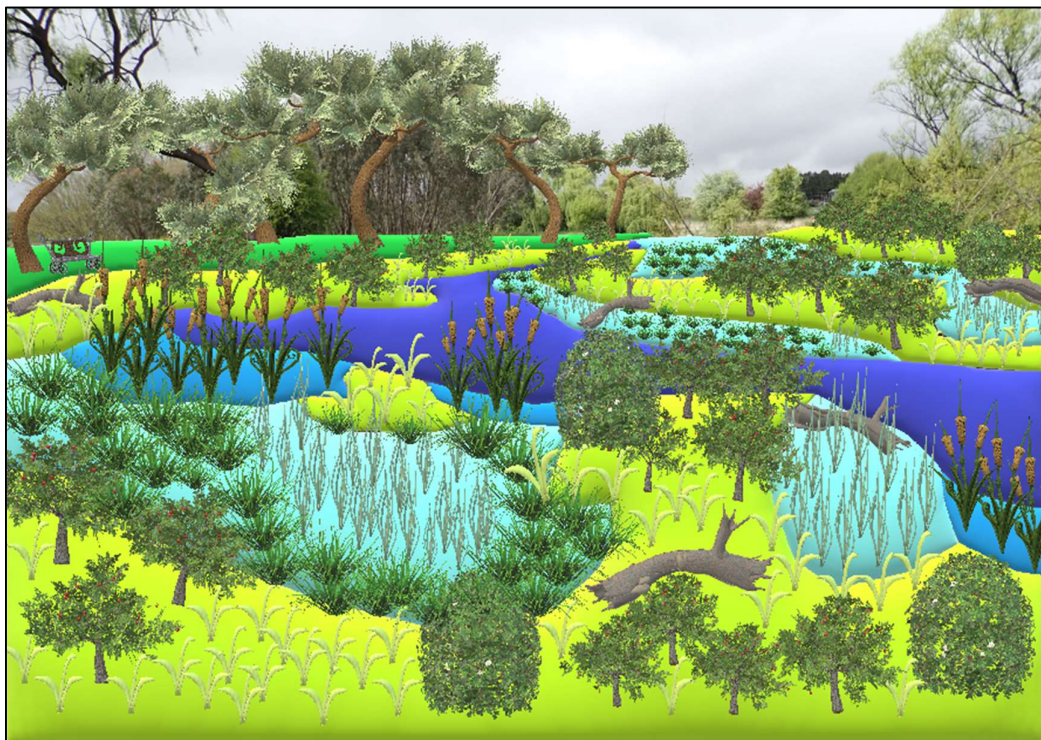


ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER

Number 127 – SUMMER
February 2023



WW2WW Weedy Wasteland to Wildlife Wetland



Editors: Narelle Clarke and Kerry Steller

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Cover image: *An artist's impression of the Dumaresq Creek Wetland. Dr Sarah Mika, UNE. Coloured zones are explained in the WW2WW article.*

From the Editor,

Another decade has rolled by bringing with it another Milestone for the ATG. This year we celebrate 40 years of service to biodiversity in the New England and invite our loyal tree loving members, the heart and soul of the ATG, to join in the celebrations. This edition will preview the celebrations being planned to embrace all seasons and is an open invitation to members join in.

Tim Flannery, in his forward to 'The Hidden Life of Trees' by Peter Wohlleben wrote: 'the most astonishing thing about trees is how social they are.' There are so many examples of forest trees caring for each other even nourishing the stumps of felled trees for centuries. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, similarly it takes a forest to raise a tree.

Trees connect with each other via a "wood wide web" of intimate connections. Not surprisingly, like us, trees in isolation have shorter and unhappier lives than those that can maintain connections in healthy forests. Celebrating the milestones together strengthens the connections that will sustain ATG for another 40 years.



