

# BANDICOOTtimes

Summer 2021-22 | No 83



[hobartcity.com.au/bushcare](http://hobartcity.com.au/bushcare)



A PROGRAM OF



City of **HOBART**

# Bushcare Roundup



**Talia Sawers**  
Program Officer Bushcare

Bushcare is slowing down to a well-deserved pause ahead of Christmas, and what a wonderful feeling it is to step back and appreciate the achievements our volunteers have made this year.

And what a year it's been!

- Almost 500 people volunteered with Bushcare this year.
- We held 120 Bushcare, Trackcare and Crag Care activities.
- Our volunteers contributed more than 3500 hours towards caring for our bushland reserves.
- Over 335 new volunteers joined the Bushcare program!
- Working Alone Volunteers put in more than 500 hours.
- Trackcare racked up 163 hours of volunteer work across six Dig Days, improving Hobart's increasingly popular recreational trail network no end!

Two new groups and their dedicated convenors joined the Bushcare family: Crag Care and Hobart Rivulet Bushcare.

A huge shout-out to staff at KPMG Hobart for helping us remove a truckload of forget-me-nots and plant 300 native grasses and shrubs in bushland adjacent to the Hobart Rivulet.

A huge thanks also to horticulture students from GlobalNet Academy and the Friends of Wellington Park for their awesome efforts controlling a large invasion of



Gabrielle Balon, far right, celebrates the end of another great Bushcare year with, left to right, Michelle Joy, Gemma Rushton, Pip Jones and Bec Johnson.

Spanish heath in an otherwise healthy patch of bush in Ridgeway.

We are immensely appreciative of the efforts of students and teachers from Mt Carmel College working in Lambert Gully, and members of the Australian Conservation Foundation Tasmania South Community Volunteer Group for their help planting at Domain Slipway with the Cornelian Bay Bushcare group.

Vast areas of land, mostly on private property, were checked for Daphne laurel by contractors, made possible by a Tasmanian Government Weed Action Fund grant. Fern Tree Bushcare volunteers have also been hard at work matching contractor hours and Daphne laurel now stands much less of a chance of becoming established in Tasmania thanks to their efforts.

In spring the Fern Tree and Friends of Knocklofty Bushcare groups held the last of our plant giveaways. We can't wait to see these plants flourishing in people's gardens and creating habitat!

A heartfelt thank you to all of

our wonderful volunteers for your contribution to our natural environment, our recreational trails, our climbing areas and our community. Despite a global pandemic and a string of rained out working bees you kept Hobart's bushland reserves healthy, safe sanctuaries for our wildlife.

## Staff changes

**Pip Jones** has finished up as a part-time Bushcare Team Leader and moved into a full-time role with the City of Hobart's fire and biodiversity team in September.

Pip has been a tremendous team leader and Bushcare advocate, and we have no doubt she will continue to champion the Bushcare cause in her new role.

Thanks Pip for bringing so much passion and expertise to Bushcare!

Many of you will have met and benefited from **Gabrielle Balon's** friendly and sage advice as a Bushcare supervisor at weekend working bees over many years.

Gabrielle edited the *Bandicoot Times* in its early days, and has

*continued page 10*



**Cover photo:** Vicki Martin fends off the rain at this year's Bushcare celebrations.  
Photo: Alastair Bett

## Contact Us

16 Elizabeth Street  
GPO Box 503,  
Hobart 7001, TAS

P 03 6238 2884  
E bushcare@hobartcity.com.au  
W hobartcity.com.au/bushcare  
f facebook.com/cityofhobartbushcare



This year's Trackcare Legend Award winner Petr Otahal.

# Rain fails to dampen the Bushcare spirit

In true Bushcare style a bit of rain did nothing to dampen our spirits as we celebrated yet another fantastic year with our incredible volunteers at this year's Bushcare awards celebration.

It was a delight to honour the fabulous Vicki Martin with this year's Golden Secateurs Award. Vicki has for years been the backbone of the Valley Street Bushcare group, which she saved from disappearing.

When Valley Street Bushcare fell into decline and was under threat of disbanding, Vicki pounded the pavement, letterboxing surrounding streets to keep the Bushcare group alive.

