



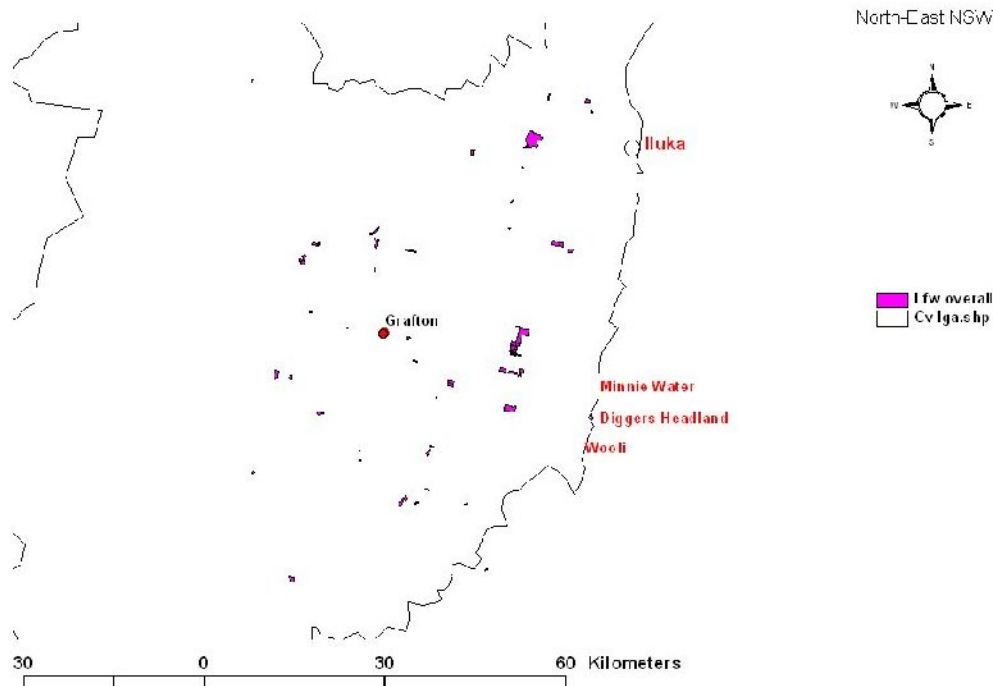
LAND FOR WILDLIFE Clarence Valley Branch

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It was exciting to learn through the last State newsletter that by calendar months last year we topped the list of registered properties, with 14 new properties listed. This was a major achievement, and one we hope to repeat again this year. Already a number of keen landowners are waiting for their properties' assessments, plus one hanging over from last year needing approval, so we are still on track and need to get back to work now to keep up the momentum. You, our Clarence Valley members, can be justly proud of yourselves for your support of our native wildlife, and your choice to share your lives with them.

Clarence Valley Land for Wildlife properties
to 2013



The above map shows where we have got to so far in the Clarence - no longer little fly specks on the giant wall of the huge CV LGA, but starting to be an important player in the field of conservation.

The last property registered for 2012 belongs to Greg Whyman, who now adds his 10ha to the approximately 8km chain of Land for Wildlife properties along Firth-Heinz Road in the Pillar Valley. Connected links like this one not only greatly benefit our wildlife but also attract

significant interest when funds are on offer for conservation purposes. So we hope for some exciting outcomes for Land for Wildlife in the Clarence in the future with particular focus on Pillar Valley. Our sincere thanks to this string of wonderful, like-minded landowners, and also to Peter Turland for his work and perseverance in this area. From all reports Pete is such a great guy that even the occasional reluctant landowner finds it difficult to resist his powers of persuasion

We do in fact occasionally come across landowners who are keen to manage their properties to protect their wildlife but are dead set against signing anything they suspect might involve some government agency, including national parks. It is difficult in these situations for an assessor to adequately explain what Land for Wildlife entails and who exactly is in charge of it, to put their minds at rest.

Explaining this more fully here may give some current members a chance to pass on your own reassuring message to reluctant friends and neighbours that you think might be persuaded to join us.

Land for Wildlife is a completely voluntary, national program that started in Victoria 30 years ago. Landowners gain a lot from their property assessments by way of base flora lists, suggestions for managing weeds, erosion and pests etc, a property plan, and a very cute gate sign. In our Clarence region members can even access help with clearing weeds through our newly-formed bush regeneration team. All this is totally cost-free to themselves, and comes with no binding contract. The single A4 sheet of paper requiring a signature for registration is merely a hand-shake agreement by a landowner to include an identified area of wildlife habitat in the management of their property. If at any time he or she decides to log or clear that habitat and finds that wildlife conservation no longer suits their lifestyle, then all they need do is inform either the CEN or ourselves as regional provider, so their property can be taken off the database and we can arrange to have the gate sign returned. It's that easy

Today there are around 10,000 registered properties Australia wide. Yet while the program has gone national, there is no involvement by the federal government. In NSW the program is managed by the Hunter-based Community Environment Network (CEN), and delivered regionally by whichever council or group agrees to squeeze it into their busy schedules. In the Clarence this is the Clarence Environment Centre (CEC), whose website (above) you can check out for all the interesting work we are involved with.

About the CEC: It is not mandatory to be a member of the Centre to join LfW, although of course that would be nice (cost \$10 per year per person, or \$25 for 5 years for one person or a couple!). We don't even demand a total blind approval of everything we do. Again, since we are all on the same side that would be nice, but everyone has their own opinions and truth is, no one asks! Also, while supporting many Green party issues and providing office space for the Party at election times, the CEC is also non-political. Only a handful of CEC members that I know of are members of the Greens party, and many of us do not support all of the Party's policies. Myself for one - most, but not all.

On the external involvement front, regionally the Centre receives some financial assistance from the CEN for each completed assessment. CEN in turn receives some funding, which they must apply for annually, through the Conservation Partners Program of what used to be the Dept of Environment & Conservation, now a somewhat reduced Office of Environment & Heritage. Whether their funding application is successful or not depends on the mood of the moment. So, the answer to the question about government involvement is 'what government involvement?' We wish it was that certain!

To find out more about the Conservation Partners Program, check out the website - conservationpartners@environment.nsw.gov.au

Bush regeneration team already making a difference

One of our most rewarding achievements last year was the establishment, through a funding grant, of our very own bush regeneration team. This was explained in our last newsletter, and now Terry & Greg's beautiful Bed & Breakfast property at Seelands has a rapidly growing corridor of locally produced native plants along their entire western boundary. The portion of river bank at the northern end of the strip was also planted with Clarence wet sclerophyll species, and while some inevitably were lost in the floods, many had already established strongly enough to hang on and help stabilise the bank. We look forward to seeing the end results of this sterling effort by our newly trained team, and in particular to seeing more koalas taking up residence on the property with Greg & Terry.

While waiting for the right time to start planting at the B & B the team made another foray into the field of bushland improvement and pitted their energies against a stand of bamboo at the Pinnacles, north of Grafton.



Before work

CEC and Land for Wildlife member Di Dadswell was having some trouble suppressing the bamboo, which had taken advantage of earlier wetter months and burgeoned back to life in a spurt of glorious growth. The team had learned about controlling lantana in their initiation at the B & B so were glad to add to their experience by tackling this different species.

While the day was hot, the bamboo stand was luckily quite small, so three team pairs - one wielding loppers, the other a brush and weed-killer - took hardly more than an hour

to have the area totally cleared and the debris stacked ready for mulching.

Helping a person out brings its own pleasure, but achieving something worthwhile and lasting into the bargain adds a huge burst of zest to any manual labour. And on this day the enjoyment was greatly enhanced by a welcome lunch and drinks laid on by Di on her shady verandah.

So thanks to the team for their achievement and good company, to Tom for new lessons learned, Jeanie for her unwavering powerhouse of energy, Rob for his driving enthusiasm, and to Di for the lovely food, pleasant morning, and the chance to make a difference.



After work

Seed collection and propagation day

Part of our training program for bush regeneration included instruction on collecting native seeds, how to recognise different species, and the best ways to grow them.



Rob, Magda, Jeanie, Tom, John, Eric, Aileen, Greg and Stan

This day took place on Wednesday 22 August, when a number of Environment Centre and Land for Wildlife members grouped at the property of Stan and Magda Mussared at Waterview Heights to learn the finer points of this fascinating occupation.

In a beautiful semi-wilderness setting entirely created by the Mussareds our team leader and trained education officer Tom Davidson led us through the many stages, from seed types and dispersal habits, the best stage to collect them, and how to dry, store and record a collection. We also absorbed a large amount of information about planting and germination, from specific needs for certain seeds, mediums and containers, the pros and cons of fertilisers and growth hormones, through a full project of planting to pricking out and nurturing the eventual seedlings.

The session wound up at lunch time with some on-site planting of a few local native seedlings to prepare the team for the main September planting at the Clarence River B & B. While we badly needed rain, the men were masters with the mattocks on the tough ground, and a few extra seedlings were soon in place waiting for better conditions. These will only slightly add to the amazing work already achieved by Stan and Magda over their time on their land.

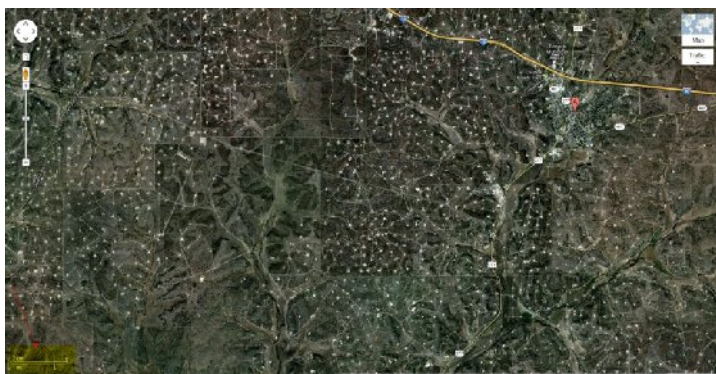


This property was an ideal venue for the day, in that it perfectly demonstrates how work and time can totally transform a cleared cattle paddock into a shady refuge for a range of native animals. In fact if we had chosen the previous day for the session we could have been badly distracted by a koala and her joey, who spent their day in a tree beside the verandah where we sat.

Thank you Stan and Magda for your great contribution to helping our native wildlife. Thank you too

to all attendees for making the day a success, and to Tom, who tirelessly draws on his knowledge and experience to the benefit of others, and subsequently to our environment.

Coal-seam gas industry threatens LfW properties



From two or three months before Christmas until now, CEC's focus has been on supporting residents in a protest against a test CSG drill site at Glenugie. While the company, Metgasco, continues to argue that this is just a single brief activity to test for the presence of gas, we all know what happens when gas is found.



As a mineral, gas belongs to the State, not the owner of the ground it is under, meaning we have no legal right to stop a mining company expanding their wells and roads across our land to get it out.

We have all seen the results of this - in Texas (top), and the start of it in Chinchilla, Queensland. The majority of local residents are firm in their conviction that this industry has no place in the Clarence Valley



Deb on the morning of the blockade breakup

The drill site at Glenugie could see the end of two land for wildlife properties, one belonging to George and Julie Oxenbridge adjoining the drill site on the western boundary, and one to Deb Whitley and her father Barry just 3 kms to the west.

Both George and Deb became instant heroes in the

blockade against Metgasco – Deb when she locked herself onto a truck by her neck, halting the incoming convoy for several hours in searing heat, and George by his leadership, knowledge, and his and Julie's development of a carbon compensation scheme that could well prove the only way to save us all.

George was also the man who broke police ranks and jumped aboard a truck carrying wastewater from the site, snatching a sample of water that the protesters had been denied. In the end this came to nothing, but the effort was valiant, and memorable.

So all in all 2013 is off to an interesting start. I now wish you all a more relaxed and stress-free remainder of the year, and good health to yourselves, your beautiful properties, and the wildlife you are protecting. You are all champions.

Pat