

BANDICOOTtimes

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A PROGRAM OF



City of **HOBART**

Bushcare Roundup



Sonya Stallbaum
Acting Bushcare
Project Officer

Thank you for the warm welcome back to Bushcare. In the ten years I've lived away from Hobart a lot has changed. Recognition of the original and ongoing custodians of nipaluna/Hobart through the renaming of kunanyi/Mt Wellington is a positive step towards reconciliation.

Our beautiful mountain has featured heavily in Hobart life over the past few months. The kunanyi Mountain Run made its debut in April using Wellesley Park as the event hub. Bushcare and Bush Adventures were showcased alongside Landcare Tasmania and Wildcare to promote the broader theme of environmental care and protection of this iconic landscape.

The other big event on the mountain was the annual Bushcare Clean Up kunanyi day. Forty-four hardy volunteers radiated out from the pinnacle to collect rubbish that has accumulated all over the sensitive alpine environment.

Mostly without intent, people who have left the still, mild atmosphere in the lower climes are often unprepared for the cold breezy conditions at the top of kunanyi/Mt Wellington and are surprised by a stiff, mischievous burst of mountain-strength wind as soon as they open the car door.

An estimated 8000 items of rubbish, mainly lightweight cigarette butts, plastic wrappers, coffee cups and lids, 20 baseball caps, and 61 disposable masks



Bushcare Program Officer Talia Sawers bids farewell to Hobart with a mountain walk.

were picked up. One lucky person found a \$50 note!

On an alarming note, foxglove was found by Bushcare convenor Peter Franklin at an incredible 1100 m above sea level on a really remote part of kunanyi/Mt Wellington, far from walking tracks, on rock.

Thanks to the hard work of the Friends of Wellington Park, active management by the City of Hobart's fire and biodiversity team and the general community we are keeping on top of many weeds that might have ruined the natural balance of the slopes and alpine environment, orange hawkweed is one example that comes to mind.

Time to say a mountainous goodbye to Talia Sawers, who

has left the Bushcare team to shift closer to her Melbourne family. A small group of Bushcare staff bid a fond farewell to Talia on a beautiful Saturday morning walk to Big Air on kunanyi. The unique mountain vegetation, beautiful birds, lichen-covered scree slopes, stunning views and a lucky encounter that allowed us to witness a slacklining activity was a fitting farewell.

Talia worked her way through a challenging time – her job as Bushcare Program Officer coincided with balancing the Bushcare program with the COVID-19 lockdown. Talia is a talented, intelligent operator, well-respected and a dream to work with. Thank you Talia, you will be greatly missed!



Cover photo: Swift parrot fledgling.
Photo: Dr Dejan Stojanovic

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



Tree hollows provide important nesting sites for swift parrots. Photo: Pradeep Pandiyan

Our swifties are in peril

Bec Johnson
Team Leader Bushcare

All female swift parrots in the wild would probably fit into an average shopping bag.

Swift parrots are critically endangered, breeding only in Tasmania. Nesting female swift parrots can't defend themselves from sugar gliders, which could be why 'swifties' fly from Victoria every year to breed in Tasmania. This was a good strategy – until we introduced sugar gliders from Victoria in the 1800s.

Sugar gliders are now seen as a serious threat to swift parrot populations, and their habit of preying on nesting female swifties is leading to a population imbalance, with far more male parrots than females.

Normally male swifties feed their nesting female partner, but the gender imbalance means the males often have to defend their partner against other males rather than feed her.

The battles going on outside the nest trigger the females to produce male chicks first. The females instinctively think more males are needed to help defend their territory. Older chicks usually outcompete the younger chicks for food, so the female chicks are younger and often underfed and



HOW TO HELP

1. Don't fell mature trees if you can avoid it.
2. Share your love of big trees with your children!
3. Consider the source of your firewood. Mature or dead trees have hollows and provide homes for a diverse range of species, including swift parrots.
4. Install a swift parrot nest box.

Photo: Dr Dejan Stojanovic

less likely to survive. This lack of females is a significant threat to the viability of our swift parrots.

To complicate matters swift parrots are nomadic and unpredictable. Each summer they choose different regions to forage and nest. Sugar glider exclusion devices have been designed that close on dusk and open at dawn, but because gliders nest in different places, it's impossible to install the devices in tree hollows or nest boxes everywhere. Luckily, there are no sugar gliders on Bruny or Maria islands. But those islands alone are probably not large enough to support our swifties.