—and help us to be ready for unexpected guests *Image: Narelle Clarke November 2022*

Our feature article outlines the amazing work of the Armidale Urban Rivercare Group (AURG) and their ongoing Dumaresq Creek restoration. Angus Adair, Bruce Whan and Bryan Johnston and their team are to be commended on the time and effort they put into beautifying our local community.

The State Government of \$290,030 has allowed AURG, in consultation Dr Sarah Mika's Aquatic Ecology and Restoration Research Group at the UNE, to prepare and plant out a Wetland on Dumaresq Creek west of Taylor Street. A consultation meeting on 12th February outlined the proposed plan and the planting will commence on March 12th. The Armidale Tree Group has been very involved with this revegetation and has grown and is supplying plants for this revegetation project.

IN THIS EDITION

- From the Committee (P3)
- Presidents Report from the AGM Dec 2022 (P4)
- General Manager's Report from the AGM 2022 (P5,6)
- WW2WW - Weedy Wasteland to Wildlife Wetland – AURG (Angus Adair, Bryan Johnston) and Dr Sarah Mika (P7-11)
- WW2WW working Bee details (P12,13)
- Songs from the Woodland – a contribution from our members with special thanks to Shirley Cook (P14, 15)
- 40th Anniversary Celebrations – the 40 year committee(P16)
- A report on the *Gasping in the Greenhouse* launch-Kerry Steller (P17)

FROM THE COMMITTEE

This year we welcome and look forward to working with two new committee members, Lorna Dickson and Barton Wicksteed. Stuart Hutton has from the committee, and we would like to thank him for his contribution during the year. Dave Steller will continue to work tirelessly as President, as will our invaluable and ever enthusiastic Treasurer Garry Slocombe. Although he will no longer serve as Vice-President, Dave Carr will continue to be a valued committee member. The role of Vice-President is now in the very capable hands of Paul McFarland. Best of luck managing the inevitable challenges of the year ahead.

Staff changes are inevitable in all businesses. As noted in the General Manager's report to the AGM in 2022 last year saw many changes. Changes continue in 2023 and have begun with the recent departure of Cassius Grows. The committee would like to thank Cassius for his valuable contribution particularly in the Environmental Services area and wish him success and happiness in his new endeavours.

Thank you to all the volunteers who put up their hand to volunteer at the Nursery during our critical staff shortage time. We have some regular volunteers working in the retail section of our nursery and making a huge difference in reducing the workload of our current staff. We still have a number of vacant positions at the Armidale Tree Group and hope to have these filled soon with new enthusiastic staff.

TREE GROUP inc. 2022 PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
David Steller- President 8th Dec 2022

What a difficult year it has been with record-breaking rainfall conditions greatly impacting on our Community and our natural environment. The landscape is flooded as fauna and flora struggle with the wet conditions. That aside, the Armidale Tree Group, nearing 40 years of operations, is still able to provide valuable services to our community and support the environment. Sure, we have had to be mean and lean but new opportunities have been pursued and demand for our services outside the region has grown.

We are in a rebuilding stage with increased demand for our products and services. We are also strengthening our staffing position to allow growth following recent turnover of staff. We farewelled long serving champion tree grower Rob Johnson who is enjoying his career change. Rob has left a great legacy for us to continue with enthusiasm to double our production and embark on a new growth phase at the nursery. This year has seen the workshop expanded to meet increased production and our seed collection and storage facilities have been greatly improved with valuable equipment purchased with grants following on from the devastating bushfires.

Thank you to Jane who has retired from the nursery coordinator's role to pursue development of the Banded Bee enterprise. I have to thank our valuable and talented staff and volunteers who have shown great initiative and duty in keeping the plant stock numbers up and preparing new stock for planting to meet increased demand. As Alicia will report we have had a successful year sourcing new opportunities and growing our skills and knowledge to provide a broader range of services. Thank you Alicia for your dedication, initiative and support of our valuable and loyal staff and volunteers.

