

THE BUSHLAND BULLETIN[©]

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Lace Monitors (*Varanus varius*) in Lansdowne

Richard Kolodziej, resident of Hazel Street, Georges Hall and long-time Bankstown Bushcarer at Lansdowne Reserve, was recently told of an incident by one of his neighbours who lives in Lucinda Avenue backing onto the reserve. Richard's informant had heard some birds creating a loud ruckus in the reserve recently, and a little while later he heard a further commotion in the yard next door. When he looked in, he saw a goanna in his neighbour's chook pen. It apparently killed two chickens, one of which it ran away with. Richard's informant sent him the accompanying photo of the thief in question.

There have been other sightings of lace monitors in Lansdowne, the last one Richard saw was skittled on Henry Lawson Drive. Others have reported seeing them in Lansvale and Helena Stockheim says they were always there when she roamed the area as a child forty years ago. As the trees grow older at Lansdowne they will provide more habitat opportunities for possums and such that the monitors prey on.

Lace Monitor at Lansdowne
(pic courtesy Richard Kolodziej)



Critical Cumberland Plain Bush Remnants

Part 1: The Western Cumberland Lowlands

by Ian Bailey

Cumberland Plain Grey Box-Ironbark-Forest Red Gum Woodlands are to be found in Cattai National Park, Mitchell Park, Longneck Lagoon and Scheyville National Park. These also include areas of Shale Plains Woodland with stands of Grey Box, Forest Red Gum and Narrow-leaved Ironbark. An understory of Parramatta Wattle and Blackthorn is present.

Widely cleared for agriculture and immigrant settlement and armed forces training in past years but regenerating well since zoned as National Park. Scheyville is the headquarters of the National Parks & Wildlife Service, Cumberland Branch. It is also the principal site for bird surveys organised by the guardian of Richmond Woodlands Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and two Trigger species for the KBA – the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot.

During 2020 Scheyville National Park has become an important remnant for birds from the bushfire affected Blue Mountains and Brown Treecreepers were recorded during August which had not been seen since 2006. The bird-science based Australian Bird Study Association (ABSA) a registered bird-banding group was a key advocate for the gazetting of this area as a national park in 1996.

It is highly recommended that surrounding remnant patches not included in the national park be acquired or protected, including bushland in Windsor Sewerage Treatment Works, Deerubbin Park, Windsor Country Golf Course, Hawkesbury Race Course, John Moroney Correctional Centre, Western Sydney University campus, Pughs Lagoon and the Richmond Lowlands.

Cumberland Plain Ironbark-Castlereagh Scribbly Gum Woodland occurs in Windsor Downs Nature Reserve to Riverstone Wetlands. Windsor Downs is the second of four nature reserves to be regularly surveyed by the coordinators of Richmond Woodlands KBA. The key vegetation species are Broad-leaved Ironbark, Grey Box, White Feather Honeymyrtle, Blackthorn and Sickie Wattle. The occasional Forest Red Gum, Mugga Ironbark and Castlereagh Scribbly Gum are seen. Key bird species, some in decline over four decades, are Rose Robin, Scarlet Robin, Varied Sittella, Jacky Winter and Dusky Woodswallow. It is also a long-term bird-banding site of the Australian Bird Study Association who were instrumental in the zoning of Scheyville as a national park and also the latest national park acquisition in Western NSW at Narriearra Station.



It is the indisputable records of the science of bird-banding, the morphology and life-spans of birds that informs the great need to preserve natural habitats. Adjacent vacant lands and government sites could be reserved for later inclusion in the NR with replanting and restoration works. Riverstone Wetlands are small settling ponds on the original Riverstone Meatworks property, plus a small area of surrounding grassland/woodland. A section of Windsor Downs was used as agistment for

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stock and remnants of troughs and water tanks remain. The ponds are now an extremely important migratory bird refuge and should be gazetted as a national park or become part of the close-by Windsor Gardens Nature Reserve.

