



NEWSLETTER

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BUSHCARE SPRING 2025 – ISSUE 67

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE

by Gareth Debney
Bushland Management Coordinator



Caption: Building Bridges to Boorowa volunteers on Elizabeth Masons' property at Hawkhill, Boorowa NSW on Saturday 31 May. Photo by Andrew Scott.

In our last Bushcare Newsletter, we celebrated five North Sydney volunteers (David Bell, David Yip, Kim Ryan, Lyn Fryer and Andrew Hall) who received a Highly Commended in the Greater Sydney Regional Landcare and Bushcare Awards for their participation in the Scotch Broom control program, coordinated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, in Barrington Tops National Park. Well, fittingly for this physically challenging but highly rewarding environmental work, recognition continues for our 'Broomies', with a nomination in the 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. Andrew, David and Kim accepted the award presented by MP Felicity Wilson at the regional awards ceremony on Monday 18 August along with many other well deserving volunteers.

Building Bridges to Boorowa, our annual tree planting weekend in south-west NSW received a brief mention in the last Coordinator's Update. However, what I neglected to note was this year's surprise special volunteer who joined the

team just before departure. Landscape architect, gardening guru, TV personality and all-round environmental champion Costa Georgiadis delighted fellow volunteers and landholders with his stories and expertise, all while digging in and working shoulder-to-shoulder with the rest of the team. Huge thanks to Costa for taking the time out of his busy schedule to experience BB2B. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank Mayor Zoë Baker, Deputy Mayor Godfrey Santer and Councillors Welch and Antonini for also immersing themselves in our unique urban-rural partnership project with Boorowa Community Landcare and Hilltops Council.

On Saturday 7 June, in magnificent winter weather, 19 Bushcare volunteers from North Sydney, Lane Cove and Willoughby councils came together at Berry Creek to celebrate World Environment Day, enjoying a guided bushwalk and planting 175 native plants. Berry Creek marks the boundary between North Sydney and Lane Cove council areas and this event,

coordinated in partnership with Lane Cove Council, was a fantastic example of cooperative action for our shared environment. Thank you to everyone involved.

This year's National Tree Day community planting event on Sunday 27 July was quite literally overwhelming! A handful of wonderful Bushcare volunteers worked feverishly to help the Bushland team coordinate 163 keen tree planters (more than double 2024 numbers) and ensure the plantings prioritised quality over quantity. Nevertheless, almost 1,400 local native plants were installed in Hamilton Reserve, Cammeray in one and a half hours. Several days before the event, a tree fell over and threatened the site. Thanks to quick action by arborists and Council's Tree Management team, the area was made safe just in time.

Balls Head Reserve now has extra protection for years to come, after being listed on the NSW State Heritage Register on 25 July. The listing recognises the cultural and natural significance of

Balls Head, and adds an additional layer of protection from activities that could negatively affect its heritage values.

In nearby Berrys Bay, Transport for NSW has started preparative works to redevelop the area of foreshore separating Balls Head Reserve from Carradah Park. The large 1.5 hectare

ex-industrial waterfront site will become a public parkland and handed over to North Sydney Council to manage upon completion in 2026–27. Community consultation on the final parkland design closed in late August 2025, however it should improve walking connections, and feature native plants, play equipment and picnic areas.

Lastly, congratulations to all those who have been involved in Council's unique Adopt-a-Plot program, which turns 20 this year! This innovative, enduring approach to community engagement in bushland rehabilitation is a reminder that Council–community partnerships can tangibly improve our natural environment, for current and future generations.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR WILDLIFE: Training new rescuers in North Sydney

by Ana Rubio – Sydney Wildlife Rescue volunteer

On Saturday 22 June, Fred Hutley Hall was buzzing with a special kind of energy. Thanks to the generous in-kind support of North Sydney Council, Sydney Wildlife Rescue was able to host our intensive introductory course, welcoming 30 passionate new participants from across the Sydney metropolitan area for their first step to becoming volunteer wildlife rescuers and carers.

The comprehensive training day equipped our new recruits with the essential skills needed to help our native animals. The day was the final component of a comprehensive online training course the trainees must do before becoming wildlife rehabilitators. A key focus of the course, and one we know resonates deeply with Bushcare volunteers, was learning to identify native foliage that provides critical food and habitat for animals in care. Participants also delved into the practicalities of setting up enclosures for possums and birds, safe handling techniques, and how to effectively respond to rescue calls through various real-world scenarios. The course covered everything from disease outbreaks and personal protective equipment to animal welfare and advocacy. Each new member left with an essential rescue kit, ready to make a difference.