To our volunteers, especially our Committee of Management who have kept a close eye on our operations and strategic direction in providing skills and guidance to assist our staff and the community in providing a better environment on the tablelands. Special thanks to Chris, Dave, John, Peter and Sue for their technical, botanical, ecological and governance skills in assisting with grant application opportunities and advice to our customers and community generally. Thanks to Narelle for taking minutes and keeping our recording of important events up to date and Kerry as our education and public Officer. Thanks to our new member Stuart Hutton for his valuable contributions. A very special thanks to Garry Slocombe, who has continued his great work as Honorary Treasurer. Garry has taken on other office roles that see him regularly working behind the scenes with day-to-day office administration. Thanks must also go to Carla for her efforts in keeping the books and payroll up to date. Lastly to Greg who again has taken on the role to audit our financials it is very much appreciated.

Thanks to members for their continued support of our business and spreading the word. Our membership is increasing which speaks volumes for the value people see in our work. Thank you one and all and may you have a happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

**ARMIDATE TREE GROUP INC. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT to the AGM
-EXPANDING AND UPDATING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Based on a Strategic Planning meeting earlier in the financial year, the ATG committee and staff recognised that we are very well situated to participate in a rapidly expanding need for local native plants and the ability to get them in the ground. However, the existing infrastructure would severely limit our ability to fully participate. Consequently, a need to upgrade the existing infrastructure was identified and the following actions resulted:

- New greenhouse was ordered. It is now delivered and waiting to be installed. This greenhouse will allow us to significantly increase our hiko production.
- A Grant was received from the NPWS foundation to replace our ageing greenhouse with a new and larger greenhouse, with additional benches. This grant also funded much needed renovations to the potting shed - adding in new doors and windows, an extension and insulation in the roof. Staff and volunteers no longer have to shiver in a cold, draughty potting shed in the middle of winter. 15,000 free tree seedlings were made available to the public through this grant, all of which have been ordered.
- We have upgraded the skin and benches of another hoop house.

The site is now prepared and ready for the new green house to be installed



Preparing the new site. Images: Kerry Steller

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE TREE GROUP

Further to the strategic planning last year the staff and committee have engaged in a facilitated discussion with Ian Mason with assistance from SRI (Smart Region Incubator) to discuss current and upcoming challenges and opportunities and how best to tackle them.

STAFF

- In March we said farewell to Rob Johnson, who, after 27 years of service, loyalty, dedication and passion for the Tree Group, decided it was time to move on and try his hand at other pursuits. Rob's contributions over these many years are too many to name, but we are pleased to know that he is happy and thriving in his new career.
- For some year's now ATG has been participating in the Traineeship Incentive Schemes instigated by the Federal Government. This financial year was no exception and it has contributed significantly to income. We have had up to as many as 6 people on the program at once.
- We also said goodbye to Jane Pickard in November. Jane has been working for the Tree Group in a number of different roles over the past several years, most recently as the Nursery Coordinator. Jane has decided it was time to focus her attention on her permaculture farm. We wish her all the best and thank her for her years of service and passion for the Tree Group.

*The nursery is
flourishing – now is a
great time for a visit!
Photo: Narelle Clarke*





WW2WW Weedy Wasteland to Wildlife Wetland

**Armidale Urban Rivercare Group and Dr Sarah Mika's
Aquatic Ecology and Restoration Research Group at the UNE**

Background to AURG

The AURG was established in 2002 and has now planted more than 100,000 plants. The group has gained over \$550,000 in external grants and has remediated approximately 4.1km or 8.1 Ha of Dumaresq Creek from Sport UNE to Cooks Road. AURG has over 100 members.

What does AURG do?

Over the years AURG has cleared exotic vegetation, planted, and maintained locally indigenous native plants. It supports Council's maintenance program along Dumaresq Creek, and it coordinated and runs community engagement programs. AURG runs about 10 working bees and 20 maintenance working bees a year!

