

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER  
Number 124 - Summer 2021-2022



**THE YEAR AHEAD**

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*Photo: Narelle Clarke - A local Tawney Frogmouth family*

## Editor's note: 2022 Summer Edition

Discovering this family of frogmouths in my own garden this summer was both a delight and an inspiration as is catching glimpses of our resident echidna moving purposefully about. As the dust settles on Covid and the challenges of climate change re-emerge undiminished we take inspiration from the resilience and beauty of this wet summer to also move forward purposefully.

While ever it continues to be the case that government funding and policy do not match the work needed to protect and conserve biodiversity in the New England environment the work of the staff, members and supporters of ATG will remain vital. Our vision remains 'growing sustainable landscapes'. To that end ATG must look to it's own growth. In December the committee met to review our progress and update our strategic plan for future growth.

Work has begun on Stage 1 of the Nursery Expansion with the completion of the new and now functioning propagation room. Promoting community awareness and participation in sustaining biodiversity in the region is intrinsic to the past, present and future of ATG and will be an area of renewed focus in 2022.



Plans are in progress to develop a program of workshops to be delivered at the Woodland Centre and an environmental education and tree-planting program is being prepared for the Armidale Regional Council Zero30 Committee. This builds on successful environmental education programs provided to local schools during 2021.

*Photo: Narelle Clarke-purposeful echidna*

It is also really encouraging to note that there has been a substantial increase in the number of ATG supporters receiving the Newsletter and attending events. We value and look forward to your continuing support in the year ahead.

## **In this edition:**

- **Managers Report – Alicia Cooper**
- **Community Helps Bring Hope for our Local Koalas  
Des Anderson – Project Officer – Tablelands Koala  
Partnership Project**

- **Lead Article – Natural Capital Accounting Project  
Susan Newey**

Susan is a long-standing member of the ATG and a committee member since 2021. In this article she shares her experiences with regenerative agriculture and her involvement in a project to map the natural capital on her farm, which aims to identify and share beneficial farming practices.

- **Feature Article – Flowers and their summer visitors  
Peter Metcalfe**

You may have noticed an abundance of beautiful butterflies and moths in your garden this summer. Peter's article explores and explains some of the relationships that have blossomed between flowers and their visitors. As with his previous article in the Spring Newsletter it is a celebration of biodiversity.

## Management Report - Alicia Cooper

### **Farewell Rob Johnson**

After 27 years of service and devotion to the Tree Group, Rob Johnson has decided to move on to other pastures. Rob's contributions to the organisation are too numerous to name, but his willingness to go the extra mile (or twenty) for the good of the Tree Group marks him out as one of those exceptional employees.

On a personal level, I can only say that I count myself as very lucky to have worked with Rob over the past 8 years. I have very fond memories of my early days of potting up plants with him over cups of tea while amicably chatting about seemingly every subject under the sun. Rob later became my confidant and my rock during challenging times, and I will always be grateful for his support, honesty and integrity. While he will be sorely missed, the Tree Group door will always be open to him.

### **Propagation Workshop Celebration**

ATG staff, volunteers and committee members recently celebrated the official opening of our refurbished propagation workshop. Our hardworking staff and volunteers will now find the winter and summer months much more bearable, after the addition of insulation, lining, and new windows and doors. Volunteers have also been taking advantage of the new awning, which provides a comfortable space for a well-deserved morning get-together over coffee and tea.



### ***Committee volunteers and staff sharing tea and stories***

This work was partly funded by the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife as part of a Bushfire Recovery grant.

The committee also took this celebratory opportunity to surprise Robert Johnson with lifetime membership of the Armidale Tree Group. Committee President Dave Steller thanked Rob for his continued support and dedication to the organisation and presented him with an honorary plaque, fittingly decorated with eucalyptus leaves and fruit.



*Team members Ben Lange-Hedge and Kjell Knable in the Tree Group's redesigned propagation room*



*Committee President Dave Steller presents Rob Johnson with his lifetime membership of Armidale Tree Group*

### **Habitat and Haven**

Our three-year grant with the Environmental Trust has now been finalised, with our Environmental Services crew filling out some riparian areas of our Salisbury Waters site with local Callistemons and Leptospermums. The project has seen volunteers and ATG staff planting over 7000 trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs to help restore remnant critically endangered New England Peppermint Woodland and Ribbon Gum-Mountain Gum-Snow Gum grassy woodland. Swathes of *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass) surround our newly planted Peppermints and Snow Gums, and the site was splashed with the gold flowers of *Bulbine bulbosa* (Golden Lily) in November.

