plantings also happened before this time. An estimated 2,116 community members have committed 5,361 volunteer hours to plant 29,380 plants, including 4,354 trees, 12,207 shrubs, and 2,819 grasses and groundcovers across 11 reserves.*

National Tree Day is usually held on the last Sunday of July. It is the most popularly attended event of the Bushcare calendar, attracting about 80 to 90 volunteers in recent years, most of whom are young families. It is often the first environmental volunteer experience for many local children, who create special family memories with a lasting legacy. Scout groups, corporate groups and the Councillors also turn out in support.

The Bushland team usually starts to prepare National Tree Day sites six or more months ahead of time – repeatedly treating weeds, terracing and mulching. This makes it easier for participants to plant correctly, which in turn helps the plants to survive.

Most years, National Tree Day plantings happen on the margins of reserves to buffer them from environmental pressures (such as urban runoff) and expand habitat for local wildlife. In other years, we have planted in parks, helping to create wildlife corridors that allow plants and animals to move across North Sydney's urbanised landscape.

We choose plants that match the local native vegetation and will contribute to wildlife habitat, including some from each stratum (or level of vegetation) – canopy, midstorey and groundcovers. The plants come from native nurseries and the Bushcare community nursery. We mostly use tubestock plants, which are cheaper and adapt well to the local environment, including the soil conditions and aspect.

On the day, the Bushland team, other Council staff and a band of Bushcare volunteers work together to make the event a success – staffing the registration desk, handing out gloves and tools, demonstrating planting technique, taking photos, and barbecuing the snags.



Caption: Primrose Park, Lambert Street (2008) – before



Caption: Waverton Park, Larkin Street (2018) – before



Caption: Primrose Park, Folly Point track (2019) – before



Caption: Hamilton Reserve, Hamilton Lane (2023) – before

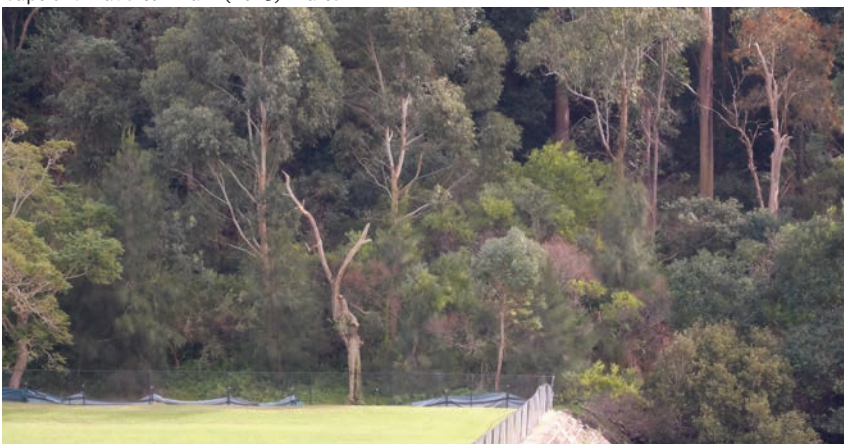
THROUGH THE YEARS



Caption: Primrose Park (2025) – after



Caption: Waverton Park (2025) – after



Caption: Primrose Park (2025) – after



Caption: Hamilton Reserve (2025) – after

Some years are particularly memorable. In 2004, 400 volunteers planted 4,000 plants in Waverton Park – the largest planting event in the North Sydney Council area to date. Celebrities and politicians attended, and there was a live band and a Toyota Prius on display.** A collection of native plants resembling the local bushland has now matured on the site.

In 2008, 175 volunteers turned out to Primrose Park to plant 2,800 plants, which were chosen to mimic how nature recovers after fire. The trees and shrubs have now matured, weeds are minimal, and Angophoras have even started to appear through natural germination. The eventual goal is an ecological burn. This will activate the seedbank that has been established thanks to the initial National Tree Day planting, supplementary planting and natural 'seed rain' from the adjoining bushland.

In 2011, National Tree Day was held early, on 19 June, in preparation for the opening of the Coal Loader parklands. Forty-three volunteers helped to plant a Bush Foods Demonstration Garden with 2,000 plants in just three hours. The garden used crushed sandstone, in keeping with the Balls Head Bushcare site across the road and the nearby Aboriginal engraving.