Networks and Partnerships

AURG is a great community connector who works with:

- Southern New England Landcare
- Armidale Dumaresq Lions Club
- Armidale Tree Group
- Armidale Regional Council
- UNE Landcare group
- All schools in Armidale
- Business partners: Coles, 2Rog, UNE, NSW Health, and others.

What is the WW2WW program?

WW2WW stands for Weedy Wasteland to Wildlife Wetland, a true description of this project that plans to remediate a long-neglected part of Dumaresq Creek.

In 2021 AURG was awarded a **\$290,030** State Government grant to regenerate a 450-metre-long section of creek lands off Douglas Street. Southern New England Landcare has been granted the funding, on behalf of Armidale Urban Rivercare Group (AURG), through Round 4 of the *Stronger Country Communities Fund*. The grant includes clearing an exotic part of the creek and re-establishing a native wetland following a wetland design from UNE's Aquatic Ecology and Restoration Research Group headed by Dr Sarah Mika. The project complements and enhances community assets along this section of Dumaresq Creek and must comply with many conditions of the approved grant.



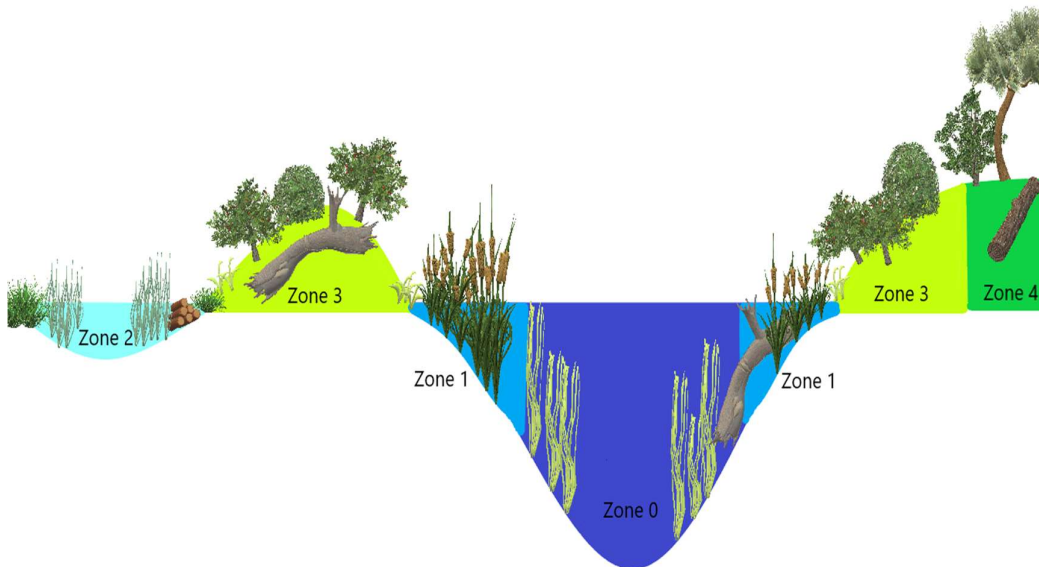
The 450-metre section of the creek to be transformed into a Wildlife Wetland, east of Douglas St.



Willows and privet have been removed to clear the area for planting. Stumps are left to help stabilise the creek bed. Some willows will be left as shade trees. Selective weed spraying on the banks will help prepare for native planting.



Willow stumps left behind help stabilise the creek bed, provide habitat for wildlife and create riffles that allow for oxygenation of the water (which currently has low levels of dissolved oxygen).



A cross section of the creek showing a schematic diagram of the different zones within the Wetlands. Extremely hardy native water plants and shrubs will be planted in these winter sub-zero zones.

What will be planted?

