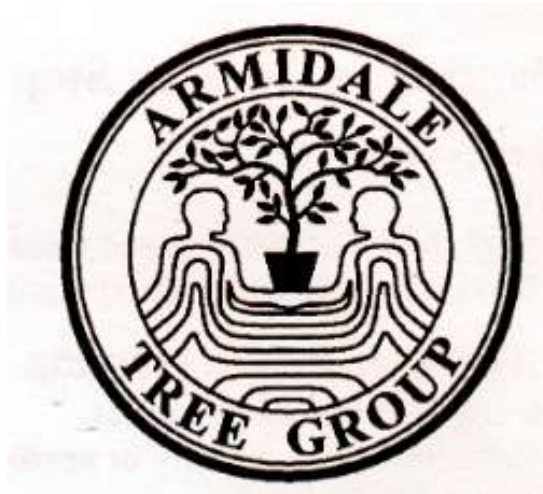


ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER

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The Power of Collaboration



Cover photo: The students of Bundarra Central School mulch newly planted trees and shrubs. Photo: Brad Burton

From the Editor

Collaboration is at the heart of all the contributions to this edition of the ATG Newsletter. From the Lion's Club members showing up and giving generously of their time and resources to cater for hungry tree-planters, to financial support from the Regional Australia Bank's Community Partnership Program, to local schools supporting their students to access the environmental educational resources of ATG and Armidale Urban Rivercare Group (AURG)—collaboration has been the key to the successes revealed in the following articles.

At sites across the region, ATG's Environmental Services team is working in collaboration with energy providers within the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) to support achieving their biodiversity restoration targets. Thank you to our amazing and hardworking team for leading and coordinating this work with the support of members and volunteers.

In this Edition:

Environmental Education

- Celebrating National Tree Day with students from Bundarra Central School
- Collaboration with AURG to engage and inform Environmental Studies students from Armidale Secondary College and Guyra Central School

Koala Food Planting – Acacia Park

Energy Providers

- Essential Energy sponsored wetland revegetation planting
- ACLE Services – ATG Environmental Services solar farm planting

Feature Articles:

The Rocky Knob Remnant Woodland Story - Susan Newey

Susan Newey is a long time supporter of ATG and the Citizens Wildlife Corridor (CWC) Project and former committee member. Susan's article provides historical context to the importance of collaboration. It is also testimony to the 'inconvenient truth' that some will carry a disproportionate burden of the REZ.

Best Snow Since 84! - Dr Peter Metcalfe

Nursery News - As usual there is always so much to catch up on in the amazing nursery and Woodland Centre where spring is abundantly evident. It was standing room only for a recent event featuring Armidale frogs and spotted-tailed Quoll (not to be confused with cats).

Up-coming events - Join us at: **Black Gully Festival** - Saturday 8th November
New England Garden Festival - Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 November

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Tree Day

We were thrilled when our longstanding client Transport NSW engaged Environmental Services for a planting by the Lone Pine Bridge on Bundarra Rd and suggested we take the opportunity to complete the work with Bundarra Central School

Schools Tree Day took place on July 25 and saw thirty students from years 7-10 join Field Officers Brad Burton and Zach Greenwood for a planting of eighty stems including:

Callistemon pungens 'Baker's Creek'

Callistemon sieberi

Leptospermum polygalifolium

Casuarina cunninghamiana

Lomandra longifolia.



The students of Bundarra Central School mulch newly planted trees and shrubs under the Lone Pine Bridge. Photo: Brad Burton



The amazing Zach Peter Greenwood (aka ZPG) delivers instructions on guarding newly planted trees and shrubs. *Photo: Brad Burton*

Armidale Urban Rivercare Group Education Day - Friday, August 29

AURG hosted sixty-three environmental studies and biology students from Guyra Central and Armidale Secondary College in the Creeklands for a masterclass on Rivercare delivered by Angus Adair. Topics broached included pollution, habitat loss, weed invasion, changes in stream morphology, what it means to work in the environmental field and what solutions

exist for the rehabilitation and maintenance of Dumaresq Creek.



The creeklands are an amazing environmental education precinct.