She found Debbie Chung, and the two now hook up fortnightly in the Leonard Wall Valley Street Reserve where they combat the tide of forget-me-nots and other weeds.

"Our reserve, we want it for our native wildlife," Vicki says. "When the forget-me-nots grow, the grass doesn't and there's nothing there for the wallabies."

Our Trackcare Legend Award went to Petr Otahal, who works like a Trojan at every Trackcare Dig Day he attends.

A keen mountain biker, Petr has brought a well-rounded perspective to the Trackcare team, benefiting all involved,

particularly the local riding community, which has gained from improved access and riding experiences on trails across Hobart.

A regular presence at Trackcare working bees, Petr has become an integral member of the team, even passing on his passion by getting his children involved as well.

Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Helen Burnet, who presented the award, praised the efforts of Bushcare volunteers.

"Through countless hours of weed control, planting native species, monitoring, mapping,

*continued page 4*



Our incredible Bushcare convenors with City of Hobart Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Helen Burnet and Alderman Jeff Briscoe.

from page 3

and more, these volunteers help create healthy ecosystems and a healthy Hobart community," Cr Burnet said.

"We've had almost 500 people volunteer with the City of Hobart's Bushcare program so far this year across around 120 Bushcare, Trackcare, and Crag Care activities."

David Phillips was acknowledged for his years of service as a Bushcare volunteer. Well into his eighties David still carries logs around at McAulay Reserve like the younger volunteers he inspires.

A special shout-out must go to Joe Ashlin, a plucky young lad who has made it to almost every Trackcare Dig Day this year. The future looks bright for Trackcare with the likes of Joe so committed to looking after our mountain bike tracks.

Roll Cycles joined us at the awards again this year, generously donating a mountain bike as part of their unwavering support for



David Phillips was recognised for his years of commitment to Bushcare.

the Trackcare program.

And of course, Gabrielle Balon, thank you for being such an invaluable member of the Bushcare staff team for 23 years! We will be sorry to see you retire from supervising but glad to

know you'll still be involved as an independent volunteer.

And last but not least, the presence of Gurpreet Singh was sorely missed, and the Bushcare community deeply mourns his untimely passing earlier this year.

# An energy that lights up Bushcare

Vicki Martin has been with Bushcare since the program's early days. As one of our most experienced and longest-serving volunteers, it would be fair to say she is a matriarch of Bushcare!

For many years Vicki has been the backbone of the Valley Street Bushcare group, which cares for the Leonard Wall Valley Street Reserve, and single-handedly rescued the group from disappearing when it declined in 2018. To save the Valley Street Bushcare name, Vicki letterboxed the streets and found her wonderful work mate Debbie Chung. Now the two of them form a dynamic duo, meeting fortnightly, and working with autonomy.

The great spirit and sense of camaraderie the two have developed helps them stay on top of the tide of forget-me-not, which is currently overwhelming most wet places in Hobart!

For many years Vicki had a strong friendship with Marjorie Wall until her passing. Marjorie and her husband Leonard Wall were guiding members of the local Progress association and community leaders for many years in West Hobart. Leonard Wall was a leading Tasmanian ornithologist and the reserve is named after him. Vicki helped Marjorie remain connected



The dynamic duo, Vicki Martin and her Bushcare buddy Debbie Chung.

to the reserve long into her old age, helping Marjorie up and down the steep slopes and listening to her stories.

Vicki has also contributed years of support to the Friends of Knocklofty Bushcare group and she's a familiar name among our Bushcare volunteers. However, it turns out she's super-active outside of Bushcare as well!

Each year Vicki co-ordinates many volunteers on behalf of Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service to do systematic counts of Cape Barren geese on all of the Bass Strait islands! As a born and bred Flinders Island girl, nothing can keep her

away from the islands for long.

Vicki is also an active member of the Hobart Walking Club. If you leaf through past publications of the *Tasmanian Tramp* you'll see Vicki is a published artist drawing inspiration from nature, and she also teaches art!

Vicki is known as a warm-hearted, always positive and bubbly person, who is a delight to work with. She is full of an infectious energy. The analogy comes to mind of a kindly boobok owl looking over our bushland reserves, although you could be forgiven for thinking she's a sprightly young fairy-wren.



Joe Ashlin with his sister Evie.



Bec Johnson tries to dodge the rain.