Staff and volunteers collected seed from 33 different species to assist with the propagation efforts, which exceeded our target by 18 species. Our crew dealt with many interesting challenges over the years, from drought to flood and triffid-like growth of weed species. However, we have learnt a great deal from these tests, and we will apply what we have learnt to future endeavours. As this site is part of our greater “Every Tree Counts” project, the Armidale Tree Group Fund will continue to support and enhance ‘Habitat and Haven’ into the future.

We would like to thank the Local Land Services department for their support of this project.



***Golden stars of *Bulbine bulbosa* at the Habitat and Haven site  
This project was assisted by the NSW Government Environmental Trust***

### **New Staff**

We have welcomed Peter Rickard into the fold as our new Environmental Services Coordinator. Peter has brought a great sense of teamwork and work ethic with him and has thrown himself wholeheartedly into the complexities of the role. He is working hard to maintain and grow our relationships with our valued supporters and

customers and is keen to build the capacity of our Environmental Services department. At the moment, he is focusing on overseeing our maintenance contract for the solar farms at Beryl and Manildra.

We also have some new faces in our nursery; Natalie Kathrada and Ben Lange-Hedge. They have been gaining experience through volunteering with plant propagation and maintenance of our display gardens, and are now joining our team on a casual basis.

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### **Something for the kids!**

Great resources and activities are available at the following sites including the launch of a new, free colouring book all about **Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands**. The book was commissioned by the Molonglo Conservation Group, with funding from the ACT government and National Landcare Program, and is available as a free ebook download from their website: <https://www.molonglo.org.au/post/explore-a-diverse-ecosystem-through-a-beautiful-free-colouring-book>

There's also a colouring competition for 9-12 year olds to celebrate the launch: <https://www.molonglo.org.au/post/it-s-time-to-get-colouring-for-conservation>

## Community help brings hope for our local koalas

### **Des Anderson – Project Officer – Tablelands Koala Partnership Project**

Now well into its second year, the Northern Tablelands Koala Partnership Project continues to power ahead with the support of the NSW government and most importantly, our local community.

The Project, hosted by Southern New England Landcare, is part of 5 regional groups all working under the NSW Koala Strategy with the aim of engaging the community in activities that directly help support koala conservation.

To begin with the good news, the NSW government has recently provided funding to support the project until at least 2025. On a more sobering note, the funding announcement coincides with the recent determination to move the koala's conservation status from "vulnerable" to "endangered". Simply translated, this means that the koala is at serious risk of extinction.

What this also means is that the koala, perhaps our most iconic and loved uniquely native animal, needs help from everyone to survive.

Our local community has responded positively, showing a willingness to engage in the activities offered by the Project. Recently, around 50 landholders logged on to "Recreating Koala Habitat Webinar" which went online on October 29, 2021. A video of the event will be available soon though Southern New England Landcare. As the name implies, the webinar focused on methods and techniques for best practise for large scale koala habitat planting, including advice from local experts Shane Andrews, Gordon Williams and Peter Metcalfe, all accredited [Master Tree Growers](#).

Participants in the webinar were provided with a free "Koala Habitat Pack" - 40 seedlings comprising of local natives, which are preferred feed trees for koalas. A knowledge guide has also been written to provide concise information for large-scale tree planting including species selection, ground preparation and post planting maintenance. These packs and knowledge guides are available at the Armidale Tree Group for anyone interested in planting koala feed trees.

Providing connected habitat across the Northern Tablelands is one of the most important ways we can help the koala survive and thrive in our local area. If you would like to help create and expand koala habitat on your property, funding is available for large-scale plantings (a few hundred to a few thousand trees). Funding will cover the cost of the trees and fencing to exclude livestock where necessary.

You can stay in touch and up to date with the events and activities of the Northern

Tablelands Koala Partnership Project by browsing the [Southern New England Landcare website](#), subscribing to the SNELC eNews service through the link at the bottom of our webpage or contacting the Project Officer, Des Andersen on 6772 9123



*Photo: Kindly Animal Sanctuary - Armidale*

## The Natural Capital Accounting Project

### Susan Newey

Last year, the Newey farm Olmo along with Stuart Hutton's property Fern Hill were fortunate enough to be selected along with 4 other farms on the Northern Tablelands to be included in the Farm-scale Natural Capital Accounting Project.

The Natural Capital Accounting Project is jointly funded through La Trobe University, the Odonata Foundation and the Australian Government's Smart Farming Partnership Program. The project commenced in 2020 and aims to be completed by mid-2023.

This project, encompassing 50 farms across Tasmania, Victoria and NSW aims to "map" the farms' **natural capital** (all elements of the natural landscape) including the soil and its biome (microbes, fungi, invertebrates) water quality, insects, vegetation (including grasses, forbs, sedges, crops, understorey species e.g. acacias & trees), birds and mammals. The farms selected for the first round of this project have generally been selected because they are being run along more "regenerative" rather than "industrial" guidelines.