Swift parrots compete for blue gum and black gum nectar (not very successfully) with the introduced European honey bee, the introduced bumblebee and the introduced rainbow lorikeet. They also face competition for nest hollows from honey bees,

rainbow lorikeets and starlings. The shortage of nest hollows is compounded by habitat loss.

Bushland habitat

The 4000 hectares of protected bushland that surrounds Hobart includes healthy forests and woodlands of blue gum and black gum at Bicentennial Park, Ridgeway, on the Queens Domain, kunanyi /Mt Wellington and Knocklofty Reserve.

We strive to protect and raise awareness around the importance of maintaining mature gum trees in the landscape. Before carrying out fuel reduction burns, we pull fallen branches and fuel away from big old gum trees to protect them.

I learned of the pressures facing this gorgeous parrot at the Bruny Island Bird Festival in March. With thanks to Dr Andrew Hingston, swift parrot expert and long-term Bushcare volunteer.

MOUNTAIN RUN OF EPIC PROPORTIONS

There is only one word to describe the inaugural kunanyi Mountain Run: epic.

The event, which ran over three days in April, proved incredibly successful and attracted more than 900 trail runners, adventurers and the wider community all ready to embrace the power of kunanyi/ Mt Wellington's wild landscape.

There is little doubt its reputation will quickly grow and that the kunanyi Mountain Run will attract more runners to Hobart for the next event.

City of Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds and state MP Madeleine Ogilvie opened the event on the Friday evening at base camp, Wellesley Park in South Hobart, which was surrounded by an atmosphere of excitement and camaraderie for the three day event.

There was a real emphasis on celebrating and learning about the mountain, its natural environment and culture by making "every step a story". The Tasmanian Aboriginal community's involvement was especially prominent and many people were greatly moved by the welcome to country and smoking ceremonies.

Biggest challenge

The ultra marathon was the biggest challenge for competitors – a 67 km run that started before dawn, climbed to the mountain summit via Myrtle Gully, the Organ Pipes and Zig Zag tracks before heading out the back of the Wellington plateau.

Runners then tackled the knife-edged Cathedral Rock Track, moved on to the Pipeline Track, down into Waterworks Reserve and back to Wellesley Park. The fastest time was a little over eight hours. All told the route was the equivalent of climbing and descending four vertical kilometres – that's half the height of Mt Everest.

Weekend activities also included the 27 km Mountain Run event to the pinnacle and the calf-burning 5 km "Vertical Kilometre" run, a 1000 m climb that was by all accounts brutal.

Culture, walks and tours

Organisers put together a fantastic collection of cultural activities for the weekend, including walks, talks, tours and workshops, many supported by our own City of Hobart Bushcare and Bush Adventures programs.

Our Bushcare team was part of the action and gave people a taste of the Bushcare ethic. We had a native plant giveaway, a display on habitat gardening, and we took a little group to try out some bush regeneration skills in an area of nearby remnant bushland.

Our Bush Adventures team won the hearts and minds of the little people with Pip's wildlife discovery and bush stories.

For those new to trail running, the event was a chance to take on an exciting and inspiring challenge – and get a great yarn out of it. Everyone who ran, volunteered or joined in

the cultural activities was part of the first genuine trail festival ever held on our mountain, which is fast gaining a bucket-list-worthy reputation for being at the centre of some incredible running and cycling events.

This event would not have been possible without the City of Hobart's amazing track and trails network.

For ongoing participation in the event visit kunanyimountain.run, and save the date for next year's event, 24-26 March 2023.

Top left photo, opposite page: Local runner Rhiannon Palmer gives the event a big thumbs up.

Top right photo, opposite page: Harley Mansell from the Tasmanian Aboriginal dance group, pakana kanaplila, helped make this a unique cultural event.

Background photo: Runners line up for the sunrise start of the 68 km Ultra Solo event.

Images: Mark Watson – Incite Images



New lease of life for black gum

What to do when a much-loved 60-year-old native black gum tree dies suddenly? Create a plan that brings together the local community, school kids and professional arborists to create future habitat for our native birds and other wildlife.

In May, months of careful planning came to fruition when the City of Hobart joined forces with Mt Nelson Primary School to ensure a native black gum tree that died now has a second life as a 'habitat hotel' for wildlife.

Instead of removing the tree, City of Hobart arborists cut back large branches to make the tree safe. Prep and year four classes walked to the site from their school. They spotted the City of Hobart's drone in action overhead and when they arrived onsite were thrilled with a close-up view of the very large and impressive drone.