Photo: Bryan Johnston

We have been working closely with AURG since 2001, providing 140,000 plants for their remarkable work in Armidale. Their dedicated volunteers are a tremendous source of support to us and we are enormously grateful for Angus Adair, Bryan Johnston and Bruce Whan who include us in AURG activities, whose experience we draw on regularly and whose insights improve how we operate.



**Echoes of Picnic at Hanging Rock...NB all students were safely returned!
Photo: Bryan Johnston**

Representing ATG was our very own Sabnam Tamang who—despite English being a third(!) language and *never having spoken in public before*—was courageous enough to share the history of ATG and deliver instruction on seed collection, treatment and propagation to future generations of ecologists.



Zach, Sabnam and Brad really are to be commended on their willingness to help ATG deliver educational outcomes. It is one thing to have a knowledge of plants, planting and ecology and another entirely to be generous with that knowledge—to be outwardly-directed for posterity. It is quite impressive that Zach, Brad and Sabnam have shown the strength of character to bravely step-up and support the team by helping ATG deliver such important benefits to the community. This kind of engagement enriches everyone and we are very fortunate to have such quality individuals in our midst.



Koala Food Tree Planting at Acacia Park - Saturday, August 23

Acacia Park is a 27.85-hectare Crown Reserve located on the southern side of Armidale, off Roseneath Lane. This Yellow Box/White Box/Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland is an endangered ecological community found in a range of states across the property. Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, this plant community is listed as critically endangered.



ATG Committee Member Glen Kelleher, enjoying the sunshine.

Photo: Janeen Robb

The planting at Acacia Park was a collaboration with sponsors Southern New England Landcare and featured a large contingent from Sustainable Living Armidale. This enhanced community engagement helped ATG fulfil our agreement to manage the reserve through the improvement of existing Plant Community Types. Plantings of this nature assist with weed control by shading out particularly problematic invaders present at the site such as St John's Wort with competitive pioneer species such as *Olearia* and *Cassinia*. This approach reduces the need for costly control measures.



Two elusive Forest Spirits tend to plants. Photo: Janeen Robb

Sam's species list:

Acacia dawsonii
Acacia filicifolia
Angophora floribunda
Bursaria spinosa
Cassinia leptcephala
Cassinia quinquefaria
Daviesia latifolia

Eucalyptus blakelyi
Eucalyptus bridgesiana
Eucalyptus melliodora
Eucalyptus pauciflora
Eucalyptus stellulata
Eucalyptus viminalis
Hakea eriantha

Indigofera australis
Leptospermum polygalifolium
Olearia elliptica
Olearia fulgens

Essential Energy Wetland Revegetation on the Creeklands
Sunday, September 14

Last June we were fortunate to have been approached by Essential Energy with a proposal for a sponsored planting. Our ongoing partnership with Armidale Urban Rivercare Group was a logical choice, so we focused on the restoration of another area along Dumaresq Creek. It's extraordinary that another patch of lawn can be utterly transformed. Site preparation in this instance included some deliveries of river rock from Terry Rhodes Earthmoving which were spread closer to the creek. This will stabilise the site when the inevitable flooding happens. The space closer to the track will be mulched and this planting happens in two stages with the following species and quantities:

<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	160	<i>Callistemon pungens</i>	80
<i>Leptospermum polygalifolium</i>	200	<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i>	80
<i>Leptospermum novæ-angliæ</i>	80	<i>Callistemon sieberi</i>	200



It wasn't a big crew, but they got the job done! Photo: Angus Adair



**Charlotte Emich,
Sonny
Thompson and
Angus Adair
clearing space in
the river rock to
plant *Lomandra
longifolia*.**

***Photo: Richard
Bell***

As testament to community engagement in Armidale, this planting saw ATG regulars, AURG stalwarts, Armidale Dumaresq Lions Club caterers, Community Service Work Participants as well as some new faces all come together with the goal of restoring our precious wetlands. It's worth noting that there



have been recent sightings of Rakali close to this site, a clear indication that AURG's ongoing works have greatly improved ecological function.