There has been a lot of conjecture about the original riparian vegetation. The UNE's Aquatic Ecology and Restoration Research Group indicated in their design document:

It is likely that the original riparian vegetation on-site was:

- *Ribbon gum – mountain gum – snow gum grassy woodland*

And the wetland may have been a:

- *New England carex fen*

However, it is also possible that the following vegetation communities may have been present alongside and transitioning into the above-mentioned community types, with changes driven by differences in relief, exposure, soil type and water availability:

- *New England riparian shrubland*
- *New England peppermint grassy woodland*
- *River oak gallery forest*

In addition to the above vegetation community types, a variety of water plants (macrophytes) would have also been present in the Wildlife Wetland project area.

This community area? zones is what we will be working to re-vegetate.

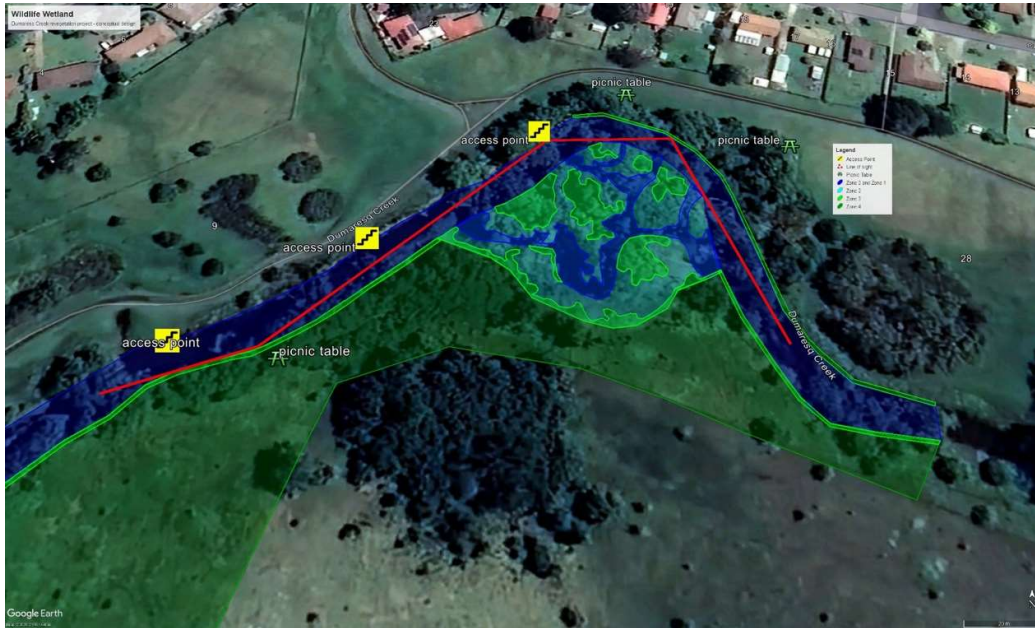
They describe the Vegetation Zones for our project as:

Vegetation Zones: *The project area broadly consists of the following vegetation zones (Figure 3 - Figure 5):*

- **Zone 0** = *instream, permanently inundated, slow-to-high flow, supports submerged and floating macrophytes (receives passive revegetation)*
- **Zone 1** = *instream, frequently inundated, slow-to-no flow, supports submerged and emergent macrophytes (receives active revegetation)*
- **Zone 2** = *stream edge, temporarily inundated, standing water, supports emergent species (receives active revegetation)*
- **Zone 3** = *stream bank, infrequently inundated, supports terrestrial riparian shrubland species (receives active revegetation)*
- **Zone 4** = *top of bank (adjacent floodplain), rarely inundated, supports terrestrial riparian woodland species (receives active revegetation).*

We were provided with a list of species to consider for each of these zones. The native species we considered to be optimal for the relevant zone is based on discussion with Armidale Tree Group ability to supply; those species that are quick to establish, fast growing and will be dense enough to assist with weed suppression. These include:

- Zone 1 – Tall Spikerush (*Eleocharis sphacelata*)
- Zone 2 – Common Spikerush (*E. acuta*), Tall Sedge (*Carex appresa*), Rush spp. (*Juncus usitatus*)
- Zone 3 – *Lomandra longifolia*, Tootoon (*Leptospernum polygalifolium* subsp. *trianmontanum*)
- Zone 4 – a range of the usual Creek mix we use from ATG including Eucalytus, Callistemons, Acacia and Leptopernums.