The children then watched the spectacle of arborists on an elevated platform installing two nest boxes with small entry holes, ideal for native pardalotes.

With help from local bird expert and Bushcare volunteer Dr Andrew Hingston we then talked with the kids about the importance of mature trees in providing



High wire act, a dead black gum becomes a 'habitat hotel'.

homes for our native wildlife. With demonstration nest boxes and photos we discussed how nest boxes provide extra habitat for native birds. The kids had some great questions, such as "How old was this tree?"

Mature gum trees provide invaluable natural hollows for our wildlife, including threatened species such as the swift parrot and masked owl as well as micro bats. And while the artificial nest boxes installed in Mt Nelson's first ever habitat hotel can never be as good as real tree hollows, they will at least ensure this tree remains an important part of the natural landscape.

An operation of this size requires careful planning and we'd like to thank everyone involved, including the local residents who

alerted us to the death of the tree and supported the project, City of Hobart arborists and staff, Mt Nelson Primary School, our drone operator, traffic management crew, and of course Mt Nelson Bushcare.

Responses to the project have been overwhelmingly positive, including this one from someone who lives in the neighbourhood: "We are so pleased that you are not cutting this tree down and are going to make it into habitat for native wildlife."

The kids from Mt Nelson Primary School have really embraced the concept of turning the dead black gum into a habitat hotel for wildlife. We hope the children will look at mature trees with a new understanding after this adventure. We can't wait to see what turns up!

Vale Melva Truchanas

Bushcare would like to pay tribute to Melva Truchanas, who passed away in May.

Melva was a co-founder of the Friends of Knocklofty in 1992, before the City of Hobart was involved. She was actively

involved with the group back in the days when the reserve was almost wall-to-wall gorse.

Melva is fondly remembered for her contribution to her local area as well as her advocacy for wilderness across Tasmania.



Burrowing bandicoots and bouncing bettongs

Bec Johnson
Team Leader Bushcare

One of the most exciting aspects of our work is looking at photos taken by infrared cameras in Hobart's bushland reserves, especially when the wildlife is checking out habitat we helped create.

And monitoring what turns up on the cameras is proving to be a great way of measuring the early success of our new Ridgeway Log Hollows project, which had its genesis after a pre-burn assessment in Ridgeway Park revealed a lack of big logs and rotting wood at ground level.

With the Ridgeway Bushcare group we applied for a Landcare Action Grant to create more shelter and foraging opportunities for our eastern barred bandicoots as well as other wildlife in Ridgeway Park.

This work will build on our Backyard Bandicoots project, and benefit other wildlife.

So far 25 salvaged logs have been carefully winched into place, with hollows cut into their undersides and concealed by loose soil or tussocky vegetation. The logs will supplement existing wildlife habitat, especially for eastern barred bandicoots, which are known to exist in large numbers in this park.

As well as providing increased habitat the Landcare Action Grant is also helping us raise community awareness about the importance of caring for our native wildlife and habitat, and volunteers will help with all stages of this project, including the fun part – viewing



ABOVE: Volunteers out in the field seeing what has turned up on the wildlife monitoring cameras.



LEFT: On the first night the cameras were installed, an endemic bettong was recorded bouncing right past a newly-installed habitat log.

and cataloguing the photos.

In April a hardy contingent of Ridgeway Bushcare volunteers joined us to help install six wildlife monitoring cameras looking onto six of the new salvaged logs. Lining up the cameras correctly is easier said than done, but after a bit of mucking about with sticks and straps we finally got them possum-proofed and secure.

In June we downloaded our first set of photos and wow, have we been photo-bombed!

Our cameras have captured images of bouncing bettongs and curious eastern barred bandicoots.

In the long term we may select the two busiest sites and leave

cameras there for longer. All data will be uploaded to the Natural Values Atlas.

As the logs age over time the rotting wood will provide habitat for fungal bodies, insects and skinks. They will create habitat and foraging areas for bandicoots, bettongs, quolls, echidnas, reptiles, native rodents and bassian thrushes.

Exploring the rich variety of native wildlife that lives so close to urban centres is a privilege and one of the delights of being a Bushcare volunteer!

If you'd like to get involved, contact Bushcare, or sign up to become a Bandicoot Buddy at hobartcity.com.au/bandicoots



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WINTER PROGRAM OUT NOW!

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