** Figures for 2000, 2001 and 2003 were not recorded. Data was sourced from Planet Ark and verified/adjusted against NSC Bushland team records.*

*** See Bushcare Newsletter Issue 36 August 2004, page 6 (available on IndyReads).*

by Gareth Debney
Bushland Management Coordinator and
Andrew Scott, Bushcare Officer

JOIN US THIS YEAR

On Sunday 27 July 2025, we will be planting in Hamilton Reserve, Cammeray. Our planting will help to improve habitat for a diverse range of species, including Powerful Owls and Long-nosed Bandicoots! We would love you to join us. To register, visit Planet Ark's National Tree Day website and search for 'Cammeray'.

LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA

by Denise Ward – Executive Officer, Crows Nest Centre

In our Bushcare groups, staff and volunteers work closely with community. Some of the work we do comes with risk, which can be magnified by health challenges that affect our daily lives.

Denise Ward, Executive Officer for the Crows Nest Centre, has provided an overview of the signs and symptoms of dementia and suggestions to live well, for those living with the condition or caring for someone who is. It's important to be able to recognise when you or people around you may need support, and to understand where to go for information and support.

Dementia is not one specific disease; it is an umbrella term for a collection of symptoms. The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's Disease, accounting for between 60% and 80% of all cases.

Other types of dementia include the Lewy body dementias, vascular dementia, frontotemporal and more. In some cases, people experience mixed dementia due to a combination of causes.

Dementia affects thinking, behaviour and the ability to do everyday tasks. It interferes with everyday life, socialising, volunteering and work.

While it can happen to anybody, it is more common in older people, affecting one in ten people aged 65 years and over, and three in ten people aged 85 years and over. However, it is not a normal part of ageing.

In 2023, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated there were more than 400,000 people with all forms of dementia in Australia. It is expected this will increase to more than 800,000 people by 2058. This is because Australia's population is ageing. The greatest risk factor for dementia is old age.

Early warning signs for dementia include:

- difficulty with everyday multi-step tasks eg cooking
- changes in communication eg finding the right word, following a story, joining a group chat
- confusing time and place eg going to an appointment on the wrong day or time
- misplacing things eg keys, phone, wallet, remote controls
- changes in mood or behaviour eg depression, reduced motivation, agitation, impulsiveness
- memory loss affecting daily life eg forgetting tablets, not paying bills, getting lost at the shops
- difficulty solving problems
- family or friends commenting on changes

You can reduce your risk factors for dementia by:

- getting your hearing checked
- reducing your blood pressure
- consuming less than 21 standard units of alcohol a week
- managing your weight
- quitting smoking – it's never too late to give up
- seeking treatment for depression
- doing something that connects you with other people
- being physically active
- breathing fresh air
- eating a healthy diet
- seeking treatment for diabetes

What is good for your heart is also good for your brain!

SUPPORT OPTIONS

Dementia Australia offers information, advice and support. They run the free and confidential National Dementia Helpline, which you can call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They also offer free counselling, practical support and a peer support program.

Free call helpline: 1800 100 500

Website: dementia.org.au

My Aged Care can help with support around the house or looking into aged care homes.

Phone: 1800 200 422

Website: myagedcare.gov.au

Locally, the **Crows Nest Centre** provides a range of services and activities to enable older people to remain living independently at home. Services include delivered meals, a bed-making service, assisted shopping and friendly home visiting.

The Centre is also the home of **Your Rotary D-Caf**, a free dementia cafe that encourages older people with dementia and their carers to live well. People come together over morning tea, enjoy some gentle exercises set to nostalgic music, engage in a fun activity or hear from an occasional guest speaker.

Your Rotary D-Caf meets at the Crows Nest Centre on the **fourth Wednesday of each month from 10am to 12pm** and is proudly supported by the Rotary Clubs of Crows Nest, North Sydney Sunrise and Northbridge.

For more information see crowsnestcentre.org.au/whats-on/social-activities/dementia-cafe or contact Valerie Willemsen, Community Support Manager, on communitysupport@crowsnestcentre.org.au or 02 9437 7502



Caption: Clients, carers and volunteers all enjoy Your Rotary D-Caf.

NATIVE PLANT PROFILE

Billardiera scandens (Apple Berry, Apple Dumplings)

Family: Pittosporaceae

Name: *Pittosporaceae* = in honour of French botanist James Julian la Billardiere (1755–1834); *scandens* = (Latin) climbing

Billardiera scandens is a slender climber or scrambler with wiry red to brown-grey stems up to 3m long. It's hard to believe that this unassuming little twiner is in the same family as *Pittosporum* and *Bursaria* species!