# CAN WE STOP WHITE GUMS FALLING?

The mighty white gum, *Eucalyptus viminalis*, is a mainstay of our coastal heathlands, low-ranging hills and dry sclerophyll forests, and an important component of Tasmania's wet sclerophyll forests, particularly the threatened *Eucalyptus viminalis* wet forest.

An expert shape-shifter, it can take the form of a hardy mallee shrub, a 90-metre-tall old-growth giant towering above temperate rainforest or a sprawling woodland tree sheltering an enormous diversity of wildlife, including the endangered forty-spotted pardalote.

But in the past decade this magnificent gum species has been in steep decline. The white gum woodlands of Tasmania's Midlands have become vanishingly rare and bushlands across the north and east of the state are transforming at an alarming pace. Ginger tree syndrome is taking down these giants, and climate change is the cause.

Our white gums are falling victim to heatwaves that have gripped the state more frequently and for longer periods. During long, hot spells, a white gum's leaf stomata can't regulate the amount of moisture lost and it becomes affected by acute heat stress, causing the tree to rapidly shrink in response. Fissures are created



**Pip Jones**  
Team Member  
Fire & Biodiversity

between the gum and the bark, which then bleed red-coloured sap – these ginger-coloured stains on the stem are a sign the tree is already beyond repair.

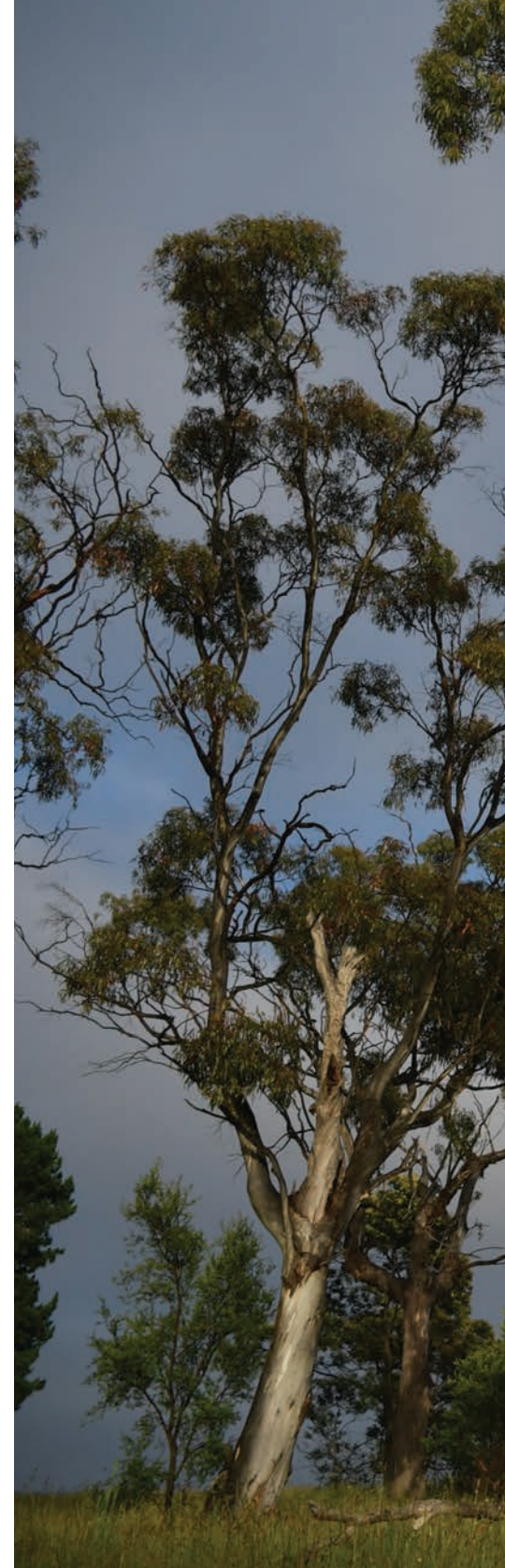
How can we protect our *Eucalyptus viminalis* woodlands and conserve these precious habitat trees into the future?

The answer may lie in the trees' DNA.