An important bushland corridor extends from Castlereagh Nature Reserve to Londonderry Road and Whitegates Road. This is the third of four sites monitored for the birdlife by the coordinators of Richmond Woodlands KBA. Records for the past 25 years are lodged in the Birddata data-base of BirdLife Australia who are the Australian patrons of the KBA system. The Richmond Woodlands is the only KBA in the Sydney Basin (of 333 across Australia) and covers 32,000 ha., mostly of Cumberland Plains Woodland, so the known bird-species data is critical to consideration for permanent zoning of remnants woodlands.

On Northern Road, opposite an entry to the Reserve, is a car-wrecking company where, above the fence-line can be seen many old-growth Scribbly Gums and Forest Red Gums. The property is for sale and should be acquired by the State Government for future inclusion in the Castlereagh NR. Trees in this area are primary breeding habitat for the local population of Yellow-bellied Glider which is extinct everywhere else on the Cumberland Plain. It is also habitat for the endangered Squirrel Glider.

This irreplaceable forest is under threat of development. Lot 2/10743 Londonderry Road is a private unoccupied lot which

presents the best opportunities for connectivity so it is highly desirable it be acquired and protected. Likewise, Lot 5/223798 Northern Road and other private lots also have great potential for connectivity.

Cumberland Plain alluvial/shale and Forest Red Gum-Banksia Woodlands occur at Agnes Banks Nature Reserve. As the fourth of four shared sites monitored by the guardians of Richmond Woodlands KBA, Agnes Banks is the most often surveyed with the richest records of biodiversity. The remnant is a rare example of sand deposits changing to shale gravel transitional forest with a corresponding variety of vegetation.

Principal in the sandy area is Wallum Banksia and Scribbly Gum with Narrow-leaved Apple and occasional Drooping Red Gum. Changes are noticed as the Castlereagh Ironbark Forest is dominant with Broad-leaved Ironbark. Further into the NR you will find Grey Box and White Feather Honey-myrtle. A hazard-reduction burn was done in August by NPWS. Most likely moving away from Blue Mountains fire scarred places, Glossy Black-Cockatoos were recorded here in July 2020.

About 100 bird species have been recorded over time but many are now rarely seen. Agnes Banks is a reserve that needs surrounding buffer zones of vacant land to be restored to protect the reserve into the long-term. The variety of woodland plants, flowering at different times, is an asset. Proposals to acquire land for conservation to link Agnes Banks to the Ham Common Wildlife

Refuge (crown land now managed by Western Sydney University) and bushland properties in Bonner Road should be supported.

Cumberland Plain open grasslands and Sandstone heaths occur in Marramarra National Park, Maroota State Conservation Area, Wisemans Ferry Park, Lower Portland Crown Reserve and along Chain of Ponds Creek. Other important areas include Annangrove Park, Holland Reserve at Dural, Fred Caterson Reserve Round Corner, Heath Road Reserve, Rouse Hill Regional Park, Wianamatta Regional Park, Yellomundee Regional Park, Nepean lagoons, Plumpton Park, Mulgoa Nature Reserve, Gulguer Nature Reserve and Bent's Basin State Conservation Area.

Western Sydney Parklands from Quakers Hill south to Luddenham are part of a corridor that includes Fairfield City Farm, Allambie Reserve, Deerbush Park and Fairfield Indigenous Flora Park. The great amount of WSP is a disappointing pretence to be a 5,000-ha oasis in central western Sydney promised by the Carr Government in the early 1990s. When one takes out the Prospect Reservoir, Nurragingy, Eastern Creek Raceway and The Plough and Harrow, about 1,000-ha. are left and under constant threat of 'allowable' development. A re-assessment of the parkland is urgently needed to fulfil the original intention of providing a place of peace and quiet for flora, fauna and people alike. *(To be continued).*

Protecting Bushwalking Tracks

by Col Gibson

In February, the Society submitted its concerns about proposed widening of the Salt Pan Creek Boardwalk as outlined in its Draft Active Transport Action Plan 2020 – 2030.

