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Visit our website and Plant Propagation Database at:

www.understorey-network.org.au

Coordinators News

Its that time of year again – the Spring Growers Scheme for 2009 is now open! The registration forms are enclosed in this newsletter, so fill them out and get them back in as soon as possible please.

This year, you may like to grow for the Bushfire recovery appeal for Victorian landcare groups. I have contacted the landcare coordinator in the Murrindindi Shire (including the townships of Strath Creek, Flowerdale, and Kinglake) and offered assistance through the Growers Scheme. This has been gratefully accepted, although we have yet to work out the transport of the plants across Bass Strait to Yea, the drop off depot in autumn next year. Any suggestions or offers of assistance are most welcome. A local Victorian seedbank has kindly offered to donate seeds for Tassie growers.

Onto funding issues – both of the projects submitted to the Federal Government's Caring for our Country funding round have been successful. One project is titled 'Kids Care for Tasmanian Coasts' – and will connect schools with a local coastcare group to work together. The other project is titled 'Linking Farm Management and Biodiversity' and will assist properties on Bruny Island to plan and implement a strategy for combining primary production with biodiversity benefits. This project is in partnerships with several other organisations, including Conservation Volunteers Australia and Natural Resource Planning.

We are aiming to increase our income to support the core administrative duties and office with user-pays workshops, seed sales and membership fees.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Understories, please feel free to offer any feedback, Regards Ruth.

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Message from the President

First I'd like to thank, very much, all those of you who contributed so generously in response to my letter of appeal. I must tell you that that letter was not written without a lot of soul-searching, but we felt it was necessary. However your response was overwhelming. It is heartening to know that so many of you obviously believe in what we are doing, and have confidence in the future of the USN. Thank you.

As some of you may know already we found out last week that the USN has been successful in obtaining funding from Caring for our Country for two projects. It is a wonderful outcome for us and all credit must go to Ruth who submitted such excellent applications. One of these projects is shared with five other organisations, so we are fulfilling the required partnerships that the Government wants!

Please don't think that because of our success that your donations have been unnecessary. The way funding is distributed means that we receive the money in stages over a twelve month period, and it must be shared with our partners as stated in the applications. Back-up finance is therefore absolutely necessary to bridge the gaps between grant allocations.

Meanwhile we are working hard to secure some on-going core funding for largely volunteer organisations such as ours to enable us to continue to have competent administration, with an office, so that the thousands of volunteer hours are used effectively. While workshops and field days are also a good source of revenue for us we have decided reluctantly to increase charges for membership and the growers' scheme. These measures will help us to become more self-sustaining and less reliant on grants. I hope that you will agree that the benefits of membership outweigh the extra costs.

So now we can anticipate another wonderful growing season. I hope most of your plants from last year are safely in the ground just waiting for some warm weather to really take off, and that you are looking forward to growing again this spring.

Anne Griffiths

Understorey Network Committee President

Beyond Buttongrass

The following is an abridged version of an article written by Wren Fraser Cameron. It is inspired by the art of Deborah Wace, as featured in our travelling exhibition.

Deborah Wace's art is a continuation of a tradition of botanical dried flower displays and illustration which evolved from the flora collections of the exploring naturalists of the late 18th and early 19th century.



The Enlightenment saw the science of botany flourish with vast collections of plant material returning to Europe from the new world to be placed in herbaria and studied and classified under the Linnaean system. Linnaeus created order in the study of natural history with his system of classification. An Herbarium comprises a collection of pressed plants between large sheets of paper and serve as a botanist's link to information about individual plants, specific plant communities, and the botanical history of a given area.

The procedure of pressing and drying specimens for storage has been an amazingly successful one in terms of preservation of detail and specimen longevity, and the plants so preserved provide a concrete basis for past, present and future studies. In its more than four-hundred-year history the herbarium has become an institution. It represents a source of primary information about explorations and observations of the earth's vegetation and documents the results of much of the past inquiry into the nature and relationships of plants.

Bringing plant collections home from long sea voyages was fraught with danger, disaster, loss and intrigue. In his 1986 book on Joseph Banks' travels in the South Seas *"The Flowering of the Pacific"*, Brian Adams eloquently elaborates that on the first voyage of James Cook, the young gentleman naturalist Banks pressed his plant specimens between sheets of Addison's commentary on Milton's 'Paradise Lost' a job lot of paper acquired from a London printer whilst the botanist Solander a pupil of Linnaeus, undertook the written classification and type locality on the sketches created from the live specimens by Sydney Parkinson.