As an organisation run entirely by dedicated volunteers, we rely on community support and new members to continue our work. The sobering reality is that most of our rescue calls are for wildlife injured in attacks by domestic cats and dogs, closely followed by trauma from collisions with vehicles and buildings. Rainbow Lorikeets and possums are the most frequent calls



Caption: Participants learning how to handle birds during Sydney Wildlife Rescue training at the Fred Hutley Hall on Saturday 22 June. Photo by Sydney Wildlife Rescue.

we get in the North Sydney area, but we also help with Tawny Frogmouths, magpies, ibises, cockatoos, Noisy Miners, Blue-tongue Lizards and snakes. This new cohort of trained rescuers is now equipped to respond to these incidents, providing a vital lifeline for vulnerable animals.

Sydney Wildlife Rescue is a non-profit organisation licensed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, with a mission to rescue, rehabilitate and release sick, injured and orphaned native wildlife across Greater Sydney. We run introductory courses for new



volunteers every 3–4 months, and close to a dozen specialised courses through the year for those who would like to gain skills to care for baby animals, snakes or raptors.

If you find sick or injured native wildlife, please call our 24/7 rescue line on 9413 4300. To learn more about our work or to volunteer, visit sydneywildlife.org.au

WILDLIFE WATCH UPDATE (JUNE TO AUGUST 2025)

This season, Tawny Frogmouths were still roosting in hard-to-reach places, awaiting the flurry of insects and life that spring brings! Meanwhile, Little Black Cormorants were out fishing, whipbirds were calling to one-another and Variegated Fairy-wrens once again foraged in the company of White-browed Scrubwrens. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos chewed out hollows in preparation for nesting and kookaburras sidled up to one-another to keep warm at night. Black Rats ran across footpaths and roads, and another Ringtail Possum was found dead.

Winter 2025 sightings included:

- **Eastern Osprey** (Coal Loader Site) perched in a tree below the Bushcare Community Nursery.
- **Australasian Figbird** (Primrose Park) male and female seen in a fig tree.
- **Black Rat** (Neutral Bay urban, North Sydney urban) running across the road and footpath.
- **Australian Wood Duck** (Badangi Reserve) females perched and making a repetitive drumming call. Male seen in tree nearby.
- **Eastern Whipbird** (Primrose Park, Badangi Reserve) pair heard, foraging in Bracken Fern.
- **Laughing Kookaburra** (Cremorne Reserve, North Sydney urban, Carradah Park) hunting on lawn, two cuddled up in a gum tree at night, family sitting together in the morning sun.
- **Little Black Cormorant** (Cremorne Reserve, Badangi Reserve, Primrose



Caption: Eastern Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*) Angela Farnsworth 2025
birdlifephotography.org.au

- Park) roosting in tree overhanging water and fishing for a meal.
- **Rainbow Lorikeet** (Cremorne Reserve, Neutral Bay urban) two chicks calling from a hollow in a Phoenix Palm, feasting on Liquidambar seeds.
- **Australian Brush-turkey** (North Sydney urban, Balls Head Reserve, Neutral Bay urban.) maintaining their mound again this year, missing claws on feet, feeding on seeds from a Chinese Tallow tree dropped by cockatoos.
- **Tawny Frogmouths** (Neutral Bay urban, Watt Park Lavender Bay, Wollstonecraft urban) pair roosting up high on water heater, on pipes along a building and two in a tree on the verge.
- **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** (Cremorne Reserve, Primrose Park) pair enlarging hollow in a tree stump, competing with others for a hollow.
- **White-browed Scrubwren** (Badangi Reserve) among Bracken Fern.
- **Variegated Fairy-wren** (Primrose Park) foraging in Bracken Fern in the company of White-browed Scrubwrens.
- **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** (Primrose Park) male and female with begging juvenile, female eating Banksia seeds from tree.

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 Projects Officer on 9936 8100 or email council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

by Karina Hanemann
– Bushland Projects Officer



NEW Wildlife Watch walking group

Join our new walking group on the first Friday of each season – an opportunity to be a citizen scientist and help contribute sightings of local wildlife to build up a picture of what is living where. Places are limited. Contact Council's Bushland Projects Officer on 9936 8100 to book.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF AD

This year marks two decades since North Sydney Council's innovative Adopt-a-Plot program was launched – establishing a new direction in bushland rehabilitation and community engagement.