AURG is working Work with Council re the location of sight lines, picnic tables, creek access points and shade trees.

What next?

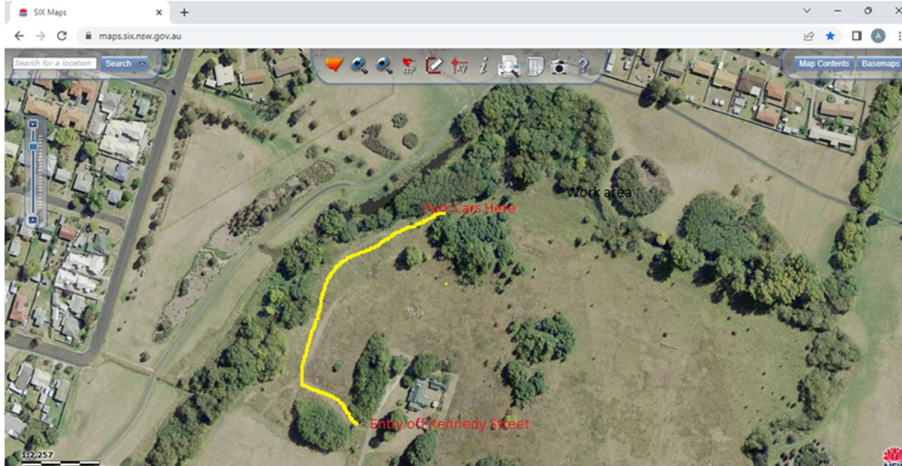
Community consultation has been undertaken to address any issues and recommendations raised from this project. The timeline for completion has been extended from Spring 2022 until Spring 2023 due to the unseasonable rainy season and the inability to gain access to the site.

- Ongoing preparation is occurring at present.
- Planting of this Wetland will commence at our Sunday March 12th Working Bee (8.30-12.30 – see map below for the location) continuing on Sunday April 9th (Easter) and May 14th, 2023. Working bees are all 2nd Sunday of each month.
- Our Spring working bees will be used to complete this project.

Please make some time to participate in these WW2WW community planting days as the Tree Group is fully involved in supplying plants, labour, and willing volunteers to help make this project a success. WW2WW is just part of the Visions for Armidale beautification of our Armidale Creeklands and a huge undertaking by the Armidale Tree Group who propaggate and provide all tree, shrubs and forbs for this project.

(All diagrams and photos provided by AURG)

AURG Working Bee to plant WW2WW Sunday 12th March.



Our next working bee will be on Sunday 12 March and will be commencing to plant part of our WW2WW site.

Sunday 12 March Working Bee

This will involve planting in our WW2WW project site. This will be one of many planting days planned for autumn and spring this year.

Details for our working bee site are as follows:

Time: 8.30am

Date: Sunday 12th March, 2023

Location: Park on the cleared area on the southern side of the creek accessed off Kennedy Street. Turn left into the gap between the trees before you reach the house at the end of the street. Follow the AURG Working Bee signs. **See also image above.**

What to bring: BYO long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy boots. Please also bring gloves, broad brim hat and sunscreen.

Covid 19 Reminder. Bear in mind the current requirements for social distancing whilst working and eating.

AURG will provide equipment, morning tea and BBQ lunch.

Future Working Bees

- Sunday 9 April (Easter)
- Sunday 14 May

Please also note the membership requirements below. Membership is free but essential for public liability and insurance purposes. I will bring a current membership list, membership forms and a guide for updating via your i-Phone.

