

BANDICOOTtimes

Winter 2021 | No 81



Bushcare Roundup



Talia Sawers
Program Officer Bushcare

Bushcare volunteers have taken advantage of the cooler weather and its slower growing conditions to ramp up efforts in woody weed control across Hobart's bushland reserves. Autumn saw many groups targeting the prolific woody weeds Spanish heath and gorse, and considerable time and energy has also been spent controlling hawthorn.

The **Friends of Wellington Park** have been busy ensuring foxglove doesn't take hold of our iconic mountain, and maintaining their grant-funded planting site in Lenah Valley. When they aren't removing weeds they have been working on and recently completed the Thark Ridge to Devils Throne walking track on Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service land.

Volunteers from **Valley Street Bushcare** are continuing efforts to rid Providence Gully of forget-me-not and thistle as well as controlling gorse in Leonard Wall Reserve.

In addition to the usual suspects, the **Friends of Knocklofty** have also been targeting thistles, hawthorn, cotoneaster, ivy, blackberry, forget-me-not, briar rose and euryops.

Waterworks Valley Landcare expanded their works to McDermotts Saddle and **Ridgeway Bushcare** combined their woody weed control activity with planting to create clusters of



Fern Tree Bushcare volunteers controlling the invasive weed karamu.

bandicoot shelters.

Fern Tree Bushcare remain focused on controlling holly, foxglove, pines and karamu.

Friends of McAulay Reserve put their 'drill and fill' skills into action at Edith Avenue Reserve, and McAulay Reserve is now one step closer to a healthy ecosystem following the removal of 12 pine trees, funded by the Communities Environment Program grant.

Cornelian Bay Bushcare volunteers were treated to a fascinating Aboriginal heritage site induction along the foreshore, and are ready to recommence works to protect and restore this ecologically and culturally significant area.

Volunteers from **Lambert Gully Bushcare** concentrated their woody weed control efforts in the riparian zone of Bicentennial Park and also invested some TLC into previous plantings in Lambert Park.

Congratulations to **South Hobart Bushcare** for completing works on

the soccer fence and starting to restore another stretch of gnarly woody weeds!

Works on the mountain bike Troglodyte trail are complete. **Trackcare** volunteers will return to the foothills of the mountain in winter as they commence works on the Tip Top Track.

We're excited to be working with Tasmania's rock climbing community to protect and restore climbing sites in Hobart and have been delighted to have the opportunity to work with UTAS Landcare Society in their efforts to care for French Street Reserve.

Our winter activities program includes something for everyone, including those who love planting!

Keep an eye on **hobartcity.com.au/bushcare-events** for details of our native plant giveaways so you can create your own wildlife sanctuary at home. We'll also need all hands on deck to plant 1300 native seedlings at this year's National Tree Day event along the Hobart Rivulet. Hope to see you there!



Cover photo: Little penguin, Michael Roberts.

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



Greg helps stabilise the banks of a stream in Bicentennial Park with native plants at a recent Lambert Gully Bushcare working bee.

Our tireless Bushcare hero honoured in Tassie awards

If you've walked an inch of Tasmania's national parks, or even the bushland tracks around Hobart, there's a fair bet Greg Kidd was there before you.

He has spent an incredible two decades as a Wildcare volunteer, and nearly as long as a Bushcare volunteer. And his efforts, as well as his patient and gentle manner with fellow volunteers, have been recognised in this year's Tasmanian Volunteering Awards.

We've run the numbers at Bushcare and estimate Greg has taken part in up to 400 Bushcare activities over the years. A retired teacher, he also volunteers extensively at schools, and has helped students build nest boxes

for swift parrots, control weeds and create and maintain native bushland sanctuaries on school grounds.

A jack of all trades in the Bushcare field, his skills include weed control, remote area track construction and hut restoration, lime washing, chain sawing, first aid and teaching.

He has a special place in his heart for Bicentennial Reserve, Lambert Gully and of course kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

Greg's time in the field is priceless. It has led to real and long-lasting impacts on our environment, including helping to significantly reduce invasive weeds and protecting peppermint and black

gum woodlands in Bicentennial Park.