Future ecological restoration projects may see the use of genetic traits from dry-zone *Eucalyptus viminalis* to climate-proof our white gum woodlands. Diversifying our white gums with genetic material from drier areas such as Ross and possibly even Victoria may be the key to protecting this species for the future.

So far, southern Tasmania is less affected by ginger tree syndrome than the north of the state, but time is running out.

UTAS PhD candidate Erin Bok has been researching the effects of climate change on the *Eucalyptus viminalis* on the Queens Domain with one particular critter in mind: the forty-spotted pardalote. This



tiny endangered bird is entirely reliant on Tasmanian white gum for food – specifically the sugary 'manna' produced by the tree, and the insects it hosts. The regeneration of climate-ready *Eucalyptus viminalis* may be critical to the forty-spotted pardalote's survival. Cracking the white gum's genetic code could be the key.



**ABOVE:** White gums on the Queens Domain.  
Photo: John Sampson

**RIGHT:** The endangered forty-spotted pardalote.  
Photo: JJ Harrison



# WHEN SUMMER HITS

**A**ustralia's Bureau of Meteorology tells us Hobart experienced slightly higher than average winter temperatures and slightly below average rainfall this year.

It also tells us southeast Tasmania continues to suffer from low soil moisture.

But ask anyone in Hobart about the winter weather and they will tell you it has been wetter than normal.

It's a disjunct that can easily lull us into a false sense of security, but make no mistake, a burst of hot weather will quickly cure the tall grasses around Hobart and bring home the reality of this year's bushfire season.

So what are the chances of bushfires over summer? We will have bushfires, that is simply part of living in Australia, and we may well have them close by, that is part of living close to bushland. But will they be bad?

Given winter and spring weather conditions we can expect a more temperate bushfire season this year. However, these same conditions have been great for the growth of grass, making fast-moving grassfires a major concern once summer warms up. And warm up it will.

As we move into summer, ground litter will dry out, as will the outer fibres of trees such as



Alan Hill  
Program Officer  
Fire & Biodiversity

stringybarks. Grasses will also dry out, and remember, even green grass burns fiercely. The cured grass, dry ground litter and stringybark fibres are all fuel that can ignite during lightning strikes or be lit from campfire escapes, among other potential sources of ignition.

So yes, we will have bushfires. There is a possibility they will not be as bad as in recent years, but the important thing is to be prepared. Clean up the rubbish and litter around your house and in your gutters. Prepare a household bushfire response plan and practice it. It is much better to trial your plan when you are not under pressure and find out what works and does not work for you and your family.

Take the time to do these things now. Don't wait until the last minute. Remember, the most important part of your plan is to leave early and to have an agreed trigger that tells you it is time to leave.





## PHOTO WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

This digitised image depicts Hobart just hours before a massive bushfire hits the city's outskirts and was created to show people the frightening realities of a severe to catastrophic bushfire.

The image shows a huge column of smoke just behind the summit of Kunanyi/Mt Wellington, with spot fires already setting fire to bushland just behind West Hobart and New Town.

Under severe or catastrophic fire conditions this bushfire would already be a dangerous threat to places like Fern Tree and Ridgeway and we could expect the outskirts of Hobart to be under ember attack within just hours.

The intense heat and smoke from a major bushfire approaching Hobart may create its own weather patterns, visibility would drop suddenly, and the entire city and outlying suburbs could be under attack.

The key message ahead of this year's bushfire season is don't wait until a major bushfire is on your doorstep and threatening your home and loved ones before you act, be prepared now.

The Tasmania Fire Service is urging everyone to ensure they have a bushfire plan. For help preparing your plan visit [fire.tas.gov.au](http://fire.tas.gov.au).

## Big. Bold. Beautiful. Bad.



Bec Johnson  
Team Leader Bushcare

The big, bright, tubular bell-shaped flowers of foxglove are hard to miss at this time of year.

They are absolute knockouts for a few weeks, but once the showy flowers fade there's nothing special about this invasive weed, which has a nasty sting in its tail for our native pollinators and natural biodiversity.

You see, foxglove is toxic. The only species that seems to benefit from a colony of foxglove is the introduced bumblebee, which competes with native bees for food and takes pollen without cross-pollinating native plants.

Each foxglove stalk can release tens of thousands of seeds that can travel far and wide and tolerate a range of conditions. Foxglove has been found from the dunes of Macquarie Harbour to at least 820m above sea level on kunanyi/Mt Wellington and many places in between.