Membership regulations:

All AURG (sub-group) members & volunteers must also hold a current membership as an **Individual Member**, under the auspicing body of **Southern New England Landcare Limited**. This is to ensure everyone is covered for public liability and insurance purposes.

All participants wishing to attend the AURG working bee must be a current Individual SNEL Member i.e.

- Hold current membership. SNEL will provide AURG with a current list prior to each event.
- New volunteers should register online via the SNEL Membership page on the website <https://snelandcare.org.au/membership/become-a-member.html> , prior to the event.
- If a volunteer does not have internet access, they may pick up a form from the SNEL office, to complete and sign. Forms should be left at, or mailed back to, the SNEL office for processing.
- A new person or non-member, who arrives on the day to the AURG working bee, must sign a hard copy Membership form, when registering “at the door”, in order to participate at the event.
- Membership is current for 12 months.

We look forward to catching up with you.

Bryan Johnston - 3 Winifred Place - Armidale NSW 2350 - P 02 6772 1414 - Mob 0429 721 424 -
Email bryan.johnston@bigpond.com

ARMIDALE URBAN RIVERCARE GROUP is a sub-group of Southern New England Landcare Ltd

SONGS FROM THE WOODLAND

Shirley Cook

Here is the species list for Sunday 5th February's outing to the Mike O'Keefe Woodland. As expected, this little Reserve fulfilled its promise of a good variety of birds. The attached list follows the taxonomic order and nomenclature used by the NSW Bird Atlassers Inc. in their Bird Record Sheet.

A tip for "new" birders: in your field guide, compare those LBJs (little brown jobs) – the Thornbills (and maybe the Pardalotes), especially their calls and habits. There will be occasions when you will see several different Thornbills in the one small area. New birders may also notice the use of capital letters and hyphens in the names of the birds that may appear a bit random. Sometimes there is a capital letter following the hyphen, and sometimes not. There is an accepted explanation/ convention in this method of naming the birds so JUST ACCEPT IT! Okay?

Our recorder Will Buchanan has once again made a great effort to get the list to me promptly so that I may then send it to you; thanks Will.



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Australian reed-warbler

Footnote: Kate Boyd

It is nice to know that our little reserve is home or habitat for lots of wildlife from microbes and ants to the attached long list of birds seen/heard on just one morning. Also nice that many people enjoy it as a habitat for their own recreation.



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Spotted Pardalote



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Black-faced cuckoo-shrike

BIRDS PRESENT IN THE MICHAEL O'KEEFE WOODLAND

February 5th 2023

Australian Wood Duck (flock of 12 on short-grassed field)	Superb Fairy-wren
Pacific Black Duck	White-browed Scrub-wren
Australasian Grebe (sub-adult)	Striated Thornbill
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Crested Pigeon	Spotted Pardalote
Tawny Frogmouth (Two huddled together in Stringy Bark tree fork ~10 meters above ground level)	Striated Pardalote
Little Pied Cormorant	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
White-faced Heron	Eastern Spinebill
Australian White Ibis	Noisy Miner
Dusky Moorhen	Red Wattlebird
Eurasian Coot	Blue-faced Honeyeater (flock of 5)
Galah	Noisy Friarbird
Little Corella	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Rainbow Lorikeet	Grey Butcherbird
Crimson Rosella	Australian Magpie
Eastern Rosella	Pied Currawong
Red-rumped Parrot	Grey Fantail
Eastern Koel	Willie Wagtail
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Torresian Crow
Laughing Kookaburra	Magpie-lark
Sacred Kingfisher	Australian Reed-Warbler
Dollarbird	Common Blackbird
	Common Starling
	Red-browed Finch



Mike O'Keefe Woodland in April 2020 after the rains. Photo: Kerry Steller

40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

ATG turns 40 this year! What an achievement! We are going to celebrate all year with events that our committee is busy planning for you, our members to thank you for all your support. There are over 200 of you! Our 40 yr committee is Narelle Clarke, Jeremy Smith, Paul Macfarland, David Curtis and Kerry Steller. If you would like to join or contribute in any way, contact the committee, check the facebook page or leave a message at the nursery.