While supportive of the overall cycleways plan, the Society's chief concern with regard to this was in regard to the proposed Chullora to Padstow Heights Cycleway (Route 3), specifically with the section between the Henry Lawson Drive bridge and the Sydney Water pipeline, which was designed and built in 1987/88 as a bush walking track. Back then, concerns were raised ahead of construction about potential impacts on the narrow band of native vegetation beside Salt Pan Creek. This resulted in Council designating the maximum width for the path as 1.2 metres. For its careful

routing and minimal impact on bushland the project was awarded the prestigious Tom Uren Award for Innovation in Environmental Improvement in November 1988.

The impacts of upgrading the foot track to a shared cycleway as much as 3 metres wide, as outlined in the Plan, we believe would ruin much of the existing beauty of the track, resulting in the destruction of particular trees and shrubs, natural rock features, and of the general appearance and aesthetics of the path. Maintenance of a transport cycle link through sandstone bushland would be problematic. Austroads' Path Maintenance Requirements (p. 176) identify the need to regularly trim adjoining vegetation so that it does not intrude into the path and "to maintain safe clearances and sight distances." In a rough bushland setting overtopped by tall forest trees this would cause constant problems with falling

branches and roots of large trees cracking the path – part of the reason why a cycleway was not built there in the first place.

Others expressed concerns over the possibility of converting the Wolli Valley walking track to a cycleway (Route 9). We are very pleased to report that Council took on board our concerns, and at its business meeting of 27th April resolved on the following amendments to the Plan:

"Council has the opportunity to make significant upgrades to walking and cycling infrastructure across the City. After considering the feedback received during the public exhibition, the Plan has been updated to:

- Clarification on Route 3 to ensure the bush track at Padstow Heights remains a recreational walking track, not a shared path with cycle access. An alternative cycle route will be investigated.*
- Clarification on Route 9 to ensure the bush track through Wolli Creek remains a recreational walking track, not a shared path with cycle access. An alternative cycle route will be investigated.*
- Mapping of existing infrastructure has been updated to reflect some errors identified during the exhibition process, for example a section of Salt Pan Creek was inaccurately shown as an existing shared path."*

This is a good outcome for bush walkers in Canterbury-Bankstown.

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The Salt Pan Creek Walking Track

Protecting People and Trees at East Hills Park

by Col Gibson

East Hills Park has some very fine specimens of native eucalypts and angophoras, as well as an interesting bushland remnant on the northern edge of Henry Lawson Drive. The picnic area on the river side of the Drive used to have more trees than it does now, but over the years many have been lost to storms and to Council's occasional enthusiasm for removing trees, especially old ones with hollow, in the interest of public safety. The last time this happened at East Hills Park was in connection to the installation of new picnic shelters. Environmentalist, Sharyn Cullis, wrote at the time: "*Bankstown Council officers tell me it's all in the cause of public safety. But there were other options if indeed these trees were dangerous. Why weren't they isolated behind fencing and a small nature conservation zone created around them? There is plenty of other space for people in this and other parks of Bankstown.*" (*The Torch*, 22-6-2005). Sharyn's suggestion was heeded, and if you go there today you will see the small conservation zones delineated by steel posts within the main picnic areas.

But not all the trees in the picnic grounds of East Hills Park are located inside the bollards; there are still trees scattered around including at the far downstream end of the park where, in 2015, word came to us that a stand of about 15 indigenous trees were being examined for potential removal to make way for an entry point to a proposed new car park at the far downstream

end of the park. When we got to the site we found about half the trees spray painted with an X, including one very big Cabbage Gum (*Eucalyptus amplifolia*), a Rough-barked Apple (*Angophora floribunda*), and the last remaining Broad-leaved Ironbark (*E. fibrosa*) in the park. Fearing that more Xs might soon appear and the trees come down, we contacted Council and the local papers and had the issue featured in both *The Torch* (19-8-2015) and the *Express* (25-8-2005).

