

# THE BUSHLAND BULLETIN<sup>©</sup>

No. 76 WINTER (July) 2015



A publication of the Bankstown Bushland Society Incorporated  
Reg. No. Y15576-12

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## NEW RARE PLANT FOR BANKSTOWN

The old firm of Colin Gibson and Robert Miller were out in the field again recently, when during a brief inspection of a small bushland remnant on a golf course in Bankstown (no, not Riverlands!) they found a small, localised population of the rare Rufous Pomaderris (*Pomaderris brunnea*).

This species occurs in isolated colonies in the northern ranges of NSW, with a disjunct population in East Gippsland. Around Sydney, until found here in Bankstown, it was only known from the Nepean and Colo River areas, so its occurrence here is a new record for the Georges River catchment, an important extension of range. A specimen was sent to Neville Walsh of the National Herbarium, Melbourne, who verified the collection. *Pomaderris brunnea* was listed as Endangered under the Threatened Species Conservation Act as recently as May this year.

Col and Rob found the species growing in a single stand of about half a dozen plants in an area of remnant bushland much

neglected and subjected to a range of unsympathetic management practices including filling, rubbish dumping, and whipper-snipping of native ground cover and shrub vegetation. The habitat is a rare example of Coastal River-flat Community comprised of Blue Box (*Eucalyptus baueriana*), Rough-barked Apple (*Angophora floribunda*) and Swamp Oak (*Casuarina glauca*), and is itself listed as an Endangered

Ecological Community. The golf course is on Crown Land, and the particular part where the Pomaderris occurs has great potential for regeneration if some of the present management abuses can be curtailed. In due course we hope to be able to propagate more plants to increase the size of the population.

*The picture shows Col & Rob in the field with the Endangered Pomaderris brunnea.*



## THE SCARRED TREES OF RIVERLSANDS FOREST

by Col Gibson

Riverlands Golf Course and environs contains over 1,300 remnant indigenous trees, including mature specimens of Forest Red Gum, Cabbage Gum, Scribbly Gum, Red Mahogany, Grey Box, Coast Grey Box, Blue Box, Ironbark, Thin-leaved Stringybark, White Stringybark, Rough-bark Apple, Heart-leaved Apple and Swamp Oak. As remnants of the original pre settlement forest, these trees have special intrinsic, historic and ecological values. They cannot



be replaced. Bankstown can ill afford to lose so many.

Many of these trees are of sufficient age to possess nesting hollows for birds and other wildlife. It can take up to 200 years for a tree to form hollows that might be suitable for native animals, and many trees at Riverlands are likely to be much older. The abundance of hollows at Riverlands attests to the great



age of many of the trees. These trees provide habitat opportunities for a wide range of native wildlife, vertebrate and invertebrate.

On 3-11-2011 an inspection of the site was made by Archaeological Heritage & Management Solutions and others for signs of past aboriginal occupation. None were found



(see “*Aboriginal Heritage Study Riverlands Golf Course Milperra*”, by Archaeological & Heritage Management Solutions on behalf of Bankstown City Council, May 2012). However, this survey was conducted on a single day in wet weather, while more recent observations have revealed a relative abundance of scarred trees, many of which are



of likely aboriginal origin. Some of the dry face scars are very deep (up to 30cms) and are partly concealed by uneven callus overgrowth, which implies considerable age.

Possible examples of multiple scarring also occur. This has been explained as follows: “*Many scars are the result of several processes, rather than simply the act of removing a sheet of bark. One of the most basic is the process of dieback which can extend the damaged area up and down the tree, dramatically altering the shape and size of the scarred area. This*

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can easily be spotted where tool marks or an early line of overgrowth are preserved, but often there is very little to interpret. In other cases more recent fire or lightning damage or



distortion caused by the crushing of the dead scar 'dry face' by the surrounding living wood accompanies the original scarring." ("Aboriginal Scarred Trees in New South Wales" p. 70).



Most of the scars at Riverlands appear on Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), a tree which produces a very hard outer bark suitable for a wide range of uses. Three main scar sizes can be recognised:

- i). Scars c. 40-54 x 12-33 cm.
- ii). Scars c. 102-160 x 27-32 cm.
- iii). Scars c. 300 x 48-58 cm.