The list of threatened native species that have benefited from his work is a long one, and includes our local eastern barred bandicoots, swift parrots and the Tasmanian devil.

Greg is a vital cog in the local Bushcare machine, and we all benefit from his generosity in sharing his skills, his experience, and his sense of custodianship for our natural heritage.

He is a more than worthy finalist for this year's Environment, Animal Care and Conservation Volunteer Award.

Thank you Greg.



We're so lucky these beautiful little penguins call the Derwent estuary home. Photo: Michael Roberts

SAFEGUARDING OUR LITTLE DIVERS

Once a month, like clockwork, two dedicated volunteers rise early and begin a very special journey along the Derwent estuary's western shore.

Their day takes them from Hobart's outskirts all the way out to Blackmans Bay and beyond. On the way they visit tiny beach coves, fossick away in beach sheds and riverside gardens and investigate the nooks and crannies of rocky escarpments.

They carry with them a kit bag of pens, notepads and a desire to help protect the smallest penguin in the world, the little penguin.

Today Zoe Bucher-Edwards has called in a favour, and instead of scouting penguin sites with her usual companion Jordy Monash, her friend Meriem Daoui has volunteered to help.

Zoe has just finished her degree in environmental science and wanted some real-life field

experience before starting an Honours course. Monitoring the Derwent's little penguins was the perfect opportunity.

"We spend the day scrambling over rocks, making our way through thick scrub to find each nest, where we check for any damage and note down whether there are eggs in the nest, if there are penguins present when we visit, and note the condition of the nest," she says.

"Sometimes debris has blocked a nest site, or land slips can damage a site, and if that's the case we report it immediately so that either the City of Hobart or Kingborough Council can fix the problem.

"We also keep an eye out for dog or cat attacks. It's exhausting work, but also exhilarating to know that we are part of a project that is keeping the Derwent's penguins safe."

It's impossible to underestimate the importance of this

monitoring work, which has been running for almost two decades.

"Regular monitoring of the penguin colonies is critical to understanding what's happening in the local environment now and over time, and so that we can react quickly if any of our penguin nests are under threat," says Zoe.

"It has also led to some really important breakthroughs in our understanding of the breeding habits of the Derwent penguins – without it we would not know that as well as breeding in spring and summer, our penguins also breed in winter."

Volunteers check 20 to 30 nests at each colony, and by the end of the day have ticked off just under 150 penguin nests.

"At the end of the day I feel a huge sense of satisfaction knowing that I have achieved something greater than myself and that I am making a very



Meriem and Zoe join Mathew Bartlett from the City of Hobart to survey local penguin colonies.

real contribution to science and the management of these little penguins," says Zoe.

B-b-b-bird is the word

The Derwent's penguins are a very special breed of birds. Unlike many other penguin colonies in Australia, they have managed to keep a foothold in an increasingly urbanised world, but the effort hasn't come without costs.

It is believed the Derwent estuary once supported more than 1000 breeding pairs of

little penguins, but ongoing monitoring of our colonies since 2004 reveals these special little birds are only just hanging on for survival. The latest estimate puts the current Derwent estuary population at about 150 individuals.

Clearly, ongoing monitoring and actions to protect our remaining colonies are working, but the Derwent Estuary Program still considers our little penguins as highly vulnerable and they need all the help they can get to ensure their numbers continue to grow.

Good little divers

Weighing in at 1.5kg on average and topping out at 30cm tall little penguins are true seabirds. Their flippers are wings shaped for swimming and when they're in the water they can hit a top speed of 6km/h. Their scientific name, *Eudyptula minor*, means 'good little diver' – and no wonder, they can reach depths of up to 70m beneath the surface.

But it's not easy being a penguin when you share your home turf with humans and their idiosyncrasies, although a penchant for secrecy goes a long way when you're a little bird in a big city.

The Derwent's little penguins usually nest in burrows or among rocks, but they've also been found hiding in people's backyards or even shacking up in boatsheds.

With each colony made up of a small number of individuals they are highly vulnerable to a range of threats, not the least of which is roaming cats and dogs. Even venturing near a penguin colony with your dog can put the little birds in jeopardy, and even the best-behaved dog can leave a scent that attracts other dogs.

continued next page ...