ACLE Services - Solar Project Planting

ATG has seen a growing trend for collaborations with energy companies. Most recently, Jesse has secured sizable contracts with ACLE Services on their solar projects in Narromine, Tamworth (two sites) and Glen Innes. These are new kinds of jobs for Environmental Services, where our regular tree-planting helps renewable providers meet their requirements for screening. The compliance strictures with companies of this scope have given us an opportunity to upskill our staff with nationally recognised accreditations such as White Cards. These are requirements for anyone working on a construction site and will serve us well for our own development works at 80 Mann St. It's wonderful that we can invest in our employees in this way. Congratulations to Jesse for all of his hard work and meticulous quoting; these successes are a credit to him.



A new treeline for screening a solar farm in Narromine. The client stipulated the use of bioguards as protection. *Photo: Jesse Powell*



Sam Arandale-Bioletti at work in the field in Naromine whilst meeting ACLE's safety demands in hardhat and hi-vis.

Photo: Jesse Powell

Sam's species list:

Acacia buxifolia
Callistemon pungens-*'Baker's Creek'*
Acacia decurrens
Callistemon sieberi
Acacia falcata
Olearia elliptica
Acacia nerifolia
Leptospermum arachnoides
Acacia pravissima
Leptospermum polygalifolium
Acacia viscidula

FEATURE ARTICLES

Rocky Knob Remnant Woodland by Susan Newey

In the mid '90s I became aware of a program called Citizens Wildlife Corridors (CWC) run by an incredibly passionate, intelligent and focussed lady called Kath Wray.

Kath was calling for expressions of interest to CWC to fence off old-growth remnants on agricultural land. I nominated Rocky Knob—a spire of granite rocks on a small hillside surrounded by 20ha of remnant stringy bark woodland. Toms Gully, a permanent stream, runs through the woodland.

In 2022, the area was surveyed by Dr Rachel Lawrence, ecologist for the La Trobe University's Natural Capital Accounting program. Rachel categorised this woodland as a rare "reference forest" (old growth forest relatively undisturbed by natural and human influences). Dr Ruth Tremont also conducted a survey there and discovered several rare and threatened plants. My grant application was successful. The remnant was subsequently fenced off, facilitated by a generous grant from CWC, which paid for all the fencing materials and labour (this was unusual back-in-the-day as most grants such as Landcare grants only paid about ¼ of total costs).

From that time until I sold the property in 2023, I managed Rocky Knob for conservation. It was not stocked, only "crash grazed" twice a year for a period of two days to revitalise the grasses. Weeds such as blackberries were sprayed and no firewood was ever collected there.

Richard Morsley (an early stalwart of the ATG) and I planted 200 *Casuarina cunninghamiana* along Toms Gully in the fenced area; some of these beautiful trees are now over 15m tall. Another 1500 trees and shrubs were planted about 300 meters away from Rocky Knob to help form a corridor to thicker vegetation further west.

The new owner of Olmo, Wal Broun, continues to manage Rocky Knob as a dedicated conservation area and is in the process of putting a conservation covenant on that title.

The proposed Boorolong Wind Factory Threatens the following:

- 1) ENCO plans to put a transmission line right through Olmo (which I have managed for conservation for the past 36 years and planted over 17,000 ATG trees and shrubs). This line was planned to run very close to the perimeter of Rocky Knob and will involve a huge amount of clearing for the easement. This clearing will fell old growth trees and possibly sections of the many treelines on the property.
- 2) Two x 300m wind turbines are slated to be erected right next to Rocky Knob on the neighbouring property, one 200m away and one 700m away. Pleas to the proponent (Squadron Energy) and the neighbour to move the turbines fell on deaf ears. Erection and operation of these turbines and the other 15 turbines planned to encircle Olmo will ensure that my conservation work (with the help of the ATG, WWF, SNEL and CWC) over the last 36 years will turn to dust.

Best snow since 84!

Peter Metcalfe, "Yangoora" Dumaresq Dam Rd

August 2nd, 2025 was a memorable event as it snowed gently all day with big fluffy flakes. This fall was far greater than the usual light flurries we experience across New England. Damage was widespread and I hear the sales of pole saws peaked. The damage was extensive stretching from the Moonbi Range to Bundarra and up on the Granite Belt in Queensland. Memories of the fall in '84 have faded but it did not seem to produce nearly as much damage to trees and shrubs.