In 2005, members of the Cremorne Point Bushcare Group were concerned that some reserve neighbours were not actively involved in caring for bushland below their properties and seemed unaware of their impacts on flora and fauna. To address this concern, the concept of residents 'adopting' a plot of bushland was proposed and with the support of a NSW Government Envirofund Grant, the Adopt-a-Plot program was born. Adopt-a-Plot provided a unique pathway to expanding bushland rehabilitation activities beyond Council's normal funding limitations.

Adopt-a-Plot participants choose to contribute in two ways – they may volunteer to work alongside a professional bush regenerator for three hours per month, or make an annual financial donation matched by North Sydney Council's Environmental Levy, to have a qualified bush regenerator maintain a plot of public bushland that is typically near their home.

Participants are guided by annual work plans that aim to rehabilitate bushland habitat, referencing the nearest known bushland remnant. This improves links between bushland vegetation, supporting wildlife movement and seed dispersal.

Through the program, volunteers have developed skills in plant identification (weed and native), learnt safe and effective weed control techniques, and gained a deeper understanding of bushland ecosystems and the complex relationships they support.

The work focuses on weed control (including herbaceous weeds, exotic grasses, vines and woody weeds), mulching, erosion control, and revegetation through planting endemic tubestock, transplanting and direct seeding.

Over its 20 years so far, Adopt-a-Plot has engaged 38 donors and 91 commitment volunteers, as well as several corporate groups. Participants have adopted over 39 plots in eight bushland reserves including Cremorne Reserve, Primrose Park, Badangi Reserve, Waverton Park, Gore Cove Reserve, Harry Howard Reserve, Tobruk Avenue Lookout and Brightmore Reserve.

Many of the early plots were overrun with weeds and are now thriving native microhabitats, home to diverse plant and animal life. Many restored plots now have resilient native vegetation, requiring minimal maintenance – a clear sign of the program's ecological success.



Caption: Plot #1, Cremorne Reserve (2014) – Sparse native ground cover and mid-storey absent. Area is dominated by *Monstera delicosa*.



Caption: Plot #2, Cremorne Reserve (2014) – Bare area covered in Morning Glory vine. Few native plants and lack of vegetative layers.



Caption: Plot #11, Cremorne Reserve (2010) – Area is covered in exotic vines including Madeira Vine and Morning Glory.

OPT-A-PLOT IN NORTH SYDNEY



Caption: Plot #1, Cremorne Reserve (2025) – *Monstera delicosa* removed from plot. Improved density and diversity of native groundcovers and mid-storey plants.



Caption: Plot #2, Cremorne Reserve (2025) – Abundant native shrubs such as acacias. Fallen tree retained for its habitat value.



Caption: Plot #11, Cremorne Reserve (2025) – Increased diversity of native plants and layering following revegetation.

Currently, Adopt-a-Plot is active in Cremorne Reserve, Primrose Park, Badangi Reserve, Harry Howard Reserve, Gore Cove Reserve and Waverton Park. There are eight donor plots and six volunteer plots, which are all worked monthly to improve the quality of bushland. Last financial year, volunteers worked 144 hours on their adopted plots and 220 hours were worked on donor plots.

ADOPT-A-PLOT IN NUMBERS

125 volunteers (including regular corporates)	38 donors
19,000 native plants	4,800+ hours worked on donor plots*
3,200+ hours worked with volunteers*	278 hours by regular corporate groups*

Last financial year, 515 native plants were planted in the current operating plots. These native plants improve species diversity and habitat structure, setting the foundations for natural regeneration in the future.

Thank you to all the volunteers, donors, corporate groups, Council staff and contractors who have contributed to the program over the past 20 years. Your hard work and persistence have helped to transform these once degraded bush remnants into thriving, layered and ecologically functional habitats.

Over the next 20 years, Adopt-a-Plot is set to continue evolving – expanding into new areas of the reserves, refining volunteer/donor models, and deepening community engagement in urban biodiversity conservation.