"Natural capital accounting is a tool that enables farmers to record and manage the natural capital on their farms, both in physical and monetary terms. Like financial accounting, natural capital accounts are guided by an agreed set of standards, and are quantifiable, verifiable and repeatable"



*Photo: Susan Newey - Annette Cavanagh botanist and PhD student mapping natural capital on 'Olmo'.*

The project involves scientists (including entomologists, ornithologists, ecologists, and botanists) setting up numerous sites on each farm and conducting rigorous identification and quantifying of all species within their speciality, on those sites.

I have been a keen observer of the positive changes that have occurred on Olmo since I introduced regenerative grazing management here more than 15 year ago. These changes manifest as both environmental and production enhancements, and include greater species and numbers of birds, greater numbers of insects, almost complete

disappearance of bare ground and erosion, improved soil structure and composition, more mammals such as the gorgeous Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*), appearance of rarer native grass species e.g. Silky Brown Top (*Eulalia aurea*), an increased

stocking rate and almost complete disappearance of sheep “camps” and many weeds including thistles and barley grass,

The NCA Project will be able to quantify these observations and other parameters scientifically.



***Photo: Susan Newey – Harry Allington – Volunteer with the NCA working in the field at Olmo.***

To quote Rachel Lawrence, the ecologist on the project “There are so many farmers out there who manage complex ecosystems in extraordinary ways and are not recognised for it. It is important to me to help in developing methods that can make that recognition possible. Doing this will also help the considerable challenge of protecting landscapes and agriculture against the dual and interconnected threats of climate change and biodiversity loss.”

Over 58% of Australia’s landmass is managed under agriculture. It makes sense in this time of increasingly erratic climatic conditions, that farmers are given the tools and knowledge to see a way forward to manage their land within a regenerative framework, to affect carbon drawdown and ameliorate global warming.

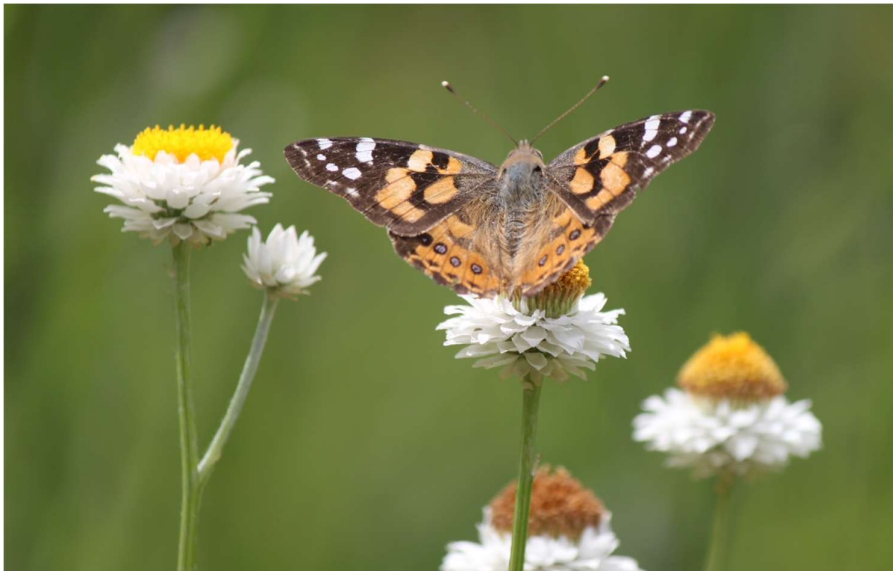
## FLOWERS AND THEIR SUMMER VISITORS

Peter Metcalfe

Flowering plants and insects and birds have co-evolved over millions of years. This co-evolution has led to the tremendous diversity of both flowering plants and insects and birds. By planting native species you can attract many birds and insects to your home.

### BIRD FLOWERS

There is a neat match between each flower and their pollinator. Australia has many honeyeaters and a corresponding range of flowers pollinated by honeyeaters. Birds see well in the red end of the spectrum and bird flowers are mostly red and green. Birds are large animals compared to insects and they have hard beaks. Bird flowers are correspondingly rich in nectar and tough in texture. Classic bird flowers are Correas, Eremophilas, Bottlebrushes and Grevilleas. Plant these near the house to attract nectar eaters.



*Photo: Kerry Steller*

### INSECT POLLINATED FLOWERS

Compared to birds, insects are light bodied so insect pollinated flowers are soft and dainty. Each type of insect has different senses and their flowers have evolved to look attractive and smell attractive to their pollinator. Bees see well in the yellow to ultra-violet end of the light spectrum so the bee pollinated flowers that are predominately blue and yellow. Bees like sweet scents so their flowers are often sweet scented.

