



Wallaga Lake Heights community newsletter 13, 8 December 2020

Celebrating the final weeks of 2020

Sue and Carl Swensson kindly offered to host last Sunday's event. A couple of dozen attended and around half that number made their apologies. Sue welcomed everybody, Bill Southwood made an acknowledgement of country and threw the floor open to steering group members.

Roz Bannon on the steering group

Members of the group gave a brief report back on the year and the outlook for 2021. The steering group has met fairly informally as required. Since being awarded the BVSC Environmental grant, much of the work has concentrated on clearing weeds, reducing fire load, training members in Landcare practices, acquiring and planting indigenous species.

Peter Campbell on grants

Having missed out on the WIRES grant, due largely to inexperience and the very limited time we had, we were delighted to be awarded a BVSC Environmental grant. This is being used to buy a range of material - plants, guards, a first aid kit, training. The biggest single expenditure has been the mulching of some massive weed trees, more of which below. We still have around \$1500 of the grant yet to spend and intend to do so over the next few months.

Doug Mein on bushfire mitigation

The Bermagui Regional Fire Brigade visited the Wallaga Lake littoral earlier in the year, agreed that felling some dead trees and getting fallen logs onto the ground would be useful. A recommendation to undertake this work was made to RFS Bega. It is now unanimously agreed that this summer's fire risk will be very much lower than last summer, but vigilance and reduction of hazards will continue.

Heights Care members attended two workshops run by The Crossing for communities on the fire edge. We attended with Beauty Point and there was considerable discussion about long effects the fires have had on even relatively unaffected communities. Reports on the workshops and a usefulness of fire-resistant plants is accessible from the Crossing's Facebook page. The Crossing will make these available as filed shortly.

USA sponsored three public talks by Bruce Leaver, a person with extensive experience in analysing fire behaviour. The slides from Bruce's talk are well worth a look, and are available online at:

- Part 1: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g3ilta9wlfmvGO7LKhHXYKdRib_g1Glg/view
- Part 2: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WEJn0-uqHREnuGNUZzShBj6yg1boGpBS/view>

Libby Bolton on Landcare activities beside Wallaga Lake

As mentioned in past newsletters, around a dozen Heights Care members have joined the Far South Coast Landcare Association (FSCLA), been through the induction including values, practices and risks. The Landcare work under way includes:

- Removing Ipomea, Elephant Grass, Prickly Pear, Turkey Rhubarb, Lantana and on and on and on forever;
- This makes way for the really exciting stuff - planting indigenous grasses, ground cover and low plants, including Lomandra, Westringia, Pigface, Warrigal, Myoporum – the list goes on;
- Last Friday 4 December the excellent work done by group members in cutting down an enormous growth of Tecoma – a pernicious weed species – was finished off by a mechanical mulcher retained under the grant. This turned the Tecoma and an equally pernicious Cotoneaster into a small mountain of useful mulch. Combined with larger pieces of trunk it will be used to stabilise the bank and provide a platform for planting more natives;
- And breaking news – many months after a WIRES-approved and critter-friendly nesting box was baited with apple and mounted in the trees by the lake, a family of ring-tailed possums has taken up residence.

There will always be masses of work still to do, but it's not a bad start! All help welcome.

Ann Maree Menager on communicating with the neighbourhood

The Heights Care web site is up and running – please have a look at

<http://www.wallagalakeheightscare.com/>.

The site has all of the newsletters (including this one), information and photos about native vegetation and weeds, results of the monthly bird survey and links to other useful resources such as Landcare, The Crossing and U3A. We would also like more up to date material, so please submit any photos, news, comments or ideas to Ann-Maree at heightscare2020@gmail.com.

One change was requested in the communication space so now anybody who doesn't use the mighty internet can have their information delivered on paper. Out of a mailing list of several dozen we have one taker so far.

The year that was

For Wallaga Lake Heights, like so much of the east coast, last year ended and 2020 started with bushfires, eight days without power, little communication either by phone, mobile, internet or email. As the smoke cleared we had some decent rain, visitors started returning and events like Sculpture Bermagui went ahead. Then came COVID 19.

We can consider ourselves fortunate – three times the fires were turned back by the north-easterly wind, and the dread 'rona virus has so far been kept well away from our shores. And, if you do have to be locked down, Wallaga Lake Heights ain't the worst place to be. Even so we'll all be hoping for a less ... dramatic ... time in 2021!

Last Sunday was a joyous event and a great way to get the neighbourhood together once again. The first gathering that started Heights Care off was on Australia Day – seems a long time ago. Two further face-to-face sessions were held over the next couple of months and one (not notably successful) attempt at a Zoom gathering took place at the beginning of the lockdown. Maybe we should have the first anniversary gig on 26 January 2021.

Best wishes, Heights Care steering group,

Roz Bannon
Libby Bolton
Peter Campbell
Ivana Gattegno
Alison Kuitert
Doug Mein
Bill Southwood