*Adopt-a-Plot voluntary and donor hours have been consistently recorded since 2011.

by Larissa Kabakov – Adopt-a-Plot Supervisor

‘Individual Bushcarer’ programs have been developed by other local councils too. For example, Lane Cove Council’s Bushfriends, Ku-ring-gai Council’s Bushcare/Streetcare/Parkcare and the discontinued Adopt-a-Patch Program with former Canterbury City Council. However, the model of donor support for bush regeneration is unique to Adopt-a-Plot.



Caption: Participants for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Tour at North Head on Sunday 22 June 2025.

BUSHCARE COMMUNITY NURSERY UPDATE

By Clare McElroy – Bushcare Nursery Supervisor

The coldest weather is almost over, and the nursery is looking somewhat depleted after thousands of plants were delivered for National Tree Day in July, and for restoration of bushland reserves across North Sydney. Our Bushland team never wastes the planting opportunities provided by a good spell of wet weather!

On 15 July, North Sydney Council hosted the third meeting of the Volunteer Coordinators Network for nursery coordinators. Started in 2024, the network brings together community nursery managers from across Sydney. Representatives from nine councils and one community conservation group joined, and it was a great opportunity to show off our own nursery and share challenges, triumphs and useful ideas with other community nursery managers.

Jonathon Eccles and Maree Whelan from Local Land Services gave important biosecurity updates on pest species management programs, including feral deer, pigs, Cane Toads, Fire Ants and the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.

Our special guest speakers for the day were Jason Bragg and Karina Guo from the Botanic Gardens of Sydney. Jason and Karina presented a fascinating overview of two of the Gardens' research and genetics programs, to tackle Myrtle Rust and biodiversity loss in threatened species communities.

You can read about the research into breeding of Myrtle Rust-resistant plants on the Botanic Gardens of Sydney website, and visit the ReCER (Research Centre for Ecosystem Resilience) website to learn more about their work and their Restore and Renew project.



A reminder to our North Sydney residents that the Bushcare Community Nursery Open Day is on Saturday 13 September. This is an opportunity to learn about our volunteer environmental programs, such as Bushcare, Wildlife Watch and Native Havens. Households can also receive up to four native plants to create wildlife habitat at home.

Register for the Open Day at northsydney.nsw.gov.au/NurseryOpenDay

Caption: North Sydney resident receiving local native tubestock plants at the Bushcare Community Nursery Open Day 2024.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE TOUR

AT NORTH SYDNEY SANCTUARY

Fifteen community members joined Karen Smith from the Aboriginal Heritage Office, Geoff and Judy Lambert from North Head Sanctuary Foundation (NHSF) and the Bushland team for Council's annual Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Walk, held this year at North Head Sanctuary on Sunday 22 June, as part of the Gai-mariagal Festival celebrations.

Participants got the bus to Bandicoot Heaven, NHSF's visitor centre, which is volunteer run and open on the weekend to raise awareness about the sanctuary's natural environment. The centre is decorated with information about local wildflowers, geology, Aboriginal and European heritage, and much more.

Geoff introduced the group to the site's military and fire history before we drove to Yiningma and the revamped Fairfax walk and Burragula lookout where Karen spoke about Aboriginal culture and heritage.

We then headed back to Bandicoot Heaven to enjoy morning tea before setting out on a guided bushwalk to the nearby hanging swamp, a return journey south about 1km on a warm winter's day. Although there are fewer flowers at this time of year than in spring, the winter flowers did not disappoint, especially the Red Spider Flowers (*Grevillea speciosa*) and Sunshine Wattles (*Acacia terminalis Eastern Suburbs*), one of several sub-species that is threatened but has a stronghold at North Head, in full bloom.

The Bushland team would especially like to thank Geoff and Judy for hosting our visit and Karen for sharing her Indigenous knowledge and encouraging the community to Connect to Country.

By Andrew Scott – Bushcare Officer

WEED TO WATCH

Tillandsea usneoides
(Spanish Moss)

Family: Bromeliaceae

Name: *Tillandsia* = in honour of Swedish botanist Elias Tillandz; *usneoides* = resembling *Usnea*, a genus of lichens

Spanish Moss is neither Spanish, nor a moss, but rather an epiphyte that belongs to the bromeliad (pineapple) family. It is not a parasite but relies on a host plant for support – it will die on the ground. Seeming to grow on air alone, the surface of Spanish Moss plants is covered with tiny, grey scales (trichomes) that trap water and nutrients which then move by capillary action on the outside of the plant. Spanish Moss favours some host species over others, but the reason for this preference has not been well studied. It is speculated that certain exudates, fungi or bacteria on host species may benefit the growth of Spanish Moss.