The first group of scars is



generally oval or oblong in appearance, with the bark being removed probably for the purpose of manufacturing food and water containers (coolamons), digging shovels or other small utensils.

The second group may well have been used for shields that cover most of the length of the body. The shorter versions may have been intended more for the parrying of clubs than of spears. One tree is interesting in that it has two possible shield scars, each taken from opposite sides of the tree; one being 119 cm long and the other 160 cm. The shorter of the two is the deeper



(31 cm) suggesting it may be older than the longer scar which has a depth of 20 cm. A third, smaller scar also occurs on this particular tree.

At around three metres the third group is long enough for small bark canoes (nowies). These long scars may have provided bark sheets for other purposes, such as for the covering of shelters (gunyahs) or for bark painting.



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Other scars occur at Riverlands on Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus cf. signata*), many of which occur close to ground level, broad at base and tapering at top. The cause of these is uncertain, but if of aboriginal origin they are likely to have served a different purpose than the implements cut from the Forest Red Gums.

That more than one tree can be found with two or three scars attests to the suitability of the trees in this area for the purpose. Reuse of the bark as a resource is an Aboriginal scarring trait: *“The number of times a tree has been scarred can tell us much about the local availability of suitable bark, which gives us information about the intensity of scarring activities and the number of Aboriginal people living in that area.”* (*“Aboriginal Scarred Trees in New South Wales”* p. 13).



Given that most of the original trees in the area have been lost, it is fair to suppose that in pre settlement times there were

hundreds of scar trees in the area. The landscape consists of a series of generally level alluvial terraces interspersed with freshwater wetlands paralleling the tidally-influenced Georges River. Wildlife, particularly birdlife and fish, is still plentiful in the area.

The density of natural tree hollows along with numerous manmade tree scars suggests the suitability of the area for hunting and camping. Large seasonal gatherings very likely would have occurred in this area. That different sizes of shields were cut from the trees here suggests the area may have been used as a ceremonial ground for the ritual settling of tribal differences. In a region where an individual scar is a rarity the large number of aboriginal tree scars at Riverlands is the largest such grouping in Bankstown, and probably anywhere along the Georges River floodplain.

The many natural hollows and manmade scars point to the significance of Riverlands in the context of aboriginal culture. Andrew Long has pointed out that, *“There are few developed agricultural regions in the world where signs of pre-modern Indigenous activities are preserved in the fabric of living plants. This makes scarred trees of south eastern Australia a record of human activity of potential world importance.”* (*“Aboriginal Scarred Trees in New South Wales”* p. 12 ).

More detailed survey work needs to be carried out at Riverlands to properly assess the occurrence of aboriginal and other scarred trees at Riverlands. This must be

undertaken by a qualified anthropologist appointed by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

For further information refer to *“Aboriginal Scarred Trees in New South Wales”*, by Andrew Long, Department of Environment and Conservation, New South Wales, 2005.



## BUSH REGENERATION AT MALUGA RESERVE

by *Christopher Brogan*

Maluga Reserve is located in the suburb of Birrong. This project was commissioned by Bankstown Council with the objective of eradicating the invasive perennial grass *Paspalum quadrifarium* (Tussock paspalum) from a small bushland remnant adjacent to Gascoigne Road. Works were carried out during the period May to June 2014. Tussock paspalum grows to 2 meters in height and forms dense clumps which outcompete and displace native grasses and herbs such as *Entolasia stricta*, *Lepidosperma laterale* and *Lomandra multiflora*. Its removal from bushland was considered a priority in order to protect

biodiversity values. Native shrubs which were largely absent over much of the site did occur occasionally and included *Callistemon linearis*, *Melaleuca erubescens*, *M. nodosa*, *M. thymifolia* and *Ozothamnus diosmifolium*. Tussock paspalum also occurs in the rail corridor to the north and east of Maluga Reserve.