Someone recalled that there was a breeze blowing and this may have reduced the amount of snow that clung to the foliage. This year there was no breeze and the snow fell straight down and accumulated on the leaves. This year's rare event followed unusually heavy rain in July so the soil was sodden and lacked the normal mechanical strength to support trees and shrubs weighted down with snow. Many trees, especially those with a bit of a lean, collapsed and were uprooted.

This collapse seemed to depend on growth angle rather than the species. At 'Yangoora' various Yellow Box, Red Gum and Stringy Bark trees were uprooted. Mature wattles that suffered a similar fate included *Acacia mearnsii* and *A. decurrens*, *A. dealbata*, *A. fimbriata* and Cootamundra. Younger, more supple wattles bowed down but did not break. Some trees had their tops lopped by the snow. Those examined seemed to have broken at a weak point in the trunk where there was previous mechanical damage or maybe witchety grub damage (one Eucalypt had been scarfed by a Yellow-tailed black cockatoo excavating for a witchety grub. Lopped wattles usually had grub damage to the trunk too).

Wattles are susceptible to the larvae of Longicorn beetles. A huge number of trees lost limbs. Again this seemed independent of species but related to the length and angle of the limbs providing leverage for the weight of snow on the foliage. No Eucalypt or Acacia species seemed immune to leverage applied by accumulated snow. Fallen limbs often had faulty junctions and sometimes fungal infestations were evident. New England Peppermint seemed to have less damage than other Eucalypts (downed limbs from Blakely's Red Gum yielded a good harvest of seed while Yellow box limbs bore nothing).

In town, Angophoras, old Radiata pines and many other species lost limbs. Some species of pine from snowy latitudes fared better and of course deciduous trees shed the snow. I was surprised to have two bare long dead *Leylandii* pines uprooted, despite lacking leaves. Maybe they were dead long enough for the root systems to rot through. Mature Acacias that lost limbs include *A. amoena*, *A. ingramii*, *A. rubida*, *A. cultriformis*, *A. decurrens*, *A. covenii*, *A. fimbriata* and *A. floribunda*. One notable exception that survived undamaged is *A. boormanii* – Snowy River Wattle, so maybe that species is adapted to snow.

The clean-up has required a lot of work with hanging branches being lopped, leaves and twigs being piled up and burnt (fire permit obtained!), the limbs and trunks of Yellow Box, Red Gum and the larger wattle trunks and limbs sawn up for firewood. Previous experience has proven wattle wood to be a good fuel, even if it burns faster than Eucalypts and does not leave any charcoal. The hard work of friends and our adult children during the clean-up was

greatly appreciated. Overall, older trees and shrubs were felled or damaged but the younger plants survived. They will probably find the thinning of the canopy to their advantage. Good seasons will see them replacing the veterans before too long.



The entrance to Dave and Kerry Steller's place in Kelly's Plains after the snow.
Photo: Dave Steller



A snow- laden Bunya Pine at the Steller's place looks like a white Christmas. *Photo: Dave Steller*

Nursery Update

Our Nursery Manager, Kim Kneebone, is always coming up with fabulous ideas to enliven the gardens of our patrons and this year is pleased to offer a range of glorious native paper daisies. These will be started as seedlings to purchase in punnets for \$5.00 and pop straight in your garden beds to grow your very own rainbow garland of jewels. See below for some of the options ***while stocks last***



Rhodanthe chlorocephala White



Rhodanthe humboldtiana 'Golden Clusters'



Xerochrysum bracteatum White



Xerochrysum bracteatum 'Scarlet Flowers'



Rhodanthe manglesii 'Pink Sunray'

For those who desire an immediate bouquet, please remember that we also stock the wonderful bunches of dried paper daisies from Mountaintop Blooms. Naomi Mutch regularly replenishes this gorgeous product in our Woodland Centre—a perfect and unusually enduring gift for lovers of native beauties. If cared for appropriately they can last for years.



