

## **Eurobodalla Champions of the Catchment 2013**

### **Deua Rivercare**

The Deua River rises in the Deua wilderness area, flows west and north before swinging in a large arc to continue south and east and enter the ocean at Moruya Heads.

On its course, it travels through wilderness and national park, historic grazing properties, state forest and private land.

Many creeks feed the river on its course, one of the largest being Araluen Creek, which joins the Deua about fifty kilometres from the sea.

The Deua is home to an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. However, the impacts of farming, forestry, roads, introduced weeds and mining require ongoing management.

Deua Rivercare is a group of local residents committed to enhancing the ecological health of our beautiful home.

The group was formed in the early 1990s and completed several erosion control projects. Since the early 2000s, our group of about twelve regular volunteers has focused on controlling invasive weed species including Privet, Willow, Sycamore, Tree of Heaven, Wild Tobacco, Cape Ivy, Blackberry, and Japanese Honeysuckle along the river and up its feeder creeks.

Over the past ten years, we have been successful in attracting significant grant funding, with two Envirofund grants, three Fish Habitat Action projects, a Landcare NSW Borland Bequest grant and most recently a large Environment Trust grant for a six year project.

We have developed a good working relationship with Eurobodalla Shire Council, which acts as our auspicing body for grants and assists with project officers from their capable Environment Team. We have also worked closely with Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority personnel who provide us with excellent technical support and advice as well as material contributions to joint projects.

Deua Rivercare is also working with National Parks NSW and Forests NSW, who are our river neighbours, to coordinate our weed control efforts. The LHPA assist us with traps and training for feral animal control.

We have developed a long term relationship with some local weed control contractors. This allows us to build trust with landholders. Also, working with a stable team allows us to monitor the success of our weed control techniques and be strategic in our follow-up work.

Through our grant funding, we have held a series of field days to encourage and educate landholders on various aspects of natural resource management such as identification of native grasses, weed control techniques and fish habitat restoration.



The group holds monthly work mornings either on private property or public lands along the river and we enjoy the impact that many hands can make in a short period of time. Our volunteer hours are substantial, with 715 hours recorded between June 2012 and May 2013. We have a monthly email newsletter which circulates to more than sixty households and keeps people informed about upcoming events as well as reporting on matters of interest.

Our aim is to make the Deua the cleanest river in NSW and along the way, to enhance the habitat for indigenous species, improve our skills and enjoy our beautiful environment.

Contact: Anne Rault 44788594

## **Friends of the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens**

The Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens is a Eurobodalla Shire Council community facility. The Gardens is a 100 acre (42 ha) property set within the Mogo State Forest, five kilometres south of Batemans Bay. It is run by three full-time Council staff and two casual staff, assisted by volunteers. Council's first Gardens Management Committee was set up in 1987, so we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2012.

Our Gardens is unique in a number of ways

1. The Gardens was conceived by the community, with a specific aim in mind, to display only the local flora, and limit the range that plants are collected from to the catchments of the 3 major rivers which flow through the Eurobodalla Shire, the Clyde River, the Deua (Moruya) River and the Tuross River.
2. The original aims of the Gardens, Recreation, Education and Conservation, have not changed materially from those agreed to from day one. Ours is the only Gardens in the world which displays only the plants of the Eurobodalla region. It is this point of difference which will ensure our place in the world of botanic gardens.
3. The community provided the initial impetus and continues to provide the bulk of the labour. About 120 volunteers assist the staff in a wide variety of jobs including gardening, construction and maintenance, public interaction, in the Herbarium, the Nursery and Education.

The Gardens is set out in remnant bushland to explain the flora of the region in walks and themed garden beds. There are two kilometres of wide, easy-grade gravel paths, suitable for every visitor to use. For the more adventurous, about 5 kilometres of bush tracks with interpretive signage have been established through a range of ecosystems. An Arboretum includes most of the trees found in the region, including rainforest species. The Herbarium provides the scientific backing for the living collection.

The IMB Children's Walk with its model animals attracts a younger audience with its message of the interdependence of plants and animals. The Aboriginal Heritage Walk, completed with a grant from the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, shows uses of local plants. A Children's Play Space, funded by \$75,000 from the Friends, \$50,000 from the NSW Government Community Building Fund, and \$75,000 from Council, was available for use in December 2011 and officially



opened at Easter 2012. It has put the Gardens on the map for many families, who are enjoying the other attractions including walks enhanced by children's puzzles.

### **What is the role of the Friends of the ERBG?**

The Friends is a support organisation for the Gardens. It works to increase community awareness of the aims of the Gardens, raises funds for Garden's projects and supports the volunteers with equipment and social activities.

As interested members of the public, the initial members of the group that became Friends of ERBG were responsible for persuading Council to set up the Gardens on State Forest land.

The early Friends were very hands on. They were the volunteers. This included the building of the Visitors Centre in 1999-2000, and the surrounding landscaping.

Changes came with the Occupational Health and Safety legislation in 2000 which outlined the responsibility of employers for all workers, whether paid or not. After 9/11, public liability insurance became difficult to obtain and very expensive so the Friends did not have that cover for some years. Council took responsibility for those who worked on the site and provided induction. We now talk about Friends who volunteer, and note that more than 80% of the Gardens' volunteers are members of the Friends.

The Friends organisation provides a social matrix for volunteers and supporters. It holds quarterly meetings, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and offers a discount on plant purchases to members. It raises money through sales of plants and merchandise including home-made preserves, and organising fund-raising events. It maintains a Trust Fund for tax deductible donations. As decreed in the Friends' Constitution, all money raised is for the Gardens. In 2012 the Friends signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Council which sets out roles and responsibilities. The Friends also agreed to its Strategic Plan. These documents assist the continuing good relationship between Council and the Friends, especially as Council has moved from a supervising Management Committee, to an advisory Management Committee and is about to put a Draft Strategic Plan to Council to cover the next five years.

The Friends organisation has been a partner in grants for Gardens' purposes, and can be very useful in cases where local government is not eligible to apply. The most recent grant obtained is for \$370,000 over three years from the Federal Government's Biodiversity Fund, for a regional seed bank. This grant has taken the Friends into new administrative responsibilities, including subcontracting Council to employ the staff member, and seeking legal advice on the effects of the grant on the Friends' present GST-free status.

The Friends took on the Gardens project to conserve the natural environment and to create a beautiful public amenity. These are still the reasons that see us involved today.

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## Akolele Coastcare

Akolele is a small coastal hamlet located between Central Tilba and Bermagui.

In April, 2010, Kerrie Ryan and I wrote a letter to our local council requesting maintenance be carried out on the road along the foreshore of Wallaga Lake. The road had developed deep holes and a wash-away area after heavy rain and was covered with thick debris following recent floods. The road was not negotiable for older residents, for mothers with prams or toddlers and to either children or adults on bicycles. Fishermen were unable to use the road to launch their boats and the local residents of the Koori village were unable to use the short cut home that had been part of their habit for many years. Forty-five local residents signed a petition requesting removal of flood debris and repairs and maintenance to the existing track.

Kerrie and I met with Lindsay Brown, then a Councillor, and were advised that the area surrounding the lake foreshore was Crown Land therefore the council was not responsible for the area. It was suggested that we meet with Peter Gow and form a Coastcare group to enable us to get funding for the repairs. This was done and a Plantswap day and Bushcare training day was later held in September, 2010. And so was born the Akolele Coastcare group which began to meet monthly.

With the instructive guidance and encouragement of Peter and later Jo Lane, we set about identifying the garden escapees and WONS Weeds that inhabited the lake foreshore adjacent to the Lake Rd (as we call it.)

In March, 2011, twelve locals turned out for Clean-Up-Australia Day organised by David Kelly. With the help of a local tractor, we removed a huge pile of rubbish from around the foreshore including a dumped trailer, rotted truck and tractor tyres and many bags of rubbish.

A Community Action Grant enabled us to be assisted by local weed contractors, James Cook and Tony Hall from Brighter Day Landscapes. They visited the area on a regular basis and attacked the big jobs. They sprayed many large areas of weed infestations that have developed over the years by people dumping over fences and from garden escapees. James and Tony have been instrumental in our education, helping us to identify weeds, to gain a greater understanding of the natives in our area including the vulnerable *Haloragis exalata* and in helping us to plan our ongoing work regime.

Peter Gow and Jo Lane have also helped us in these areas and organised backpackers working with Conservation Volunteers Australia to assist us to clear two of the bigger areas of weeds in May 2011. Local native varieties were then planted up after the clearing and we have had a seventy five percent success rate from those plantings.

Works on repairs to the track surface were finally carried out in September 2011. Unfortunately,



some of this work has again been washed away due to an old problem - the careless situation of a drainage pipe following the curb, guttering and sealing of Flower Circuit many years ago.

A beautiful section of littoral rain forest exists below Umbarra so we have been attempting to stop the progress of many weeds into this area. Potoroos have also been identified as living in this bushland.

We are a small group of seven – six women and one man – ages ranging between low forties and mid seventies. Of the five women, one lives in Canberra and joins us, possibly once every three months, when she is able to get a flexi day from work. One of our founding members is now a full time carer for her aged mother so rarely gets to our monthly working bees. Despite our low numbers, the fruits of our labors are beginning to be seen around the area.

Work this year has mainly concentrated on the verge areas of Turners Drive, along the service road below Bermagui Road and along the verges of Bermagui Road. Twice a year we check the eastern side of the causeway and around the eastern side of the lake for sea spurge

Unfortunately, some residents are still dumping rubbish over fences and cutting down trees to enhance their views. Despite this, there is less Lantana, Blackberry, Turkey Rhubarb, Madeira Vine, Seaside Daisy, Moth Plant, Climbing Groundsel, Bridal Creeper, Wandering Jew, Crucifix Orchid, Agapanthus and Mother of Millions coming to maturity to again litter our beautiful area and a greater appreciation and understanding of our native flora has developed between those of us who are contributing to our Coastcare group

We are extremely appreciative and grateful to Peter Gow for his unstinting support, instructive guidance and encouragement in our efforts to return our beautiful land to its original state. And our thanks go also, to Jo Lane, Tony Hall, James Cook and their support workers without whom the WONS weeds would still be thriving.

Most of all many thanks to everyone from Akolele who give up time each month to help with this effort. Akolele Coastcare would not exist without you.

Contact: Robyn Levey 44737732

## **Broulee / Mossy Point Dunecare**

Broulee / Mossy Point (BMP) Dunecare was formed in 1991 when Bitou Bush was spreading along coastal areas of the shire. Barb Roberts was the convenor for many years and now over 20 years later is still active in the group. Jenny and Rob Edwards are also long standing supporters and there are others, such as Norma Coats, now nearly 88, who has since retired from active weeding but lends a supporting hand when necessary.

The group activity lapsed during the mid-1990s but was revived again in 2004, when works were focussed on ways of controlling beach erosion, including fencing of dunes, and rationalisation and fencing of access tracks through the dunes.



Although, Bitou is well under control thanks to the work of the shire and continued maintenance by BMP Dunecare – it is always surprising where it pops up! Our weeding has expanded into other areas – there is never any shortage of new infestations of noxious and environmental weeds and garden escapees on the large areas of public land in our part of the shire.

Contractors, organised through the Community Support Officer and Council Project officers make a significant impact on the 'war on weeds' and make seemingly impossible looking tasks more manageable.

More recently the group has worked with other local groups such as Broulee Women's Boardriders and Broulee Public School

As well as lots of weed control we were involved in the Rationalisation of access ways onto North Broulee beach and Bengello, which commenced with planning in 2004 and then signage, fencing and the Holeybelt path surface was installed with the help of Council using Envirofund grants, community fundraising and help from the Broulee Community Association. The work included planting with the help of Broulee Public School.

We have participated in Art on the Path with Broulee Mossy Point Community Association to showcase work of local artists and crafts people and explain environmental issues to the community.

We undertook local plantings at South Broulee, near the surf club, supplemented and improved by the Carroll College Landcare Group. We have been helping others too – such as North Head camping ground planting and Bengello Fencing

We are also involved in environmental education – with talks about potential impacts of climate change on our local beaches with more than 70 participants on coast walks led by a local ecologist. Activities have included spotlighting in the Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) - Coastal Bangalay Sandforest. Participants were delighted to hear and see Yellow-bellied Gliders.

We have participated in finding more environmentally sustainable solutions to proposed Council works such as the proposed extension of Bayside Street.

We worked on the development of a rehabilitation plan with Mossy Point Headland residents and neighbours to improve the environment of the headland and protect the EEC *Themeda* grassland on coastal headlands and sea cliffs.

Why do we do it?

- A strong commitment to protection and enhancement of the local environment
- Providing an example to the community that we care about the environment and try to influence Eurobodalla Shire Council to take environmental issues into account before any works commence
- Involvement of other community groups in the area
- Education of the community about impacts of noxious and environmental weeds, preservation and understanding of biodiversity values and understanding how privileged we are to live in such a special place



- Protection and enhancement of endangered ecological communities - Littoral Rainforest on Broulee island, *Themeda* grasslands on the headlands, and Coastal Bangalay Sandforest

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## **SAGE – Sustainable Agriculture and Gardening Eurobodalla – Moruya Community Garden**

SAGE was born out of the first Slow Food Celebration in Moruya when it was felt that a demonstration site would really benefit the community. The land is Council owned and zoned for community gardens. In 2009 a small group of people got together and formed a committee which created SAGE – Sustainable Agriculture and Gardening Eurobodalla. Our aims included improving local food security and sustainable farm practices, encouraging more people to become food literate through demonstration and education, and community involvement. Since its inception SAGE has been well supported by local organisations and businesses, in particular, Eurobodalla Shire Council and Landcare, who have donated many resources and time to our cause.

Originally the land was covered in blackberries and *Phragmites* and a lot of hard work was done to prepare it for cultivation. We drew up a plan which includes a 'house' block, with demonstration 'back yard' to show how food can be easily produced in a home garden.

The back yard includes a six-bed rotation garden area and some wicking beds to demonstrate water conservation when growing vegetables. The plan also includes an orchard and 30 semi-commercial garden rows with the idea of demonstrating food production on a larger scale. As well, a small area of land was dedicated to allotments which have been taken up by SAGE members and are extremely productive. However, it was always agreed that the bulk of the SAGE site should be for education and demonstration.

One of SAGE's main aims is to 'grow the grower' which will ensure greater food security for our local area. The commercial rows provide a good demonstration of local food production and to date this has resulted in the establishment of four new food producers who are now providing food for local consumption.

We have a working bee each month where members can come and be involved in the food production going on at SAGE at that time. There is also a 'front garden' attached to the SAGE house on which some members are concentrating their efforts.

At most working bees we hold an 'education spot' where something of interest is demonstrated or talked about. Children are very welcome at SAGE and we have developed play areas for them in the house garden, as well as opportunities for them to get their hands in the soil. Future plans also include bush tucker and medicinal herb gardens.

Education is one of the main aims of SAGE and since 2009 our program has increased enormously. Now we offer at least one workshop/demonstration/excursion per month in a diverse range of subjects – specific vegetable production, compost making, correct use of tools, soil science, fruit



tree care and production, home vegetable garden planning and creation, seed collecting and raising, harvesting and cooking produce, value adding (preserves, food drying, paper manufacturing), wicking beds, watering systems, biodynamics, permaculture and all areas of organic food production. We have partnered with the local TAFE to provide land for the Organic Food Production course and have hosted many visits from the students of local schools.

SAGE has established the South East Harvest Festival which is held every 18 months. This festival celebrates the diversity of food production in our area and includes a day of demonstrations and exhibitions by local food producers, which culminates in the River Feast highlighting the local food of that particular season. Jackie French is the patron of the festival and Costa Georgiadis will be enthusiastically attending this year for the second time.

SAGE also holds an open day at least once a year where people can visit the site to see demonstrations, and listen to talks by local producers, scientists and food enthusiasts.

On 1 January 2013 the SAGE Farmers Market was established. Every Tuesday afternoon local producers (including SAGE) gather in Riverside Park, Moruya to sell local produce. This has very quickly become one of the most popular markets in our area and most producers report sell-outs each week. SAGE also regularly supplies vegetables to a number of local restaurants.

We see one of our most important roles as being an integral part of, and contributing to our community. To that end SAGE donates vegetables to a number of community groups on a weekly basis. As well, we host groups of people with a disability and isolated members of our community who come to the SAGE garden weekly and are assisted in all areas of vegetable growing. These people obviously enjoy their time at SAGE and everyone has a lot of fun.

From small beginnings in 2009, SAGE now has over 200 members who are passionate about, or have an interest in local food production.

Our members are as diverse as the types of plants that can be grown, and bring to our community expertise in many different areas. Our plan for the next five years is to build on what we have so far established, and to increase the community's awareness of what they are eating and where it comes from. We also want to ensure that we are relevant to our members and the local community, while always striving for local food security and sustainability.

Contact: Penny Cook 44744176

## **Champions of the Catchment Bus Tour Itinerary - 20th June 2013**

- 9.00 Depart Coachhouse Resort, Batehaven
- 9.30 Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens (Princes Hwy, between Batemans Bay and Mogo)
- 10.30 Depart Botanic Gardens
- 11.00 Mossy Point Headland
- 11.30 North Broulee Beach, Coronation Dr, Broulee
- 12.00 South Broulee Beach



- 1.00 Lunch at SAGE Moruya Community Gardens, Queen St
- 2.00 Tour of SAGE Moruya Community Gardens
- 3.30 Coachhouse Resort, Batehaven