In addition to Tussock paspalum, *Asparagus aethiopicus* (Asparagus fern) and *Eragrostis curvula* (African love grass) were also targeted as part of the project scope of works. Small patches of the highly invasive naturalised grass

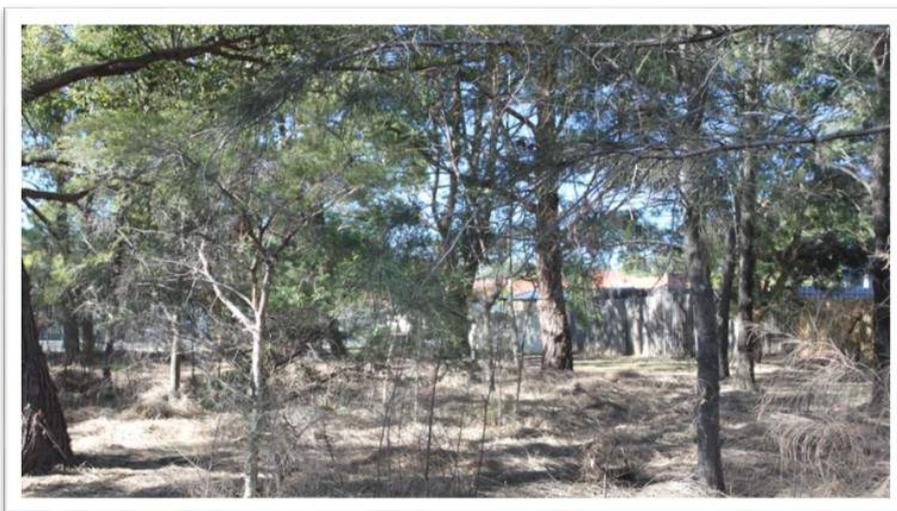
*Ehrharta erecta* (Panic veldt grass) were also treated. Woody weeds such as *Acacia podalyriifolia* (Mount Morgan wattle) and *Acacia saligna* (Sickle leaf wattle) while not the primary target of bush regeneration works were treated if time permitted.

No plants on the national Rare or Threatened Australian Plant (ROTAP) list had been recorded at Maluga Reserve however the site represents significant habitat for one of the last remaining populations of *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* in the Bankstown Local Government Area (LGA). *E. sideroxylon* also occurs on the banks of the creek draining from Woods Road on the western side of the reserve, not the subject of bush regeneration works during the contract period. Maluga Reserve is also significant due to the presence of a small population of the locally rare cycad *Macrozamia spiralis* (4 plants) which were identified during these works.

A number of non-native Eucalypt species including *Eucalyptus bauerana*, *E. citriodora* and *E. microcorys* had been planted in previous years. These trees outcompete naturally occurring flora and should be progressively removed. Non provenanced *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* had also been planted.

Bushland at Maluga Reserve has been mapped and classified by the New South Wales (NSW) Office of Environment and Heritage as Cooks River Castlereagh Ironbark Forest which is listed as an Endangered

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Ecological Community under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (TSC Act). Another small isolated Cooks River Castlereagh Ironbark Forest remnant is located at Band Hall Reserve approximately 1 kilometre to the east of Maluga Reserve.

Works during the contract period included high volume herbicide spraying with Glyphosate at a dilution of 3% using a 4WD mounted 600 Litre QuikSpray Unit. This was primarily undertaken in the southern part of the bushland where Tussock paspalum had displaced all native flora and there was no risk of off-target damage. Sprayed Tussock paspalum was later brushcut in order to improve the aesthetics of the site. Manual removal was utilised in areas where herbicide spraying would have resulted in off target damage to native herbs and grasses.

## RIVERLANDS REZONED

After 30 years the bottom was finally reached on June 23rd when Bankstown City Council voted to rezone Riverlands Golf Course for residential development, as was witnessed by Milperra residents opposed to the rezoning who turned out in force. The outcome of the meeting was made all the worse by the terrible situation of two west ward councillors having to abstain due to threats of legal action on them personally by Bankstown developer Demian Holdings..

At the meeting local residents and ecologists Paul Wynn and David James addressed Council speaking against the rezoning, while ecologist Anne Clements spoke in favour. To their great credit two Councillors, Mayor Linda Downey and Cr. Jenny Golledge, voted against the rezoning. It's a shame the others could not make a similar stand for the protection of open space in Bankstown.

The Society was disappointed in that Council did not take any of the recent findings of likely aboriginal scar trees (see feature in this bulletin) into account, accepting instead the flawed findings of an earlier report which declared there were none.

On the positive side was that Council voted to rezone the site Environmental Management, which is entirely new for Bankstown. Although Environmental zoning will permit residential development, it emphasises the protection of environmental values such as remnant native trees and wetlands. How strong this emphasis will turn out to be only time will tell (the state government is proposing that this form of zoning be scrapped, but that's another story).

The specific environmental issues prior to approval of the development application are to be dealt with in a Master Plan, which BBS will be following closely.

### *Macrozamia spiralis* planting at Maluga Reserve

Chris Brogan met with staff from Strathfield and Bankstown Councils at Maluga Reserve on the 26<sup>th</sup> May to plant 5 seedling *Macrozamia spiralis* kindly donated by Alex Mackenzie, Natural Resources Coordinator at Strathfield Council. These cycads were propagated from seed collected from a plant growing in bushland at Rookwood Cemetery. This effectively doubles the population of this locally rare plant at Maluga Reserve. Left to right Paul Angel (Bankstown Council) Sebastian Van der Eyk, Shane Barrie and Alex Mackenzie (Strathfield Council).





## ***BANKSTOWN BUSHLAND SOCIETY ON FACEBOOK***

Bankstown Bushland Society is now on Facebook. Anyone who shares an interest in Bankstown's bushland should like this. Facebook will provide us opportunities for posting information relevant to the natural environment of our area, remnant flora and fauna as well as updates on our bush regeneration projects, nature walks and so on. Anyone interested in local bushland are welcome to 'friend'.

## ***ELECTRONIC BULLETINS***

The Bushland Bulletin is available electronically to members who so desire. All you have to do is send your email address to the Bulletin editor at:

grenaissance1@gmail.com.

Members are entitled to both printed and electronic forms, but if you would rather have the electronic form instead of the printed please let us know.

### **The Passing of Beatrice McKay**

With sadness we note the passing in May of Beatrice McKay, a long time member who was a regular attendee on our outings in the 1990's, until infirmity set in. Beatrice was a keen bird watcher who shared her love of nature with her family and those of us who were fortunate enough to know her. Our condolences and well wishes go to her devoted sons, Darryl and Warren.

**Don't miss:**

### ***“REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS of BANKSTOWN”***

**A presentation by Darryl  
McKay at our September  
meeting (16th).**

**Bushland Society meetings  
are held at Padstow  
Progress Hall, Ryan Road,  
Padstow, on the 3rd  
Wednesday of the month  
(except December &  
January), in the Wal  
Browning Meeting Room  
at rear of hall.**

**Time: 7.00pm.**

**Tea and biscuits provided.**

**All welcome.**

**Further enquiries please  
ring Col on 97886232.**

## **BANKSTOWN BUSHLAND SOCIETY COMMITTEE**

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### ***Editor:***

Colin Gibson

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**WHY NOT JOIN THE SOCIETY ?**



The Bankstown Bushland Society is an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW) 1984.

We are Bankstown's only incorporated association dedicated to protecting our City's environment.

The Society's objects are:

- To protect the environment of Bankstown
- To assist other persons in the protection of the environment in Bankstown
- To foster better community awareness of environmental issues
- To lobby through Government, commercial and other persons for the maintenance of a high quality of life through the progressive improvement of the environment

Bankstown Bushland Society has lobbied effectively for the protection of bushland and the natural environment since 1988. With your support we can continue the work. By joining the Society you can make an important contribution to our local environment.

Yes, I wish to join the  
**Bankstown Bushland Society Inc:**

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

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

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

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

Attached please find my payment of:  
(\$ .00) \_\_\_\_\_  
(amount in words)

**Membership fees**

Family/Group - \$20  
Ordinary - \$15  
Concession - \$10  
"student/unwaged/pensioner"

Send payment to:  
**The Secretary,  
Bankstown Bushland Society Inc.  
PO Box 210  
Panania NSW 2213**

Or pay by direct transfer to  
**BSB 512 170 Account Number 100087319, AND put  
your name on the transfer form.**



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