Save the Date..

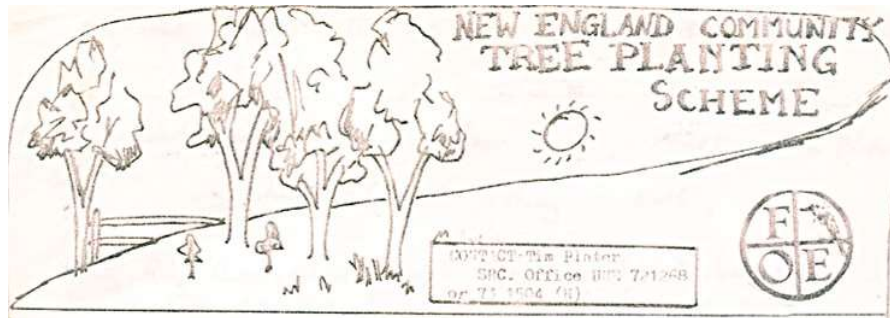
ATG's 40th Birthday Party
Saturday 7th October at the Armidale Town Hall from 6.30pm
and you are all invited to attend.
Details to come.....

Other 40 year plans underway...

- The opening of our foot bridge in the Mike O'Keeffe Woodland in October
- Community plantings by schools at Acacia Park in Autumn, AURG plantings on the Creeklands (see working bee dates in this issue)
- Community plantings on public land TBC in Spring
- An art exhibition of New England Flora and Fauna and some art classes in the Woodland Centre in Winter
- A tour of some of our ATG plantings on members' land in late October

Plus many other fun activities: the Autumn festival with SLA and the giant koala (1st April), Black Gully festival (11th November), New England Garden Festival (18th and 19th November).

ATG's 40 Year Newsletter will feature our history and our tree planting champions. Any contributions greatly received. If you have an photos or memories send them to kerrysteller@gmail.com as I have agreed to edit this milestone newsletter. What will the next 40 years bring?



Our first Newsletter with our logo in 1983 and our original name:
New England Community Tree Planting Scheme.

ATG's launch of Gasping in the Greenhouse:

A Climate Change Adventure.

On 3rd December last year, David Curtis launched his second comic entitled *Gasping in the Greenhouse: A Climate Change Adventure* at the Woodland Centre. Around 40 people attended the launch and enjoyed hearing about the inspiration behind the story that David commenced back in 2000 and finally completed in 2022.



Emeritus Professor Nick Reid from the UNE school of Ecosystems management launches *Gasping in the Greenhouse: A Climate Change Adventure* created by Dr David Curtis. Photo: Kerry Steller.

David's first comic book *Dazed by Dieback* was also launched at an exhibition at the Tree Group's Woodland Centre. Both comics have as their main characters Barry, Fay and Warren Streuth (environmental detectives extraordinaire) who seek the causes and consequences of firstly dieback, then climate change and they explore what we can do to reverse it.

Dr David Curtis is a founding member and first president of the Armidale Tree Group. He is an ecologist, an artist and a musician. David also spoke after the showing of the film of *Plague and the Moonflower* at the Belgrave Cinema the next day as part of the UNE's Peace Studies Conference. This oratio of *Plague and the Moonflower* by Ralph Steadman that was performed by over 300 members of the Armidale Community at the Woodford Folk Festival in 2004 and research from it was used in David's PhD thesis around *Using the Arts to Shape Environmental Behaviour*. Congratulations David.



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

You may email this form to accounts@armidaletreegroup.org.au or post to Armidale Tree Group, 80 Mann Street, Armidale NSW 2350

Office use

Date processed: _____ / _____ / _____