There is some irony in Bank's conjunction of botany and poetry in the New World. Banks described these new plants as "flowers worthy of paradise" whilst the Endeavor negotiated Milton's 'rising world of waters dark and deep'. Indeed paradise lost was to be the fate of the new lands, peoples and wondrous plants.

After two years at sea and with the wondrous new flora of South America, New Zealand, the South Pacific and Australia pressed firm between Milton, the Endeavor went aground on a coral reef. A near disaster, the breached Endeavor was careened. As the ship was hauled ashore all the water in her hold rushed to the stern. Unfortunately most of the collection became waterlogged. Banks and his team however took the entire sodden collection ashore to dry. Four months on the Australian east coast had produced thousands of plant specimens together with 412 working sketches. Limping home via Batavia saw Banks and Solander nearly die of Malaria and Parkinson die at sea of the 'bloody flux'.

Linnaeus was informed in Sweden that the botanists were back, "laden with the greatest treasures of natural history that ever was brought into the country at one time by two persons" The voyage sketches were later developed into watercolours from which 340 became copper engravings forming the largest section of Banks' Florilegium a global publishing effort celebrating the botanical discoveries of Banks some 200 years after his voyages.(1)

Edward Duyker points out in his 2003 *"Citizen Labillardiere- A Naturalist's Life in Revolution and Exploration [1755-1834]"* when Labillardiere, the best French botanist of the times, prepared for his 1791 journey with d'Entrecasteaux's aboard the Recherche in search of missing la Perouse, he wrote to Sir Joseph Banks advising him of his prospective journey and seeking his advice. Banks offered Labillardiere practical advice to "take an enormous supply of the coarse paper in which plants are dried. I have often had several heaps of quires of plants drying at the same time, so large as to make it necessary to spread them out once a day to prevent their heating by juxtaposition."

With the French Revolution underway, the Brest warehouses emptied of paper for the service of the artillery but Labillardiere managed to procure, with difficulty, 22 reams of paper with which to press his plant specimens, an impressive quantity signalling the extent of his collecting ambitions.

The fact that his vast collection survived the perils of this journey is a miracle.

Unlike Banks the weather conspired against Labillardiere and he was unable to take his collection ashore to dry out on the beach. Later when the expedition was imperiled, Captain and crew dead and dying in Batavia, battered ships impounded by the Dutch, d'Auribeau had the collections seized and the Republican survivors including Labillardiere imprisoned due to France being at war with Britain.

The confiscated collections including 37 cases of natural history specimens were aboard a Dutch vessel when the British seized it at sea as a prize of war in May 1795. Upon return to France in April of 1796 Labillardiere wrote to Banks in the name of science to aid in returning to him his plant collection. The exiled French King however had laid claim to the collections but had offered a choice of them to Britain's Queen Charlotte who in turn charged Sir Joseph Banks with examining the boxes. Banks was deeply impressed.

Queen Charlotte was keen to have a complete set of the plant collection. Banks however had received Labillardiere's plea and honour between scientists prevailed with Banks recommending that the "whole should be returned to M. de Billardiere in order that he may be enabled to publish his Observations on Natural history in a complete manner..." (2)

By 1800 Labillardiere had published *'Relation du voyage a la recherche de la Perouse'* with illustrations prepared by the great French botanical artist Pierre Joseph Redouté. This was followed in 1804 by *'Novea Hollandiae plantarum specimen'* the first published flora of Australia.

The flora that forms the matrix of Deborah's art is collected from the same floristic landscape as that of Labillardiere's 1792-3 type locality some 10km south of where she lives at Lune River.



References:

1. Adams, Brian: *"The flowering of the Pacific", Being an account of Joseph Bank's travels in the South Seas and the story of his Florilegium* Collins British Museum 1986
2. Duyker, Edward *"Citizen Labillardiere – A naturalist's life in Revolution and Exploration (1755-1834)"* 2003 The Miengunyah Press

An African Landcare Project

Village tree Nursery Project

Chiradzulu

*An Understorey Network member, **Martin O'Bryan** worked for Australian Volunteers International in Africa for several years. Part of Martin's work was assisting in establishing community nurseries with local villages in Malawi. Here is a summary by Martin of this work – it has a lot of similarities to our community nursery, and method of growing plants!*

Project Aim and Philosophy

Our philosophy was that every member of the either the village or project committee worked as a volunteer. The production of the tree seedlings was predominantly for local planting by the volunteers around the village. A small percentage (up to 15%) may be sold for income generation. Ingenious species such as soil fertilising species Msangu, Mthethe, Nkunkhu and Gliricidia were actively promoted for long term benefit (ie non wood supply). Exotic species like Blue gum and Keshya wa Milimo were grown for fire wood and building materials. In the longer term the aim is for each village to produce 10,000 seedlings each. Most input materials for the nursery were provided free of charge (ie seed, tubes and some tools). Fencing was to be provided by the village.