There was no argument that the old provision for parking of pulling in directly off the line of Henry Lawson Drive was dangerous, especially in spring and summer when the park can become very crowded, and the proposed new car park on the river flat would be safer; but we were opposed to a car park there not only because so many fine trees would have to be destroyed, but also because of the substantial amount of picnic area that would be lost. We suggested Council create a new car park on a vacant block it owned just north of the railway overpass.

The outcome was that Council scrapped the plan for a car park on the river flat and established a new car park on the vacant lot as per our suggestion. Council went further and engaged a consultant to reconfigure the parking space along Henry Lawson Drive without the removal of remnant trees. This new car park paralleling the Drive was opened last year and, in my view, is brilliantly designed. Cars can now only access the parking area here from one point and exit from another, whilst a metal barrier on a solid concrete footing now separates and protects the parking area from busy and hazardous Henry Lawson Drive. There is now considerably more parking space at East Hills Park and it is much safer for motorists and for picnickers, and it was accomplished without having to cut any trees down. Well done all concerned. #

Photo showing the new entry to the reconfigured car park at East Hills Park, and the protective barrier along Henry Lawson Drive.



Extract from **“Planning Around Biodiversity”**

by **Martin Fallding** in *“Bushland or Buildings? The Dilemma for Biodiversity Conservation in Urban Areas”*, NCC, 2001.

It is essential that biodiversity be recognised for what it really is – a fundamental part of urban infrastructure, just like roads, water supply and transport systems. This requires being smarter in planning and design. I suggest that an approach to designing development is required that not only takes into account biodiversity, but makes it a key criterion for the location, design and construction of all development.

Ten top biodiversity planning principles apply irrespective of the planning scale and are outlined as follows: 1. Identify regional ecological context; 2. Protect communities, ecosystems and supporting processes; 3. Recognise habitat requirements of individual species; 4. Consider all natural areas not just those of highest value; 5. Minimise landscape fragmentation and site disturbance; 6. Promote native species; 7. Protect rare and ecologically important species; 8. Protect unique or sensitive environments; 9. Resolve compatibility of biodiversity with social and economic objectives; 10. Recognise and design for ongoing land management.

All too frequently development projects are not designed for the site and its context, rather the site is transformed and reconstructed to fit the design. Site specific design criteria must be developed taking into account the landscape context and the ecological setting. In most current practise, the emphasis is on regulations, and approvals, rather than on design criteria and on ensuring that appropriate design skills are available.

In urban and modified areas, biodiversity considerations will

generally be secondary to other urban design issues and impacts tend to be direct. However, off-site biodiversity can be significantly affected by matters such as utilities servicing the site and drainage. In natural and transition areas, biodiversity impacts are direct and sensitive design is generally required in most areas.

Levels of design criteria to support biodiversity objectives in new developments include no import or export of earth or fill; maintain natural drainage pattern (no pipes and maximise infiltration) and keep away from natural drainage lines; subdivision and/or building location to ensure orientation within 10 degrees of true north; build above ground, not into the ground; choose a site density that either maintains natural processes or is high enough to ensure efficient use of services; limit clearing of native vegetation.

Because of their influence and regulatory controls of on-site development activities, local governments play a key role in successfully planning around biodiversity. Councils in New South Wales have clear legislative responsibilities to take steps to conserve biodiversity and are important managers of the development process.

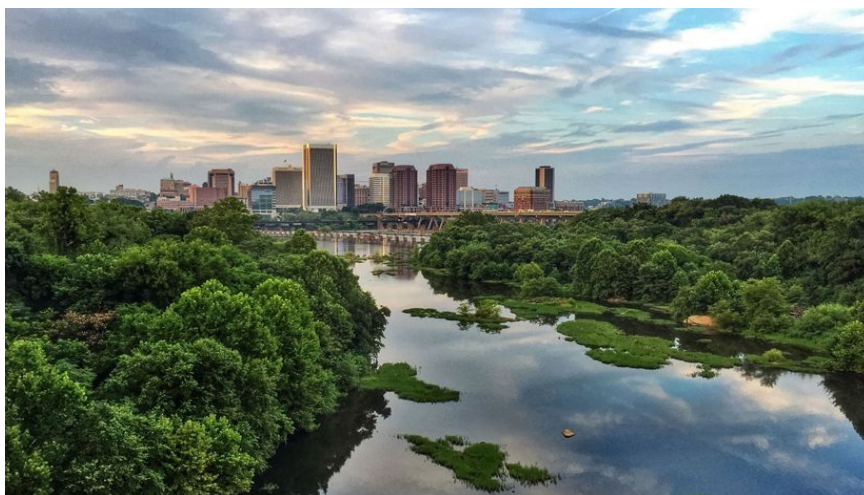
Councils already have a wide range of mechanisms that can be applied to support biodiversity conservation. Effective consideration of

