

BANDICOOTtimes

Summer 2020-21 | No 79



Bushcare Roundup



Talia Sawers
Program Officer Bushcare

Welcome to our summer edition of the *Bandicoot Times*, which we're dedicating to a very special little creature that features in our Bushcare logo and is larger than life when it comes out to play as Bluebell, our Bushcare mascot.

I am, of course, talking about eastern barred bandicoots. I hope you enjoy reading about our new Backyard Bandicoots program, sign up to become a 'bandicoot buddy' at hobartcity.com.au/bandicoots and help spread the word with friends and family about the need to protect our bandicoots.

Bushcare volunteers were very busy this spring. The **Friends of McAulay Reserve** held a planting day with Waimea Heights Primary School students. It was a fun day for all, and the plants are thriving.

Fern Tree Bushcare held their fifth successful search and destroy mission of Daphne laurel on private property. Tackling this weed in people's gardens is a great way of generating weed awareness among residents.

Friends of Wellington Park have done a great job controlling Spanish heath and gorse under powerlines.

Ridgeway Bushcare is controlling gorse and teaching new volunteers how to identify Spanish heath seedlings, which hide among similar-looking native plants.



Former Bushcare team leader Nicole Gill takes her dog Zorro on a bird and bat mortality survey.

Lambert Gully Bushcare continues to tackle red hot pokers in Bicentennial Park. As well as cutting off seed heads, they are digging out entire plants, which Plane Tree Studio then turns into beautiful hand-made cards.

The **Cornelian Bay group** has been investing a lot of time at the Queens Domain to help restore the grassland/grassy woodland.

Trackcare volunteers have worked wonders on the Yellow Hippo track at the back of Knocklofty Reserve. After four dig days formalisation of the track is almost complete, with lots of new features to improve the riding experience. Once signs are installed it will be ready to open! A smaller group has been working towards formalising the Troglodyte Track in Bicentennial Park.

South Hobart Bushcare removed a large area of mature cotoneaster growing along (and into!) a fence at Wellesley Park. Hats off to you!

The tireless **Friends of Knocklofty** never take their eyes off gorse as well as forget-me-not and hemlock. They also held a successful plant giveaway, promoting the Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

Mount Nelson Bushcare undertook some valuable post burn weeding and, like everyone else this spring, found a mountain of forget-me-nots.

Waterworks Valley Landcare celebrated the completion of Fantail Quarry with a bird walk guided by Don Knowler and Denis Abbott. More plants were added to the site as well as bird and bat nesting boxes, picnic tables and a beautiful mosaic. Congratulations to the group for creating such a beautiful home for local birdlife.

It's farewell but not goodbye, Nic

We were sad to farewell **Nicole Gill** from the Bushcare team. Not surprisingly, she's gone on to a very adventurous job working side-by-side with her conservation dog Zorro, monitoring wildlife mortality at a wind farm in central Tasmania.

"I've been offered regular work at Cattle Hill Wind Farm at Waddamana, using Zorro to conduct bird and bat mortality surveys," she says.

"Zorro and I will also be doing some work in Hobart's bushland reserves, working with Adam Cisterne looking for masked owls, so you'll not be rid of us entirely!"

We are very excited to welcome **Pip Jones** to the team. You can read Pip's story on page four.



Cover illustration:
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Our dedicated Bushcare volunteers who cleared out overgrown she-oaks at the Queens Domain.

Operation grasslands

More than 100 Bushcare volunteers joined forces with the City of Hobart to protect grassland habitat on the Queens Domain by helping to thin out she-oaks encroaching into nationally important grasslands.

Despite a long history of development, the Domain retains nationally significant remnants of once extensive grassland/grassy woodland.

Among the six native plant communities mapped on the Domain, two are significantly rare: lowland *Themeda triandra* grasslands are critically endangered nationally and blue gum forest and woodlands are a threatened native vegetation

community in Tasmania.

She-oaks have been steadily increasing in density since the 1970s, effectively turning a eucalypt-dominated grassy woodland into a low, closed forest.