Village Nurseries

We established tree nurseries in 12 villages surrounding Montfort, in Chiradzulu district. One other tree nursery was additionally found at the local Demonstration (Primary) school at Montfort.

Our project was to achieve an output of 25,000 seedlings in 2007. Each village nursery had an average of 4 to 6 village volunteers with the larger nurseries having ten volunteers. On average each nursery grew 2000 seedlings.

We successfully applied for two small grants for the 2007 season from the following organisations:

- Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi – Blantyre Branch – donation of input material
- Australian Volunteers International – to value of 80,000 MKW

In total the funding was worth around US \$800.

A number of issues occurred during 2007. Initially 15 nurseries were planned but three nurseries failed due to poor participation (1), lack of agreement on nursery location (1) and lack of agreement on nursery management and ownership (1). Some of the successful nurseries struggled due to low community participation with members volunteering and then failing to perform their tasks. Some members were not happy to participate without some short-term financial benefit..

Future Aims

- For each nursery to grow 10,000 seedlings per year.
- To expand the number of nurseries if funding allows.
- A number of nurseries to become income generating or at least self sufficient.
- We are also looking for some additional partners to support our project.

Nursery Setup and Management

The following steps were taken during 2007 to set up the village nurseries.

- Formed project committee and obtained support from WESM and AVI for inputs.
- Organized the nursery clubs and had initial meeting at the villages.
- Provided some fencing materials and visited the nurseries to check fence construction.
- Ran a training session for participants for filling tubes and soiling seeds.
- Distributed hoes, watering cans, tubes and seed to the nurseries.
- Monitored progress in each village and corrected incorrect nursery practises.
- Supervision of out planting and follow-up.
- Continued supervising and encouraging

DAPP Vocational School – Opportunities for Agriculture Students to gain practical experience in the villages.

OXFAM/ World Vision – to provide additional support and funding to enable the project to grow.



At start-up meeting at Nyama Nursery (Martin O'Bryan bottom left). Fifteen meetings were conducted at different villages – August 2007



Children getting involved!

• !



Lopa Village Nursery – a hard working success story

Like to support a community project in Africa?

Interested in Native Tasmanian Plants?

Thinking of planting local species and/or replacing exotics with native alternatives?

Martin has grown around 800 trees, scrubs and grasses in tubes ready for planting, that are looking for good homes. These include grasses (poas), two species of Melaleucas, native daisies, Acacias (wattles) and many other varieties.

Noisy miners – weeds on wings?

Landholder Richard Hastings shares some practical hints about designing plantings that discourage Noisy Miners

The journal article on which this summary is based was published in *Ecological Management and Restoration*, Volume 7 No. 2, August 2006 by Richard Hastings

Weeds are commonly defined as a plant in the wrong place. A similar definition is also apt for the native Australian honeyeater, the noisy miner, *Manorina melanocephala*, which has frequently become a bird in the wrong place. The right place for the Noisy Miner is open eucalypt woodland, with cleared ground and little understorey. Before the coming of Europeans, such an environment was relatively scattered, but clearing of understorey has created much ideal Noisy Miner habitat and as a result Noisy Miners are spreading and have become a major threat to Australian small birds.

Noisy miners are both cooperative and communal breeders. They are cooperative in that the young males stay and help with feeding nestlings; they are communal in that they live in colonies of up to several hundred birds. They fiercely defend their territory and have been recorded mobbing wallabies, cattle, horses, sheep and pigs as well as other birds. Large birds can resist their attacks, but any small bird that inadvertently trespasses will either be chased away or killed.

Recently I completed a research project, examining whether Noisy Miners might be taking over some of the "wildlife corridors" so lovingly and industriously planted by Landcare and Bushcare groups. I looked at birds in six different types of corridors, all running next to pasture.