THEIR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON US!

If you are near little penguins, please help keep them safe by following these simple precautionary measures:

- Keep your dog away.
- Don't take your dog to places with 'No Dogs' signs. Penguins might live there.
- Keep your cat inside at night and if possible during the day.
- Keep away from penguin homes, especially at night.
- Don't fish with gillnets or throw away fishing lines or tackle.
- Put litter in rubbish bins. Don't use plastic bags.

- Look out for penguin nests before you 'tidy up' your backyard. Sometimes weeds protect nests from dogs and cats.
- Plant prickly native plants to keep dogs and cats away from nests.
- Do not go near a penguin!

Penguins are easily frightened, and they might bite if they get really scared. And even though they might look a little dishevelled when moulting they don't need our help, just time alone.



Illustration: Liam O'Donovan

And if people or dogs are on the beach at night their presence is enough to scare off penguins returning home to feed their chicks.

In safe hands

Keeping the penguins safe hasn't been easy, and relies on strong relationships between councils, scientists, volunteers and neighbours.

Running for almost 20 years and facilitated by the Derwent Estuary Program, the Derwent Estuary Little Penguin Project has been critical to ensuring the survival of the Derwent's penguin colonies.

Kingborough Council has faced very serious threats to its colonies from roaming dogs, and at one site was forced to put up a dog-proof fence to protect penguin nests.

The City of Hobart has put in a huge amount of effort at one of its most important nesting sites, building first 'penguin igloos' and then wooden nest boxes to provide safe breeding shelters for its birds. We are now seeing this penguin colony, which at one point was on the brink of collapse, expanding in numbers. Stabilising the area by planting

more native species has played a key role in giving the colony the shelter, safety and space it needed to grow.

Also key to the success of these colonies has been the caring and watchful eyes of neighbours, who keep a lookout for threatening cats and dogs, disturbance from beach parties and the impacts of harsh weather patterns that can damage the fragile nesting sites.

Penguin colonies can be noisy at night, and sometimes a bit smelly, and so we thank these neighbours dearly.

Where to from here?

Kingborough Council's Bridget Jupe has been a part of this collaborative project for more than 12 years. She says the monitoring work carried out by volunteers once a month is a highly skilled undertaking, and builds on one of the best little penguin datasets in the country.

"The survey data generated by the volunteers is essential to

the ongoing protection of the little penguins in the Derwent estuary," she says.

"Not only do the project volunteers need passion and commitment, which they have in spades, but they also need to be highly disciplined and meticulous in how they gather the data to ensure it meets the high standards required for the scientific community.

"That's why we'll soon be asking for public donations to ensure our volunteers have all the support they need to help keep this project alive."

If you would like to support this project and the work of its wonderful volunteers keep an eye on the UTAS website, which will soon have a donation portal via the SEA Sentinels Project at www.utas.edu.au/giving/give-now.

You can also follow @sentinelssea on Instagram and Twitter, and the Derwent Estuary Program has great information on little penguins: www.derwentestuary.org.au.

The Derwent Estuary Program coordinates the Derwent Estuary Little Penguin Project and facilitates the Derwent Penguin Advisory Group, which includes the City of Hobart, Kingborough Council, Clarence City Council, NRM South, DPIWWE's Marine Conservation Program, Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) and independent wildlife experts. The Penguin Advisory Group's work includes overseeing monitoring of estuary penguins, analysing penguin data, providing advice to councils and individuals, and organising working bees.



Cragcare volunteer Shumita helps clean tools after a working bee. Photo: Rosie Hohnen

Cragcare: The social climbers

City of Hobart Cragcare is back in action with new convenors and a whole lot of energy! After a two-year hiatus, Cragcare has returned to the Bushcare family and the group is busily making plans to care for Hobart's much-loved climbing sites.

Like any climber, Cragcare's new southern convenors Rosie Hohnen and Michael Hitchcock have set their sights high. The pair have generated plenty of interest among the climbing community already and along with Steve Postle have kick-started a statewide Cragcare program, in partnership with Wildcare.

Here in Hobart, Cragcare aims to provide an outlet for climbers to take on informed stewardship of climbing routes, abseil landings, approach tracks and link-up tracks.

Cragcare started in 2016 as an initiative of the Bushcare program to connect climbers with the City of Hobart and to work together caring for our local climbing areas – particularly Fruehauf, the



Cragcare volunteers planted almost 100 tussocks and shrubs at Fruehauf to help create habitat for bandicoots and small birds. Photo: Rosie Hohnen

popular climbing spot in South Hobart.

After a successful two-year stint of weeding, planting and picking up litter, the group took a breather while their plantings grew. Today, the former quarry on Hobart Rivulet is a restored woodland, with flowering trees and shrubs providing habitat for local birds and bandicoots, as well as shade

for those on belay duties!

The group intends to continue revegetating and caring for Fruehauf, but their plans don't stop there. Cragcare also hopes to get stuck into caring for the sensitive alpine environment on kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

Keep an eye on wildcaretas.org.au/events for upcoming Cragcare working bees.

Weed Watch



Bec Johnson
Team Leader Bushcare

Hawthorn can be a beautiful small tree and in old Tasmanian farming districts forms extensive hedgerows. It's a reminder of English landscapes and my English mum loved to see them crowding around the edges of bushland, especially in autumn.

Hawthorn is known for its cultural and medicinal significance. The berries (haws) are often taken as a natural remedy for blood pressure or heart health. Traditionally, the tree was admired for its spring flowers and life-giving qualities, but was also thought to harbour protective faeries who had to be placated with offerings.



However, like many plants away from their homeland, hawthorn lacks native predators in Tasmania and has become a weed. The slopes surrounding the Hobart Rivulet hold dense thickets of hawthorn. It's possible the hawthorn originated from hedgerows of small market gardens on the north side of the Rivulet.

Growing out of its home range, hawthorn tends to create multi-

stemmed thickets rather than single trees. It supports less native biodiversity than natural bushland, and harbours feral species such as blackbirds and rabbits, reflecting a gradual 'homogenisation' or mixing of species between continents.

On the other hand, hawthorn hedgerows in the UK form very important habitat and are often the last refuge for a range of British birds, mammals and insects.

It is fascinating to understand the cultural and medicinal significance of introduced plants, but important to be aware of their impacts on the native ecology of this country. It also makes us wonder how much knowledge we've lost about the cultural and medicinal uses of indigenous Tasmanian plants.

Talking trails and Trackcare

It's been a big year of achievements for Trackcare, with a keen crew of volunteers working to bring two great mountain bike trails into Hobart's track network.

In April, Trackcare held its annual catch-up event Talking Trails and Trackcare, an evening of trail talk and information, and an opportunity for both new and seasoned volunteers to hear about the program and have their say in its future.

A bunch of enthusiastic mountain bikers and trail users joined us at Cascade Brewery to talk about how the Trackcare program is helping to get the community out onto our tracks and trails with tools in hand, helping to build and maintain the trails they love to ride.

We provided updates on several upcoming trail builds that the City is planning, and chatted about the various challenges that COVID created. Those challenges have helped us shape a better program with more chances for volunteers to learn key trail building skills, and build solid, sustainable trails.

Over the past year the Trackcare crew has grabbed shovels and mattocks and sweated it out to formalise Yellow Hippo Track in Knocklofty Reserve and Troglodyte Track in Bicentennial Park. Both tracks are now part of the official trail network, thanks to the hard work of the volunteers. Planning is underway for our next sites, with the crew heading over to improve Tip Top Track, before tackling the formalisation of Upper Luge Track.

Ready to grow your own?

Getting involved in a local community garden opens up a world of opportunity for everyone who wants to grow their own food, while learning more about veggie gardening and getting to know your local community.

There are also significant health and wellbeing outcomes from being involved in community gardens.

The City of Hobart has produced guidelines to help take you through the process of creating your own community garden, step by step.

To get started, visit:
[hobartcity.com.au/
community-gardens](http://hobartcity.com.au/community-gardens)



Emily and Bec investigate willow infestations on the Hobart Rivulet.

Award-winning project stems tide of weedy willows

Several years ago a casual comment by Bushcare team leader Bec Johnson about willow trees took root in the active mind of Emily Walter.

At the time Bec and Emily were making bows and arrows from a willow tree at Cockle Creek. Years later, Emily's idea matured into a national award-winning project on the harm willows do to waterways.

As grade 10 students at St Mary's College, Emily and co-student Caitlin Marr submitted a STEM project on the environmental impacts of crack willow on the Tasmanian landscape.

Their project demonstrated through a controlled experiment how willow twigs grow much faster in water than in wet soil. They also looked into the impacts

willow leaves have on water quality.

"Willows are deciduous, and so unlike our native trees they drop all of their leaves every autumn – that's millions of leaves going into the watercourse," Emily says.

"This can lead to a whole range of detrimental effects as the oxygen is sucked out of our waterways.

"We tested for key water quality indicators such as pH, turbidity and dissolved oxygen levels, and we found that willow leaves had a drastic impact on most of these, in particular decreasing the dissolved oxygen."

Then followed an amazing string of awards. Emily and Caitlin (the crack willow team) received a gold crest CSIRO award. They won awards in the Tasmanian Science Talent Search 2020 including Best

Research Investigation in their age group and Most Promising Young Scientists in their age group. They were the Tasmanian finalists in the BHP Science & Engineering Student Awards 2021.

Emily and Caitlin were two of only five Australian students selected to go to the USA in May 2021 to represent Australian students and present their work at an international science fair. However, COVID meant no free trip to the US but instead, getting up at midnight to present their project online to judges in Arkansas. A poor swap!

The Hobart Rivulet was the source of willows for their experiments. Now that the willows are gone from some of this creek, Emily and Caitlin are keen to be involved in the community replanting day in August 2021.



LOGAN'S RUN

Logan Higgins holds up an almost perfectly triangular piece of rock he's just found on the North-South Track as if he's struck gold.

Made of mudstone, each side is about 30 centimetres long, and the rock is perfect for creating the dry stone walls that feature so strongly along one of the most popular mountain bike tracks on kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

"This sort of triangular rock is my favourite," he says. "It has so many uses as we build stone features into the track, and it looks beautiful set into the wild, forested landscape."

Both Logan and Jeram Cowley, City of Hobart track workers, were part of the original teams that built the North-South Track more than a decade ago, and over the years they've watched as nature has taken hold – moss and lichen now form intricate, green-soaked patterns across many of the hand-crafted stone walls that are a hallmark of this trail.

The mountain and its weather have also left their marks on the North-South Track. Some of the larger log ramps have rotted away and need replacing. Water moving over and through the track has undermined the integrity of some gravel-packed sections.

And that's why these two, as well as Pete Schieck and Andrew Evans, are on the mountain one day after massive bags of gravel, some weighing as much as 700kg, were dropped gently down through the forest canopy by helicopter, each bag guided into position by teams in constant radio contact with the pilot.

Huge log sections, one giant

weighing in at just under a tonne, were also threaded through the tall trees and edged into place, ready for today's final adjustments.

As they engineer each new log ramp into place you can see just how important the North-South Track is to them. The merits of each rock or stone used in the construction is first weighed in the balance and, if found wanting, returned to the forest floor. But if that rock meets their approval, like the almost perfectly triangular piece that lit up Logan's eyes, then it will be lifted into place, malleted into position, and will become yet another part of the track.

" This sort of triangular rock is my favourite. It has so many uses as we build stone features into the track, and it looks beautiful set into the wild, forested landscape.



national tree day

PLANET ARK  TOYOTA

JOIN US ON THE HOBART RIVULET

Help restore Hobart Rivulet and make a positive difference to our local environment. We aim to plant 1300 native seedlings, so will need all hands on deck. Come and collect a free native plant to help you create your very own habitat garden.

Everyone is welcome!

This is a COVID-safe event and numbers are limited. All participants must register.

WHEN

Sunday 1 August 2021,
10 am – 1 pm.

WHERE

Hobart Rivulet, between Tara St bridge and MacFarlane St bridge, South Hobart.

For more information and to register visit:
hobartcity.com.au/events



City of HOBART