There is now evidence the spread of foxglove has accelerated in recent years, possibly because the introduced bumblebee cross-pollinates it, and also because



Tasmanian winters are becoming milder.

In my observation, if left undisturbed, a colony of foxglove can triple in size every year, much faster than other annual weeds.

In contrast, Spanish heath would increase by just a proportion over the same period of time without disturbance.

### Taming foxglove

- Never walk past a new foxglove – if it's new to the area, pull it out! That's the easiest way to prevent a new infestation.
- Start in areas with low infestations of foxglove, taking out the outliers first. Don't start in the worst patch.
- Start in winter or spring. If you wait until the flowers develop it's much more work, the plants are bigger and you have to deal with millions of viable seeds.

- Disturb as little soil as possible.
- Get the main foxglove root out of the ground with a knife or sharp trowel, or cut and paint the stem with a hand-held dabber.
- Remove and bin the flower stalk. Be careful in late summer, as fine seeds will rain out of the flower stalk.
- Leave the plant high and dry, off the ground, and get most of the soil off the roots, otherwise it will continue to grow and develop seed. Or make a pile and check it every month or so.
- Do not brush-cut the plant – this will only encourage quick regrowth with multiple heads and stronger roots.
- Look after grass, buzzies, ferns, leaf litter and woodchip, which all help shield soil from new foxglove infestations, preventing germination.

from page 2

racked up 23 years working for City of Hobart Bushcare!

Thank you for your immense contribution to Bushcare Gabrielle. We wish you well in your retirement and count ourselves twice blessed knowing you are

staying on as a Bushcare volunteer.

We're pleased to share the great news that **Sonya Stallbaum** is returning to Bushcare in early January, taking up Pip's former role as a Bushcare Team Leader.

Sonya was the Bushcare Coordinator from 2008-12 before

moving to Tasmania's north coast, where she has been working in a key natural resource management role supporting Landcare groups and managing bushland.

Sonya brings extensive experience and we are delighted to welcome her back.



City of Hobart firefighters keep an eye on the Knocklofty Reserve fuel reduction burn. Photos: John Sampson

# Reducing Knocklofty's fire risk

The City of Hobart's specialist fire crews conducted their first low intensity summer fuel reduction burn in Knocklofty Reserve in December.

These burns help protect the local community from bushfire and also have a very strong focus on protecting Hobart's natural values, including Knocklofty Reserve, long cherished for its open forest landscape and tremendous views out over the city and the Derwent.

This 144-hectare bushland reserve provides a refuge for many native animals and plants, some of which are threatened or endangered.

It protects a large area of pre-European, old-growth white gums, an extremely rare natural commodity in a landscape that has changed dramatically over the past 200 years.

Black peppermint, which can only be found in Tasmania, also grows in Knocklofty Reserve.

Swift parrots, eastern barred bandicoots and the spotted marsh



Samantha Jones has just joined the City of Hobart fire crew.

frog are among the native wildlife calling Knocklofty Reserve home.

If you would like to help care for this bushland reserve why not volunteer with our Bushcare program – [hobartcity.com.au/bushcare](http://hobartcity.com.au/bushcare)? The Friends of Knocklofty are incredible advocates for protecting this area of natural bushland, and are part of our Bushcare program.

They also have a terrific website: [friendsofknocklofty.org](http://friendsofknocklofty.org).

And if you or a family member has a medical condition that can be exacerbated by smoke you can sign up to receive email alerts about upcoming City of Hobart fuel reduction burns.

Just visit [hobartcity.com.au/burn-alerts](http://hobartcity.com.au/burn-alerts).

# BUSHFIRE WHY RISK IT?



# DO YOUR 5 MINUTE BUSHFIRE PLAN **NOW!**

Spending as little as 5 minutes preparing a Bushfire Plan could save your life and the lives of those you love. Go to [fire.tas.gov.au](http://fire.tas.gov.au) to start planning today. Don't wait until it's too late!

SCAN TO PLAN



Visit  
[fire.tas.gov.au](http://fire.tas.gov.au)

Phone  
1800 000 699



Tasmania Fire Service



Tasmanian  
Government