The she-oaks crowd out other plants and an array of native grasses and herbs (including threatened species), competing for light, water and nutrients.

There are many reasons why this invasion occurs, but the change in burning regimes and climate change are major factors.

Reducing she-oaks gives woodland species space to thrive.

The decision to manually thin she-oaks was not made lightly. In fact,

the Domain has been the subject of one of the most far reaching, long-term studies into the floristic composition of lowland temperate grassy woodlands anywhere in Australia.

The City's fire and biodiversity team treated 36 hectares of the Domain with she-oak removal before our volunteers stepped in to help remove the dead she-oaks, which will be chipped and used elsewhere.

Since August, volunteers have put in 430 hours towards restoring the health of grassy woodland at the Domain. A great achievement alongside the work Cornelian Bay Bushcare is also carrying out on the Domain.



Lily receives her award from Keep Australia Beautiful's Lesley Gardner.

Lily receives youth leader award

Our spring edition of the *Bandicoot Times* featured a story about a sculpture of a coffin created by Hobart school student Lily Neyland.

Lily's sculpture highlighted the environmental impacts artificial flowers blown from Cornelian Bay cemetery have on surrounding bushland and the River Derwent.

In November Lily was presented

with a 2020 Keep Australia Beautiful (Tasmania) Youth Leadership award for her work. This is a welcome recognition and helps spread the message about the impacts of artificial flowers and encourages people to consider alternatives.

The award recognises young people making their mark as leaders in sustainability.

Bushcare passion wins Golden Secateurs

In just 18 months he has gone from an environmental novice to one of our strongest advocates for nature.

Born in Cambodia and now living in Hobart, Namkheang Ly's enthusiasm for protecting the bushland reserves that surround the city as a Bushcare volunteer has won him the 2020 Golden Secateurs Award, which he received at our annual celebrations at Legacy Park in November.

Presented each year to an outstanding Bushcare volunteer, the award recognises positive, inspiring and lasting contributions made to the conservation of Hobart's bushland reserves.

"Volunteering with Bushcare lets me be part of a movement



Namkheang proudly shows off his Golden Secateurs Award.

that is protecting wildlife habitat by getting rid of environmental weeds, planting native trees and shrubs, and getting others to join our cause," Mr Ly said, who is also happy to be known by his

Bushcare colleagues as Bryan.

"In Cambodia land mines still make it very dangerous to explore natural areas, but here in Hobart you can walk out your back door and be in a beautiful bushland

Merri old Melbourne time leads to Bushcare

Volunteering has taken our new Bushcare Team Leader Pip Jones from the furthest reaches of lutruwita/Tasmania to Victoria's volcanic plains and almost everywhere in between.

"I've been lucky enough to work with passionate people from all walks of life to protect and enhance some incredible places in Tasmania and Victoria," she says.

"It's a real honour to join Bushcare as a Team Leader and I can't wait to get better acquainted with nipaluna/Hobart's remarkable bushland parks and reserves through the knowledge and energy of



Bushcare's volunteers.

"To me, volunteers are a cut above the rest, bringing a special kind of care and connection to the landscape and everything within it."

Pip has returned to Tasmania after a long stint in Melbourne,

where she worked as a ranger and on Merri Creek, focusing on ecological restoration, waterway health and burning for biodiversity with Traditional Owners.

"Working on Merri Creek opened my eyes to what volunteer advocacy and hard work can achieve," she says.

"In 30 years the Friends of Merri Creek have helped turn a dumping ground into one of Melbourne's most biodiverse catchments. I'm really looking forward to working with Bushcare's wonderful vollies and learning about the places we care for together."



The Johnston family make their way to the podium to accept this year's Trackcare Legend Award.

reserve in minutes."

Mr Ly's first taste of Bushcare was with the Waterworks Valley Landcare group in 2019. Since then, he has branched out to the Cornelian Bay, Fern Tree, Friends of McAulay Reserve and Lambert Gully Bushcare groups.