Although the plants produce seed, their primary method of reproduction is vegetative, through detachment of plant sections. They disperse when festoons catch on the host or adjacent plants and detach to form new infestations, or through animals like birds and possums transporting plants for nest material. Humans, however, are the main contributor to the spread of Spanish Moss in urban areas.

Spanish Moss is often viewed more as an innocuous art piece, rather than a living entity, and is frequently passed between neighbours, with endorsements of its unkillable qualities for the horticulturally

challenged. Its silvery-grey garlands can be seen festooning street trees, fences and hanging baskets.

So, why the concern?

A 2024 report from STEP Inc, a community-based environmental conservation group, identified Spanish Moss as likely to become a serious weed of plant communities in which Turpentine, Lilly Pilly, Brush Box and Cheese Tree are major components. In northern Sydney, this includes the critically endangered Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest and Blue Gum High Forest as well as Sydney Enriched Sandstone Moist Forest. The report identified many Myrtaceae species as preferred hosts for Spanish Moss, including species of eucalypt, callistemon and paperbark found in North Sydney.

Spanish Moss can limit photosynthesis for the host tree, and even cause it to die. Its threats to ecosystems also include subtle effects such as altering water and nutrient cycles, changing predator-prey interactions, altering habitat and microclimate, and transforming fire regimes.

As Spanish Moss is most often found in out-of-reach, mid-canopy strata, removing or treating it can be very difficult.

The STEP report makes several recommendations, including:

- formally recognising Spanish Moss as an ecosystem threat and weed of concern
- preventing sale and distribution of Spanish Moss
- widespread education for the public and professional groups about its potentially disastrous impact on some bushland communities and urban forests
- further surveys and research into the ecology of Spanish Moss and its ecological consequences
- research into control methods suitable to Australian ecosystems and conditions

How you can help

Council is asking the community to record Spanish Moss observations on iNaturalist.

We also ask residents not to acquire or distribute Spanish Moss and to hand remove plants on private property. They can be disposed of in green waste collection.

To record sightings of Spanish Moss on iNaturalist, read the STEP report and for further information, visit northsydney.nsw.gov.au/SpanishMoss

NATIVE LOOKALIKES

Native species of Beard Lichens (*Usnea spp.*) have a similar grey-green appearance and grow on trees. Unlike Spanish Moss, *Usnea* species have a definite point of attachment (see photo) and fine, tufted growth that does not form long, detachable chains.



Caption: Beard Lichens (*Usnea spp.*) by Clare McElroy.



Caption: Spanish Moss (*Tillandsea usneoides*) on the corner of Ernest Street and Park Avenue, Cremorne. Photo by Andrew Scott.

BUSHCARE EVENTS CALENDAR

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

SEPTEMBER

- 13 **Bushcare Community Nursery Open Day** | Saturday 9am to 12pm
- 14 **Wildflower Walk** | Sunday 8am to 4pm
- 30 **Family Bushwalk** | Tuesday 10.30am to 12pm

OCTOBER

- 1 **Family Kayak** | Wednesday 10am to 12pm
- 2 **Family Spotlight Walk** | Thursday 5.30pm to 8.30pm
- 3 **Wildlife Detective** | Friday 10.30am to 12pm
- 9 **Bushcare Convenors Meeting** | Thursday 6pm to 8pm
- 12 **Bushcare Essentials** | Sunday 10am to 1pm

NOVEMBER

- 8 **Weed Recognition and Control** | Saturday 10am to 1pm
- 16 **Introduction to Wildlife Watch** | Sunday 10am to 1pm
- 16 **Grasses of North Sydney** | Sunday 10am to 1pm

DECEMBER

- 11 **Mayor's Community Christmas Gathering (save the date)**
Thursday 5pm to 7.30pm



Caption: Volunteers liberating Native Couch (*Sporobolus virginicus*) from the invasive Buffalo Grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*) in a highly disturbed remnant of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest, an endangered ecological community in NSW.



Caption: On Sunday 14 June, a glorious winter's day, ten North Sydney Bushcare volunteers joined eight Northern Beaches Bushcare volunteers and Friends of Currawong for a Bushcare activity at Currawong State Park on the western foreshore of Pittwater, a short ferry ride from Palm Beach.



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.

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