biodiversity in development proposals requires adequate strategic planning and the integration of regulatory controls and incentives. Planning controls should apply to the design criteria outlined above.

Furthermore, land based taxes tend to support development by providing an incentive to use land for financially most attractive purposes. The current structure of council rates and land tax does not distinguish between land with high biodiversity values and degraded land, thus providing no incentive to protect important ecosystems.

Successful planning around biodiversity requires integration of landscape and site scale issues to specify appropriate site design criteria for development design and in the assessment and approval approaches applied by local government.

Approaches to planning around biodiversity must focus on site specific implementation of guidelines to integrate biodiversity on a development site, taking into account the regional landscape context. Incorporating scientific and ecological approaches and definitions into planning, legal and regulatory structures is also required. Biodiversity design criteria other ecologically sustainable development requirements such as water sensitive urban design criteria and sustainable energy criteria. #





***Check out BANKSTOWN
BUSHLAND SOCIETY on
FACEBOOK***

Join us on Bankstown Bushland Society Facebook for postings and discussion of information and activities relevant to the natural environment and flora and fauna of our area. All with an interest in the Georges River and its bushland are welcome.

ELECTRONIC BULLETINS

The Bushland Bulletin is available to subscribers in hard copy or digital form or both. To obtain a digital copy all you have to do is send your email address to the Editor (see front cover).



PLEASE NOTE:

**ALL ACTIVITIES ARE
CURRENTLY
SUSPENDED UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE
DUE TO
COVID RESTRICTIONS.**

Keep an eye out on Bankstown Bushland Society Facebook for notices of other activities during the year.

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MEETINGS

Bushland Society meetings are normally 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 the rear of hall. **HOWEVER**, due to **CORONAVIRUS** restrictions, meetings will not be held at the Hall until further notice. In the meantime meetings will take place at private residences when permitted by the restrictions. Members wanting to attend such meetings need to give notice to BBS Secretary **Chris Dewhurst** on **cdewhurst2626@gmail.com** or ring Skye on 0411584295.

BANKSTOWN BUSHLAND SOCIETY COMMITTEE for 2021

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Vice President:

Skye Virgin: 0411584295

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Assistant Secretary:

Colin Gibson: 9788 6232

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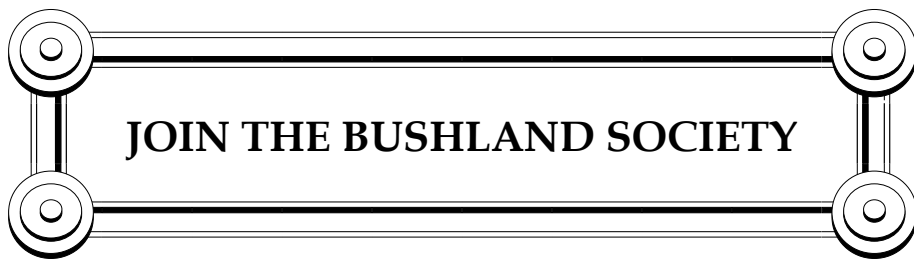
Committee Members:

Wal Browning
Darryl McKay
Ian Bailey

Bushland Bulletin

Editor:

Colin Gibson



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.



I wish to join

Bankstown Bushland Society Inc:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ Postcode _____

Telephone No. _____

Email: _____

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.**

Enquiries: greenaissance1@gmail.com



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