It is widespread and common in woodland along Australia's east coast, although the plant is easy to overlook when not in fruit or flower. In North Sydney, *Billardiera scandens* can be found twining through the understorey in most bushland reserves, including Berry Island and Badangi Reserve.

The most conspicuous feature of *Billardiera scandens* is the edible oval berries, 2cm long x 1cm wide, borne in summer and resembling, in taste and appearance, a miniature kiwi fruit. These fruits have a fuzzy, peach-like skin that ripens from green-purple to yellow when ripe.

The pendulous, bell-shaped flowers are yellow-cream and 1–2cm long, borne singly or in clusters of two to three. Flowers are borne from spring to summer, and it is common to find both flowers and fruit at the same time.

The plant's leaves are narrowly oval, up to 5cm long, and mid-green with a silky underside and wavy edges. Juvenile plants have deeply incised leaves and look very different to mature specimens.

In the Bushcare nursery, we propagate *Billardiera scandens* from seed that has been macerated or fermented for up to a week prior to sowing. Summer-sown seed can take up to three months to germinate.

Billardiera scandens makes an excellent garden or pot plant and is easy to cultivate on most well drained soils in a sheltered position. The slender growth is not invasive, and plants can be tip pruned to form a bushy shape. The flowers are attractive to nectar feeders, and a variety of native animals eat the fruit.

The plant can occasionally be mistaken for environmental weed *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese Honeysuckle), a lookalike that also has reddish young stems and incised juvenile foliage. Honeysuckle is a more robust plant that grows roots at its leaf nodes, forms angular woody stems with flaky bark, and has fragrant white and yellow flowers.



Caption: Fruit of *Billardiera scandens* by Clare McElroy.



Caption: Flowers and leaves of *Billardiera scandens* by Clare McElroy.



Caption: Juvenile leaves of *Billardiera scandens* by Clare McElroy.

BUSHCARE EVENTS CALENDAR

Bookings must be made for all events at: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare or 9936 8100 unless otherwise stated.

JUNE

22 **Aboriginal Heritage Walk and Talk** | Sunday 9am to 2pm

JULY

- 6 **Winter Bushwalk** | Sunday 10am to 1pm
- 8 **Family Bushwalk** | Tuesday 10.30am to 12pm
- 10 **Spotlight Walk and Talk** | Thursday 5.30pm to 8.30pm
- 11 **Bird Walk Bingo** | Friday 10.30am to 12pm
- 25 **Schools Tree Day** | Friday, activities organised by schools
Enquiries: Bushland Project Officer on 9936 8100
- 27 **National Tree Day** | Sunday 9.30am to 11am

AUGUST

- 10 **Native Havens Garden Tour** | Sunday 9am to 1pm
- 16 **Nestbox Building Workshop** | Saturday 10am to 2pm
- 21 **Living with Urban Wildlife Webinar** | Thursday 6.30pm to 8pm
- 31 **Fern Walk and Talk** | Sunday 10am to 1pm

SEPTEMBER

- 6 **Bushcare at the Markets** | Saturday 8am to 12pm
- 6 **Mosses and Lichens Walk and Talk** | Saturday 10am to 1pm
- 7 **Wildlife Watch Walk and Talk** | Sunday 7.30am to 11am
- 13 **Bushcare Community Nursery Open Day** | Saturday 9am to 12pm
- 14 **Wildflower Walk** | Sunday 8am to 4pm

BUSHCARE VOLUNTEERS AT WORK



Caption: Luke Harris and Sunny Fong installing log edging at Smoothey Park on Saturday 8 March by Tristram Thomas.



Caption: Amy Stahl planting local native tubestock in Cremorne Reserve on Sunday 12 April by Tristram Thomas.



Caption: Samantachai Chaipaen and Rahul Ramaswamy at Forsyth Park on Saturday 22 February by Tristram Thomas.



Caption: Abbey Hasleham planting local native tubestock in Cremorne Reserve on Sunday 12 April by Tristram Thomas.



Did you know North Sydney Council Bushcare has a Facebook page? Like us at www.facebook.com/bushcare



Visit regenTV the Australian Association of Bush regenerators video platform, view recordings of webinars, field days and forums. www.aabr.org.au/regenTV

For more information or to make a booking for any of these workshops or special events please contact the Bushcare Officer on 9936 8100. Printed on 100% recycled paper.

Gratitude to all our contributors who take the time to put ideas and research into words so we can learn. Thank you.

Would you like the newsletter emailed to you instead? www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare