

# Bushland Newsletter

SPRING 24

## BUSHCARE COMMUNITY NEWS

### Garden bed installation at Old Tramlines

The project aimed to address areas of denuded lawn and the subsequent erosion which resulted. Instead of just seeing problems our team jumped at this opportunity to expand the good work done by volunteers in the park over the past 15 years.

In the space of one morning our combined teams defined the garden bed with sandstone boulders, removed an embedded concrete slab, weeding, mulched, planted and watered in the brand-new garden bed. What a tremendous demonstration of the power of collaboration.

Thanks to Council's Open Space team: Corey Morris, Shane Stark, Alan Cooke and Ryan Lelliot and the Tramway Parkcare volunteers: Bob Lundy, Marleen Zegerman, Susan Lundy, Ross Odell and Vickie Bonanno.



A one-day transformation – thanks to the hard long-standing dedication by both teams

### Connection with original Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub at Randwick Environment Park

After working in the patch south of the oval for over a decade, steadily reducing the extent of the woody weeds, chasing turkey rhubarb, keeping on top of herbaceous weeds and critically planting and waiting for the native plant cover to grow, the team at the Enviro' Park have opened a link to the remnant Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS).



Bushcare volunteers at REP in 2011

This is a big win, because having that connection and keeping it weed free (or at least low weed cover) allows the seed of indigenous, naturally growing ESBS species to trickle down the hill and – with luck & care - to take up the opportunity to germinate.

The diversity of species and genetic material contained within this seed bank is invaluable and unique to this area. Already we are seeing a few tiny examples of species popping up, including broom-heath and variable swordsedg.

The area will require ongoing work and a careful eye to see what else may emerge. The team may also enjoy the fact that with remnant seed, there should be no need to plant – provided we are patient and tread lightly.



Broom-heath (*Monotoca elliptica*)



Variable swordsedg (*Leptidosperma laterale*)



# Nesting habits of two Sydney icons

By Emily Strautins  
Bushcare Officer

### The Superb Fairy-Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*)

The Superb Fairy-wren was one of the first Australian birds to be described according to the Australian Museum and if you have seen these cheeky birds flitting around the shrubbery you might appreciate why. Though tiny the male Superb Fairy-wren seeks to stand out in his dazzlingly blue hood, black-eye stripe, brown wings and white belly.

Females are more subtle in appearance, mostly soft brown with white belly and faint blue tinge to the tail distinguishable from immature males by her orange beak.

Despite being widely disturbed across eastern Australian these birds, like many other small-bodied species in urban areas worldwide are in decline.

They rely on dense shrubby vegetation which has continuous cover from ground to at least 1.5-2m height and don't mind if this is native or not – lantana is often used as preferred hide out. Nests are built just one metre from the ground within thick grass and undergrowth which can make them extremely vulnerable to disturbance by people not to mention predation by cats, dogs or foxes. Nests are dome shaped and carefully crafted from the softest materials, often lined internally with fur, feather or grass, with a side

entrance close to the top. Nesting begins in September to January, with eggs incubated for just 2 weeks before becoming fully fledged 10 days after hatching.

Super fairy-wrens have a host of intriguing behaviours and complex social interactions. Despite living in well-defined family groups where there will be a dominate breeding couple, there is plenty of genetic mixing through sneaky liaisons with other

birds by both males and females. When males do sneak off to entice females of other groups, they will bring a gift of a carefully selected yellow petal perhaps as compensation for not sticking round.

Recently scientist have observed that even before hatching, chicks are learning to communicate thanks to the array of "lullabies" sung to them by females.



Superb fairy-wren nest in coastal shrubs



Superb Fairy-wren male

### The Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*)

The Australian Magpie may be one of Australia's most recognised birds (after perhaps the cult-classic 'bin chicken'). Striking in black and white plumage and rambunctious in nature, this bird is infamous for dive bombing people and their pets during spring. Although swooping behaviour gives these birds a justifiable bad wrap with the potential to cause serious injury – it is a learned behaviour practised by less than 10% of magpies. Swooping will also only occur whilst parents are most on edge, which is when there are young in the nest, a period of only about 4 weeks.

For the rest of the year these birds can be a joy to watch as their clear intelligence shines whilst they play and act upon their intense curiosity. Birds live up to 20 years, with almost their entire life spent in the one spot fiercely defending their territory from other birds. Throughout their lifetime individual continually learn both from their own experience and from other birds, adapt their behaviour and calls to be highly specific to their context.

It has been recently revealed that Australian Magpies come to recognise each individual human that co-inhabits their home tuft. This can be leveraged if you wish to create a more friendly relationship with any magpies that live near you.

Despite being an early urban adapter, "BirdLife Australia data shows that Australian magpies declined by 31% in the East Coast region — including Sydney and Brisbane — between 1998 and 2013" (Hambert 2020). The trend has also been shown for many other carnivorous birds including owls and kookaburras, suggesting it may be linked to use of secondary poisons used in pest control.

A bigger threat is likely to be climate change, which brings drier autumn-winter weather which delays the start of breeding in combination with hotter summers which reduce late season brood success.

### References & to learn more:

*Aussie fairy-wrens learn while still inside their eggs*, Drew Rooke, 25 Oct. 2023, Australian Geographic  
<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2023/10/aussie-fairy-wrens-learn-while-still-inside-their-eggs/>

*Superb Fairy-wren*, 25 July 2024, Australian Museum  
<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/birds/superb-fairy-wren/>

*Superb Fairy-wren*, Animalia, Accessed Sept. 2024  
<https://animalia.bio/superb-fairywren?letter=s>

*Breeding success and timing of nesting by forest birds on the northern tablelands of NSW, Australia*, I. G. McLEAN, H.F. Recher, B. S. Studholme, A. Given and C. Duncan, A., Corella 2005, 29(3) pp. 53-62.  
<https://absa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Cor-Vol29-Pg53-62-ForestBirds-2.pdf>

*Decline in 'successful' bird species like magpies and kookaburras rings alarm bells*, Micaela Hambrett, 27 Apr. 2020  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-27/magpies-and-kookaburras-in-decline-says-birdlife-australia/12155248>



# Learning from Nature

## Wetland and Marsh Plants

By Kezia Littlemore  
Randwick's Nursery Team Leader

Randwick Environmental Park

For areas of the garden or sites that are wetter, the borders of ponds or raingardens and swales, we can take inspiration from nature and incorporate a range of plants that are happy to have wet feet. As well as filtering pollutants, plants such as sedges and rushes thrive in these conditions and provide habitat and food sources for insects and frogs, and protection for small birds.



Red-crowned toadlet, a vulnerable species

Gardeners looking for solutions to difficult wet areas might consider the following plants.

Knobby Club-rush *Ficinia/Isoplepis nodosa*, is an attractive smaller, tufted plant with densely tufted hard stems with brown globular clusters. It will grow well in both wet and dry conditions and is a successful barrier plant for verges and borders in gardens, parks, and streetscapes.



Knobby Club-rush *Ficinia nodosa*

*Juncus* has over 50 species in the Sydney district, many of them introduced or hybridising. Tussock Rush *Juncus usitatus*, is a tufted native rush with stems to 1 metre and spaced rather than clustered flowers. It grows well in damp soil and has been planted at Randwick Environmental Park as part of the revegetation works.



Tussock Rush *Juncus usitatus*



*Baloskion* spp.

*Baloskion gracile* Slender Cord-rush - and *Baloskion tetraphyllum* subsp. *Meiostachyum* are more plants that like a wet sandy soil. Growing to 1.5 metres, their size and bright green divided branchlets contrast well with smaller, neater rushes and sedges and make a dramatic and protective border for larger ponds. They can also grow in large pots provided they are given reliable moisture.

Other useful small strappy leaved plants that would be practical alternatives to rushes or sedges are *Dianella* spp. and *Bulbine bulbosa*.

For medium sized flowering shrubs, *Westringia fruticosa* and *Epacris longiflora*, the spectacular when flowering Native *Fuschia* *Heath*, will tolerate wetter soils.

Moving up to large native shrubs and small trees, we have: *Banksia robur*, *Banksia ericifolia*, *Callistemon citrinus*, *Leptospermum laevigatum* and *Casuarina* spp. which grow near swamps and marshes in the Randwick LGA and could be an attractive addition to a home garden. The nursery frequently stocks these species and has the smaller practically-sized She Oak cultivar *Casuarina glauca* 'Greenwave.'

Instead of installing costly drainage or hardscaping a garden area, which creates increased storm water run-off and flooding risk, it is worth considering the eco-friendly alternatives in residential and built-up areas of creating ponds and swales, or using plants that can cope or thrive in wet soils that we should consider.

## References

*Native Plants of the Sydney Region*, 3rd edition, A.Fairley & P.Moore Jacana Books, Allen & Unwin, 2010.

*Habitat, A practical guide to creating a wildlife-friendly Australian garden*, AB Bishop, Murdoch Books, Allen & Unwin, 2018.

*Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney*, Revised 3rd Edition, 2003 L. Robinson, Simon & Schuster.



*Dianella* spp.



*Bulbine bulbosa*



*Epacris longiflora* Native Fuschia Heath



*Banksia robur*



*Leptospermum laevigatum*



# Randwick Environment Park origin story

By Julian Lee and  
Renée Ferster Levy



**Almost thirty years ago, the land which is now Randwick Environment Park was saved by community action starting with the idea of just one person.**

Kim Morris (now Rosen), a local resident and then Coordinator of the Community Centre near the wetland, became concerned about plans to cover the open space with housing.

Instead of being resigned to this, Kim saw this as a once in a lifetime opportunity to do something for the whole community. "I couldn't bear the thought of the whole thing being covered in housing without the community having a say," she said.

Her passion has resulted in a wonderful legacy for future generations – 13 hectares of beautiful bushland and open space containing one of the largest inland examples of endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub, a sparkling ephemeral wetland, the Randwick Sustainability Hub, a kindergarten and aged day care.

This shows that the actions of one person can mobilise a community and alter the course of history.

In 2024, the space is well loved with over 250,000 people visiting every year including schools and universities who come to learn at the award-winning Sustainability Hub.

However, getting to this point wasn't a certainty and Kim's approach to the problem was to find the facts, inform the community, flesh out ideas collaboratively and see what could be done.



Kim Morris (now Rosen)

Kim said, "It started around a kitchen table, with people who were involved in the Community Centre and we formed a little committee. Then I contacted Randwick Council who were very supportive."

Working with the community and landowners, Kim developed an alternative plan that would result in the inclusion of three key factors - community services, environmental protection and housing - and work out how they could harmonise together for the best outcome.

Finding out that an endangered plant was on site - Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) strengthened the importance of protecting the natural values of the site.

During the process, other interesting things came to light including historical records and geological maps which showed the ephemeral wetland up to 6m deep and its importance to the community came out strongly at a public meeting.

At the time, Kim felt they were up against the developers and believed they had to find a way to help them understand that they would get a much better result if the community was on side.

Kim said, "Always bring people together, and brainstorm to get the best ideas. By doing it together in a group, you are more likely to get the best outcome."

The result of this was that in 2010, the land was handed over to Randwick Council to manage. Almost fifteen years later, more and more people come to the site to enjoy the open space and natural beauty, and the Randwick Sustainability Hub hosts many environmental activities including Saturday Circle, and the permaculture demonstration gardens are used to showcase ecological principles in growing food and protecting native animals.

Kim likes to quote the anthropologist Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

For more about the Randwick Sustainability Hub [www.randwick.nsw.gov.au/hub](http://www.randwick.nsw.gov.au/hub)



**Got a snap to share?** We'd love to share your recent photos of native plants, animals or you - getting out and about in. Please send your photos & stories to [bushcare@randwick.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bushcare@randwick.nsw.gov.au).



Fabulous fungi at Arthur Byrne – Felicity Hall



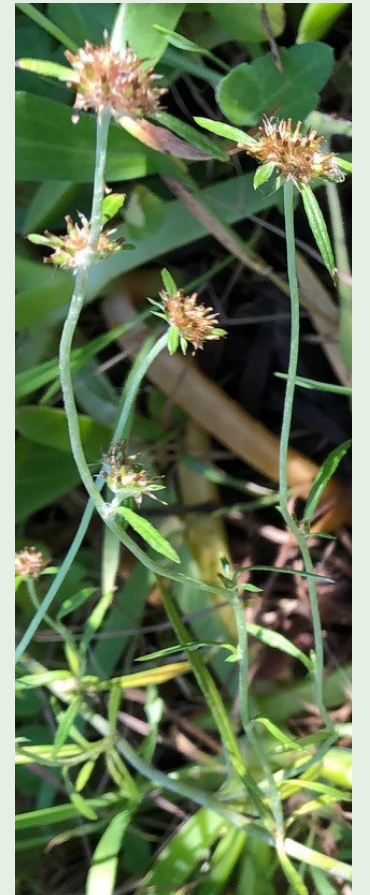
Tiny Birds Nest Fungi at Wylies Bushcare - Ross Odell.



As yet – unidentified – snake, Ian Clarke.



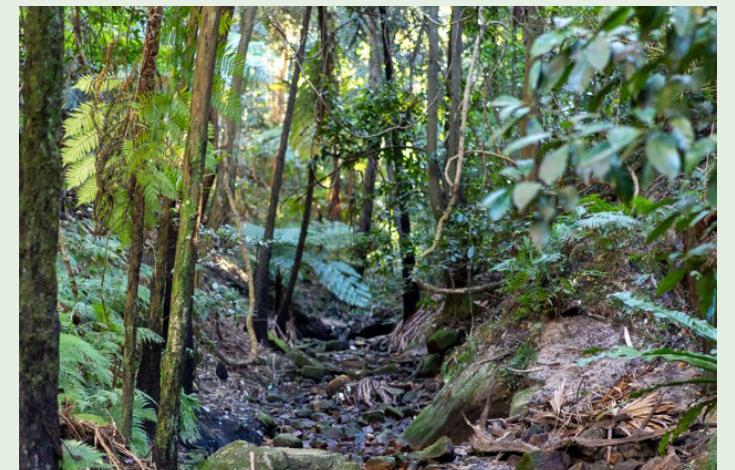
Laughing kookaburra spotted at Alison Rd spotted by council's tech whiz Hawar



Jonathan Milford's keen eye identified this locally rare star cudweed (*Euchiton involucratus*).



Ghost Fungi and Tremella jelly burst from a banksia stump – "wonderful what you notice when you start looking" (Ian Clark).



Fred Hollows - Jasper Odgers



# Working bee calendar

## BUSHCARE

GROUP	LOCATION	DAY	TIME	SEP	OCT	NOV
<b>Alison Road</b>	Corner of Alison Rd and Beach St, Coogee	4th Thursday	1pm-3pm	26	24	28
<b>Clovelly Bay</b>	Opposite 18 Eastbourne Ave, Clovelly	4th Friday	9am-12pm	27	25	22
<b>Dunningham Reserve</b>	Adjacent 5-7 Major St, Coogee	4th Thursday	9am-11am	26	25	28
<b>Fred Hollows Reserve</b>	Bligh Place entrance, Randwick	2nd Wednesday	9am-12pm	11	9	13
<b>Gordons Bay</b>	Access via UNSW Cliffbrook Campus Grounds: 45 Beach St, Coogee	1st Sunday	9am-12pm	1	6	3
<b>Grant Reserve</b>	Coogee Surf Life Saving Club car park (south of the beach)	3rd Wednesday	9am-11am	18	16	20
<b>Ladies Pool (Women Only)</b>	At the entrance to the Ladies Pool, McIver's Rock Baths, Coogee	3rd Thursday	9am-12pm	19	17	21
<b>Malabar Foreshore</b>	Opposite 9 Bay Pde, Malabar (near Malabar Ocean Pool)	1st Saturday	9am-1pm	7	5	2
<b>Malabar Wetland</b>	End of Manwaring Ave, Maroubra	3rd Wednesday	1pm-4pm	18	16	20
<b>Maroubra Dunes</b>	The South Maroubra SLSC car park	1st Thursday	9am-12pm	5	3	7
<b>Old Tramline</b>	The reserve between Dudley St and Carrington Rd, Randwick	2nd Thursday	9am-12pm	12	10	14
<b>Prince Henry</b>	Alternate between the corner of Jennifer & Harvey St, 5R Brodie Ave or opposite 2 Millard Dr, Little Bay	2nd Saturday	9am-1pm	14	12	3
<b>Randwick Environment Park</b>	Access via corner of Dooligah Ave and Burragulung St, Randwick. Works take place within fenced area on the far side of the oval.	1st Wednesday and 2nd Sunday	9am-12pm	5 & 8	2 & 13	6 & 10
<b>Wylie's Baths</b>	At the picnic tables above Wylie's Baths, Neptune St, Coogee	3rd Tuesday	9am-12pm	17	15	19

## NON-COUNCIL RUN GROUPS

<b>Friends of Malabar Headland*</b>	Contact Therese Weiss on 0403 532 655 or via malabarheadland@gmail.com for details.	2nd, 3rd and 4th Thursday	9am-1pm	12, 19 & 26	10, 17 & 24	14, 21 & 28
<b>Little Bay Landcare*</b>	Access between 119 and 121 Bilga Crescent, Malabar. Contact Kerry Gordon on 0411 245 985.	1st Saturday	8am-12pm	7	5	2
<b>Kamay Botany Bay National Park*</b>	Contact National Park Rangers for details. <a href="https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/bush-regeneration-at-kamay-botany-bay">https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/bush-regeneration-at-kamay-botany-bay</a>	Every Tuesday & 4th Saturday	Tues: 9am-12pm Sat: 8am-11am	3,10, 17, 24 & 28	1, 8, 15, 22, 29 & 26	5, 12, 19, 26 & 23

For more information contact the Bushcare Officer via: [bushcare@randwick.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bushcare@randwick.nsw.gov.au)

\*Denotes non-council run groups. Please contact organisers directly.