Bees also collect pollen to feed their larvae so they visit wattles that are yellow and sweet scented and produce plenty of pollen. Bees collect pollen from many different flowers and you may see their bright yellow pollen sacks or perhaps other colours, as not all pollen is yellow! Honey bees co-evolved with flowers in the northern hemisphere but are adept at stealing nectar and pollen from Australian native flowers without rewarding the plant with pollination. Carefully watch bees in Grevilleas and

Bottlebrushes and you might see that they can collect nectar without contacting the anthers or stigmas of the flowers.

Flies look similar to bees their senses are differently tuned. Their flowers are usually dull coloured and smell musty or worse to attract flies, which seek stinky materials in which to lay their eggs. Wasps are different again and have many different life styles. One important relationship is between Blackthorn (*Bursaria*) the big blue wasps that parasitise Christmas beetle larvae. The female wasps are wingless but the male wasps are big and strong. The males pick up the females and take them to feed on *Bursaria* before mating and returning the female to the pasture where the beetle larvae are eating the roots of the pasture plants.

### **BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS**

Superficially they look alike but their biology is very different. Unlike many other insects, butterflies have a poor sense of smell. Butterflies will even visit marigolds that smell quite unpleasant. Butterflies are visual creatures that fly by day and seek their mates by sight and seek flowers by sight rather than smell. The picture shows a typical butterfly that has landed on a paper daisy. Butterflies land to feed. They have fine tubular mouth-parts and can penetrate the narrow tubes of plants such as daisies. ATG has many different daisies for the garden.

Moths have an even longer tubular mouth parts than butterflies. They communicate by scent, fly at night and usually hover to feed. Moth- pollinated flowers generally have a strong sweet scent and are white to be easily seen in the dark. The native gardenia and Roman Candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*) are moth pollinated. Both have scented white flowers with a narrow nectar tube held horizontally. Petunias, Jasmine and Tuberose are introduced plants that also attract moths.



*Aegeus Papilio* – common name the Orchard Butterfly  
<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/insects/orchard-butterfly/>

You might see big black and white Orchard Butterflies flitting around your garden, especially if you grow Correas. These handsome butterflies lay their eggs on orange and lemon trees and they are attracted to Correa bushes that are in the same plant family as the citrus. Spare a few Correa leaves for their caterpillars and be rewarded with more butterflies.

Keep a lookout for insects visiting your flowers to appreciate the biodiversity your native plants support. The shrub Clarence River Weeper produces masses of small white flowers, each having a small nectar cup in the centre. They have a rather subtle spicy scent. When in bloom the bush it is a magnet for a huge number of different species of native insects including bees, flies, wasps and gnats. Have a look when next your bush is in flower.



# Membership Application/Renewal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Email (Required): \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your preference, you will receive an email when membership is due:

- \$5.00 for 1 year
- \$10 for 2 years
- \$25 for 5 years
- \$50 for 10 years

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

Total Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment method:** EFTPOS / cash / credit card below / direct credit / cheque

Cheque – Please make cheques payable to Armidale Tree Group Inc.

Credit Card –	<b>Card type:</b>	Visa / Mastercard only
	<b>Card number:</b>	
	<b>Expiry date:</b>	
	<b>CCV number:</b>	
	<b>Name on card</b>	
	<b>Signature</b>	
Direct Credit -	Please remit payment to BSB: <b>932000</b> Account No: <b>10016306</b> Detail: <b>“Subs &lt;Name&gt;”</b>	

You may email this form to [accounts@armidaletreegroup.org.au](mailto:accounts@armidaletreegroup.org.au) or post to Armidale Tree Group, 80 Mann Street, Armidale NSW 2350

### Office use

Date processed: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_



# Volunteer Registration

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Email (Required): \_\_\_\_\_

<p>I am keen to help out the Armidale Tree Group, on a volunteer basis, in any of the following (ticked) areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Propagation</li> <li>● Planting (Field Days)</li> <li>● Gardening</li> <li>● Media</li> <li>● Grant Applications</li> <li>● Cleaning</li> <li>● Office</li> <li>● Wildlife Corridors - mapping, planning and landholder communications</li> <li>● Seed and Cutting Collecting</li> <li>● Other - Please specify</li> </ul> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I would like to help out on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weekly</li> <li>● Fortnightly</li> <li>● Monthly</li> <li>● Occasionally</li> <li>● Other - Please specify</li> </ul> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Thank you so much for your offer of help. The Armidale Tree Group provides a lot of value to the community and it will be greatly appreciative of your efforts. Together we will make a difference.

Office use \_\_\_\_\_

Date processed: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_