Our supply of dried paper daisy posies from Mountaintop Blooms make a long lasting gift.

Dan Murphy's Regional Heroes Giving Program

We received a welcome visit from Alex Robinson, Store Manager At Dan Murphy's, Armidale. Alex came to deliver some amazing news: ATG has been awarded a \$1000 Visa gift card as part of the Dan Murphy's Regional Giving Program! This generous contribution will allow us to make a significant purchase and further our work of planting trees and building communities.

Our profound thanks to Dan Murphy's and their initiative in supporting local organisations such as ours across rural Australia.



Vice-President Barton Wicksteed and Nursery Manager Kim Kneebone accept the Regional Heroes Giving Program Award from Dan Murphy's Manager, Alex Robinson.
Photo: Richard Bell



We're so grateful to those Members and Supporters who contribute to ATG through the Regional Australia Bank Community Partnership Program. As you can see, the figure raised for the year was \$6,269.76—thank you!

The Program is an option on the everyday banking account—Community Partnership Account. It is as simple as visiting the branch and changing the name of your everyday account to a Community Partnership Account (from S1 to S3). When you nominate ATG, the bank will calculate your average balance and donate 1.00% p.a. for the period from 1 July 2025 at no cost to you. In the previous financial year, ATG was well supported by this program receiving over \$7000. This is an excellent program that supports so many local not-for-profit organisations.

Community Event in the Mike O’Keeffe Woodland Centre 27/9/25

How fortunate ATG is that two of our most regular customers also happen to be brilliant speakers whose passion for nature and generosity of Spirit translated to a wonderful community event.

Angus Adair presented a talk entitled *Frogs of the Armidale Area*, guiding attendees through a sound library of local amphibians and the ways in which residents can support these precious creatures. Angus also constructed a Frog Hotel for the Tree Group which can be viewed near our front door. Anyone who has visited us of late has heard the Pobblebonks in the Woodland and Aboriginal Land Council going Pobble-bonkers, heralding the advent of welcome warmer seasons.



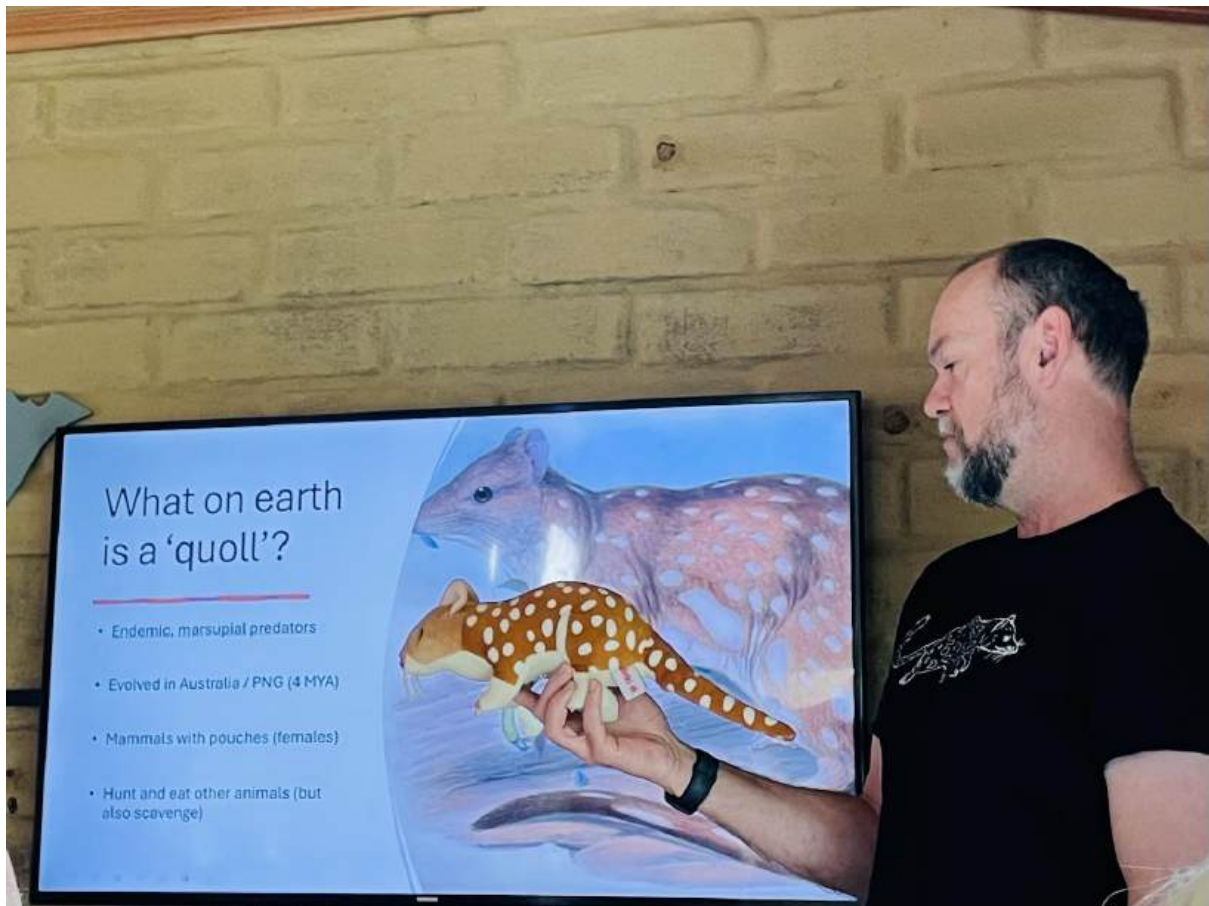
**Angus’
marvellous
presentation
packed out
the
Woodland
Centre.**