"The different Bushcare groups all have their challenges and rewards," the UTAS Communications Technology student said.

"Working with Lambert Gully Bushcare can be really hard work. Clearing out weedy red hot poker from steep gullies before they escape and invade bushland further downstream can be hot, sweaty work.

"I also get to learn about the different native plants in each bushland reserve and the types of weeds that threaten them."

Lord Mayor Councillor Anna Reynolds said Mr Ly was an inspiration to his fellow Bushcare volunteers.

"His enthusiasm for Bushcare isn't just limited to weekly weeding forays," Cr Reynolds said.

"He has introduced many new volunteers to the program, talks it up as a member of the Hobart



Lambert Gully Bushcare convenor Ingrid Colman proudly receives a beautiful hand-printed card signed by the Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds thanking her group for their dedication to Bushcare.

Toastmasters Club, and has even convinced his body corporate to let him create a habitat garden in the block of flats he calls home.

"He is a wonderful advocate for the program and for our city's bushland areas and a deserving recipient of the Golden Secateurs."

Trackcare honours

Over the past few years our Trackcare program has gone from strength to strength because of volunteers like the Johnston family, who won the 2020 Trackcare Legend Award.

The whole family – Mark, Anna, Lucie and Ollie – has been with Trackcare since early 2018. They have worked on the North South, Slides, Stumpside, Pitfall, Drops and Yellow Hippo tracks.

They bring fun and enthusiasm to every single dig day they attend. They also nabbed this year's Trackcare prize, a fantastic Stumpjumper mountain bike generously donated by Roll Cycles Tas.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved with Trackcare and Bushcare in 2020, we look forward to 2021!

BACKYARD BANDICOOTS

They come out after dusk, scampering through Hobart's backyards and bushlands, feeding on grubs, beetles and spiders and leaving small, cone-shaped holes in the ground as evidence of their nocturnal visit.

Eastern barred bandicoots are smaller than a rabbit, and distinguished by the dark bars that run across their back.

These tiny, beautiful creatures are now extinct in the wild on mainland Australia, but in Hobart we are still lucky enough to have them as part of our lives.

Eastern barred bandicoots are vulnerable to all sorts of threats, including cats, dogs and cars.

But together we can protect Hobart's bandicoots.

What you can do

Join our new Backyard Bandicoots program and become a bandicoot buddy! You'll receive a sticker to put on your letterbox or car and we'll ask you to sign up for some simple actions that will help protect our bandicoots.

- **Plant local native plants** that provide shelter and nesting sites for eastern barred bandicoots. Good species include tussock grass, sagg and flax lily, prickly moses and prickly beauty.
- **Provide food and shelter** by maintaining a lawn, leaf litter, branches, logs and rocks.
- **Keep bandicoots safe from cats** by not letting your cat roam outside at night or during the day and fitting your cat with a collar, ID tag and bells.
- **Ensure dogs are kept away** from bandicoot habitat in your garden by securing the area from roaming dogs. If walking your dog in an off-lead area,

don't let it wander into the bush or use an extender lead.

- **Report bandicoot sightings** in your garden and neighbourhood on our iNaturalist project page – [inaturalist.org/projects/backyard-bandicoots](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/backyard-bandicoots).
- **Take the pledge** and become a bandicoot buddy today at hobartcity.com.au/bandicoots.

Biggest threats

Cats are an ever-present threat for bandicoots. During the day cats are attracted to the scent of bandicoot nests and can destroy the nest and occupant. At night cats can stalk foraging bandicoots – even well-fed cats have the instinct to hunt.

Many cats also carry parasites that can cause a deadly disease in bandicoots and other marsupials. Called *Toxoplasmosis* (Toxo) it spreads in cat poo and on cat hair.

Dogs too are attracted to the scent of bandicoots in their nests and love to explore them, easily injuring or killing bandicoots.

BECOME A BANDICOOT BUDDY!



Take the pledge and become a bandicoot buddy! By doing so you and your family will be helping to protect and provide food and shelter for Hobart's endangered eastern barred bandicoots.

You'll also be sent a special bandicoot buddies kit to help spread the word Hobart's bandicoots need our help.

What do bandicoot buddies do?

Bandicoot buddies help monitor the health of Hobart's eastern barred bandicoots by joining our special iNaturalist project.

All you do is install the iNaturalist app on your phone



Bandicoot joey. Photo: Petra Harris

– inaturalist.org/projects/backyard-bandicoots – then whenever you see an eastern barred bandicoot in your neighbourhood take a photo and upload it to iNaturalist! It's easy, and fun, and helps us

monitor bandicoot populations.

As a bandicoot buddy we also ask that you and your family follow some simple rules to protect Hobart's bandicoots:

- Make your garden bandicoot friendly by planting native species that provide food and shelter for bandicoots.
- Keep pet dogs and cats contained, especially at night, and away from bandicoot habitat.
- Keep dogs on-lead if walking them in bushland reserves and please don't let your dog wander into the bush.

Become a bandicoot buddy at hobartcity.com.au/bandicoots.

Cars don't kill bandicoots, inattentive drivers do! Bandicoots explore large territories at night, putting them at risk of being hit by cars when crossing roads. Slow down at night, particularly near likely bandicoot habitat.

Snail pellets are poisonous and can kill bandicoots, other wildlife and pets. Avoid using pellets by looking for safe alternatives – you could pick up snails after rain, make barriers with copper wire or lime, which snails won't cross, or make beer traps!





MOULTRIE 18°C 29.76inHg MOULTRIECAM 10 DEC 2018 07:20 pm

This large black cat was caught by a monitoring camera prowling McAulay Reserve in the exact same spot an eastern barred bandicoot was registered just days before by the same monitoring camera.

No hiding from prowling cats

Alan Hill
Program Officer Fire & Biodiversity

I was standing in the sun on a large patch of grass surrounded by forest. The grass had been mown to within an inch of its life, most likely by the local pademelons. They come out on the grass when they think it is safe during the day, and almost constantly when they know we are inside at night.

But this early morning another small creature was quietly sitting on the edge of the grassy patch, digging into the soil. It was an eastern barred bandicoot. I had seen it before but not that often. Seeing the hole it was making, I knew it and maybe others were more often around at night.

This species of bandicoot was once widespread in Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria. Its favoured habitat is grasslands, which have largely been lost to farming. On the mainland, where it is extinct in the wild but major efforts could see it reintroduced into the landscape, introduced foxes, cats and dogs have been its greatest threat.

Here in Tasmania we do not have foxes, but we have lost much of



MOULTRIE 17°C 29.57inHg MOULTRIECAM 08 DEC 2018 12:55 am

our grasslands and we do have cats and dogs. Of the two, cats are the greatest threat to eastern barred bandicoots, which leave the relative safety of their nests to feed at night in open grassy areas.

Cats hunt at night and the small bandicoot is easy prey. Cats also carry a disease called *Toxoplasmosis*, which can be transmitted to eastern barred bandicoots and is often fatal.

Hobart's bushlands and its wildlife are a signature of the city and surrounding areas. We can appreciate and indulge in its beauty whenever we like, simply by taking a walk, or a run, or a bike ride in one of our reserves.

More fleeting are the glimpses

we get of the wildlife that share this city with us – just enough to remind us that we live in a very special place. But the small bandicoot is very quiet and often only comes out at night. For most of us it is only if we know what its small diggings look like that we know it has been in our presence.

It is so important that if we want to have cats in our lives, and bandicoots, then we need to take responsibility for the habits of cats and keep them controlled at night and during the day.

By doing so you will be playing an important part in protecting our backyard bandicoots, and other small animals such as woodland birds, which sadly are also being lost to hunting cats.

Riding the Mountain gets green light

After extensive community consultation the City of Hobart's *Riding the Mountain* report has been endorsed by council.

The report is the City's blueprint for expanding the mountain bike network in the lower foothills of kunanyi/Mt Wellington, and includes plans for new tracks that will create a unique experience for mountain bike riders.

The blueprint's four key goals are:

- Improve the functionality of the

current mountain bike track network by addressing key gaps.

- Increase the types of rides available to cater for a broader range of riders.
- Establish multiple riding circuits and loops of varying levels of difficulty and distance.
- Where possible, provide new recreational links for non-riding trail users such as bushwalkers and trail runners or separate use where appropriate.

Development of the report included a review of the existing formal mountain bike track network on kunanyi/ Mt Wellington, which found a significant lack of connectivity between existing mountain bike tracks.

Riding the Mountain identifies the potential to establish 37 kilometres of new tracks to improve Hobart's existing track network and deliver trails built to international standards that will serve local and tourism needs.

Weed Watch

Blackberries and bandicoots

Ironic, isn't it, that some of our worst weeds can also provide shelter for some of our most vulnerable native wildlife?

Blackberry is a Weed of National Significance and yet its removal can, if not done carefully, create real issues for our eastern barred bandicoots, leaving them without cover. The same goes for gorse.

Bandicoots need the shelter of any dense understorey vegetation close to pasture and lawns, and in a landscape altered by humans that can mean patches of blackberry and gorse provide much-needed cover.

It's best to protect healthy bushland first before looking at clearing patches of weeds. If you are planning on removing environmental weeds where bandicoots might shelter, consider doing so in stages and allowing replacement plants to come up first.



When choosing replacements it is important to avoid fire-prone plants. Understorey species such as dianella, diplarrena and buzzies are not particularly flammable but do provide some cover for bandicoots. Tussock grasses, saggs, prickly native shrubs, layers of organic material and decaying logs are ideal for bandicoots but may present a fire hazard close to homes.

Removing blackberry

First look for the youngest runners or 'daughter plants', which have

shallower roots. You can easily dig them out to prevent the blackberry patch getting bigger.

To remove mature blackberry, people often brushcut, but this could destroy the shelters of bandicoots and wrens or scrubtits, especially in spring. You may want to do a small area at a time. Blackberry will of course resprout next spring, but the younger stems are then easier to treat with herbicide.

If you choose to dig out the roots, you'll find the stems lead to a strong root core underground, a bit like a potato. If you apply herbicide using the cut and paint method to the top side of the core, it's often not enough to kill it, and it may resprout. You might have to dig the whole thing out. You could leave the dying stems in place for a while, to continue to provide some cover.

If using herbicide, be sure to use it as the label indicates, and follow the safety directions.

Is this a new species of spider?

The discovery of a potential new species of jumping spider has highlighted the importance of Hobart's bushland reserves in protecting native wildlife.

The City of Hobart manages 4600 hectares of native bushland, providing habitat for countless species of native animals and plants – including many listed as threatened or endangered.

The discovery of an unidentified jumping spider at Waterworks Reserve by local science teacher Dr Keith Martin-Smith has further cemented the importance of protecting the city's bushland.

"After taking some photographs of an unusual jumping spider in the genus *Jotus* on a number of occasions, I entered into discussion with an entomology and arachnology expert at Museums Victoria who suggested it was probably an undescribed species," Dr Martin-Smith said.

"I then applied for a permit from the City of Hobart to collect some specimens for formal identification and description. I collected six spiders and hand delivered them to Museums Victoria."

Lord Mayor Councillor Anna Reynolds said the potential discovery highlighted the importance of protecting the city's bushland areas.

"This demonstrates the quality of our local ecosystem and just how important this habitat is," she said. "It makes you wonder how many other as-yet undiscovered species might be inhabiting our bushland."

Several threatened species are found only in Hobart, including the Knocklofty leek-orchid, Mt



Could this be a new species of spider discovered at Waterworks Reserve?



Dr Keith Martin-Smith at work.

Wellington eyebright, silky snail and the Ammonite snail.

"If we don't take steps to protect them, they could become globally extinct," the Lord Mayor said.

Eleven native animal species and ten plant species on Australia's national threatened species list can be found in Hobart's bushland reserves. They include:

- **eastern barred bandicoot**, one of Australia's most endangered species and considered extinct in the wild on the mainland
- **masked owls**, the largest of Tasmania's nocturnal birds, they are dependent on large old hollow-bearing trees
- **swift parrots**, critically endangered in Australia, the swift parrot is dependent on blue gum and black gum dominated forests.

The City of Hobart's biodiversity

action plan, *Protecting our Wild Heart*, identifies a number of biodiversity hotspots within our bushland reserve system, including:

Knocklofty Reserve: Home to a very large stand of old growth trees and threatened species found nowhere else on Earth. It protects nationally endangered eastern quolls and the endangered Tasmanian chaostola skipper, a type of butterfly.

Waterworks Reserve: Very large old trees found within the reserve provide significant habitat for a number of threatened species, and the threatened vegetation community black peppermint forest and woodland on sandstone.

Queens Domain: A stronghold for nationally listed threatened grasslands, the Queens Domain supports a number of threatened species including the eastern barred bandicoot.

Wellington Park: The diversity of micro climates on the mountain produces a diverse range of flora with more than 500 native plant species recorded in the park, including the Mt Wellington eyebright, which is found nowhere else on earth. Also endemic to the mountain, the silky snail is found only on the eastern and southern slopes of kunanyi/Mt Wellington.



City of Hobart fire crews in training for this year's bushfire season.

BURNING QUESTIONS

Bushfire season is here, but has a wet autumn lulled Hobart into a false sense of security? Do you and your family have a plan for when the hot north winds blow?

Most people will never know what it is like to be caught in a major bushfire. The sound, the eerie light, the smoke, the heat, not being able to see clearly create a frightening and disorienting world.

The best way of surviving a bushfire is to be prepared, to have a plan, and to leave early.

But when do you put your plan into action and avoid the mistake of leaving everything to the last minute? The best bushfire plans include a trigger point, something that kicks you and your family into action long before the real threat arrives.

One thing many of us overlook in preparing our household bushfire plans is what to do with some of the most cherished members of our family, our pets. Can you safely move your chickens or goldfish in your car? Where will you take them? If you have larger pets such as horses, you will need to consider your options long before a bushfire comes knocking.



Alan Hill
Program Officer
Fire & Biodiversity

What else do you cherish and could not live without? Apart from your family and pets, this might include passports, insurance papers and other legal documents. Your laptop or a hard drive, photos, the list can be endless. Only you will know what is important.

A safe bushfire plan means having valuable items in one place, ready to leave the house with you at the drop of a hat. You, your family, your pets, some clothes and any other items you want to take must fit into your vehicle while still being safe to drive.

Make it a family affair

Get your household together and ask them to put everything they want to take with them in an emergency on a sheet in the middle of the lounge room. Time how long it takes to get those things together.

Did you find everything you wanted? Will all of you and all

of these items safely fit in your vehicle in a hurry?

Take the time to walk around the house and say goodbye to what's left, knowing that if your home is threatened by bushfire it could destroy everything left behind.

Ready. Set. Go!

Galvanise yourself for the bushfire season. Be prepared to leave early. Get your household to agree to a trigger warning, and make sure you know what you are taking with you.

Put all of this into a plan that is known and understood by everyone involved and is practised at least once before every bushfire season.

Physically practising each step in your plan helps iron out any difficulties and turns notes on a piece of paper into a reality, something your body and mind can visualise so that if you are ever threatened by bushfire, you will know how to act in the heat of the moment.

For help preparing a Bushfire Response Plan for your household visit the Tasmania Fire Service website at **bushfire.tas.gov.au**.



IF YOU FIND INJURED OR ORPHANED WILDLIFE

- Keep the animal warm
- Keep the animal in the dark
- Keep the animal quiet
- Keep handling to a minimum
- Do not provide food or drink

CALL BONORONG WILDLIFE RESCUE
STRAIGHT AWAY FOR ADVICE:

0447 264 625 (0447 ANIMAL)



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Wildlife Hospital & Rescue