**Photo: Kerry
Steller**

Angus Adair is
a great
supporter of
ATG in myriad
ways.

Be it
coordinating

Armidale Urban Rivercare Group, assisting with the writing of grants, volunteering at community events or planting more trees than any other human I’ve met, Angus is always a welcome presence for whom we are endlessly grateful. (He’ll likely be mortified that I’m announcing in the newsletter that he recently donated some new chairs to the Woodland Centre, but everyone should know that he’s just as vital as an Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog, *Litoria fallax*). Thanks, Angus.



“Alas, poor Quoll-rick!” Photo: Kerry Steller

Associate Professor Guy Ballard from UNE joined us to present *The Spotted-tailed Quoll (Dasyurus maculatus) on the Northern Tablelands.*

Guy gave a very informative and easy to understand scientific talk on the research his colleagues have been doing on the spotted-tailed quoll. They have used extensive arrays of camera traps, teamed with cage trapping, to monitor quoll populations in key areas of NSW. He said that the populations of quolls in nearby National Parks on the Great Divide were fairly healthy whereas Queensland and Victorian numbers were low and even non-existent. Some interesting facts:

- Don't call quolls native cats or tiger cats, they are marsupials which evolved here over 4 million years ago
- Quolls climb trees so are probably the original Drop Bears we hear about.
- Quolls only live 3-5 years and females can only support six young (they have six teats)
- All spotted-tailed quolls can be identified by their unique distribution of spots
- Bushfire hasn't lessened the population of spotted tailed quolls in the area.
- 1080 baiting of foxes has not affected quoll populations as they are not affected by the active ingredient, sodium fluoroacetate.
- Bellingen means 'place of quolls' in Gumbaynggir language but there are no quolls there today.
- Promote and protect quolls. They play an important role in the ecosystem.

There was a smattering of audience members who have been fortunate enough to see a quoll in the wild. Guy's experience and ease presenting made the scientific content accessible and gave us all insights into the many elements to consider when supporting such an amazing species. Thanks Guy.

We were heartened by the extraordinary turnout to both of these talks; the support proved a shared desire for information and community engagement. There were many new faces as well as the usual hardworking staff, steadfast volunteers and dedicated Committee members, without whom such occasions simply wouldn't materialise. Thank you to all who attended and please keep an eye out for future events which will be promoted via email, on Facebook and Instagram.



Endemic staff are better suited to local conditions (Sam, Kim and Jesse).
Photo: Richie Bell