All non-eucalypt corridors, with or without understorey, had no Noisy Miners and did have a small number of native birds. Noisy Miners dominated corridors of eucalypts, with no shrubby understorey, and there were no small birds at all.

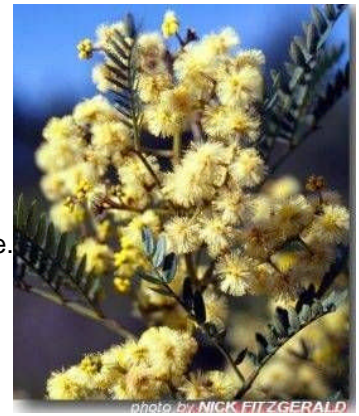
Probably the most significant finding was that the presence of shrubby understorey on a eucalypt site made no difference unless at least 15% of the trees were bipinnate wattle (i.e. feathery leaved wattles such as *Acacia dealbata*, Silver Wattle *Acacia terminalis*, Sunshine wattle and *Acacia mearnsii*, black wattle). Eucalypt sites with understorey but without bipinnate wattles were dominated by Noisy Miners and had no small birds, but eucalypt sites with understorey and where more than 15% of the trees were bipinnate wattles had no Noisy Miners and had a large number and variety of small and large native birds.

To set up colonies, Noisy Miners need a food supply that will last the year round, and trees with an open structure from which it is easy to repel other birds.

Eucalypts meet these requirements. Bipinnate wattles however, are a favourite source of food for many small birds, and have a dense structure in which they can easily hide.

It would seem that when there are sufficient bipinnate wattles, the effort of chasing away small birds just does not have sufficient rewards for the Noisy Miner.

So, if you are doing vegetation of either corridors or small (less than 40hectare) patches, then it would seem worthwhile that you mix at least 15% bipinnate wattle with your eucalypts. A shrubby understorey covering at least 10% of the area is also required to avoid your revegetation becoming dominated by Noisy Miners.



Manorina melanocephala- Noisy Miner a grey bird with a yellow beak are often confused with the Common or Indian Mynas a brown bird with a yellow beak.

If you would like further information please email Richard at richard.hastings2@bigpond.com

Thank You

to all those members and friends who made donations to the Understorey Network during our recent appeal. For the first time ever we needed to ask for your help and we are very grateful for your response.

A very big thank you to all of you.

Money from donations and our success in receiving funding for two projects (Kidscare for Tasmanian Coasts and Linking Farm Management and Biodiversity) means we can ensure our coordinator is able to continue to work for the USN and we are hopeful that we will be successful in our submission through Caring for our Country for our longer term funding.

Understorey Network Committee

First Plant 'Sale'

The USN held its first plant 'sale' in June, sale in inverted commas because plants went out of the nursery gates for gold coin donations. From a small amount of advertising we were inundated with people queuing to take home some native plants. Many prospective native plant growers sought the assistance of our committee members with knowledge of growing Tasmanian natives. A big thank you to Warner Wait for sharing his knowledge of plant size, plant requirements and flower colour.

We sold a staggering \$1047 worth of plants which was wonderful.

On the day volunteers also moved 3 cubic metres of gravel to nearly cover our new hardening off area.

Our thanks to all our volunteer helpers and plant buyers.

What's Happening

The Understorey Network AGM:

All members are invited to attend our AGM, with guest speaker Dr Tonia Cochran from Inala on Bruny Island. This will be followed by afternoon tea.

Date: Saturday 19th of September

Time: 1:30pm to 3pm

Place: Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Riverview meeting room (next to the shop).

Growers Scheme Registrations

Please send in your registration forms if you would like to grow or receive plants through our Spring Growers Scheme.

The closing date for registration is 30th of September 2009.

Victorian Bushfire Recovery

Would you like to help Victorian landcare groups recover from the recent bushfires?

Due to the devastation to landcare sites in Victoria, with the bushfires this year, the Understorey Network has offered a helping hand by including these groups as receivers of plants in the Growers Scheme this spring.

Landcare revegetation sites are often in weedy areas where there is little or no soil seedbank of native plants to aid recovery after a fire. Seeds will be sourced from a local seedbank in Victoria, and following clearance by Quarantine Tasmania, will be issued to Tasmanian Understorey Network growers.

The Upper Goulbourn landcare Network Coordinator Bridget Clark, located at Yea will ensure the smooth handover of plants from Tassie growers to local landcare groups next Autumn.

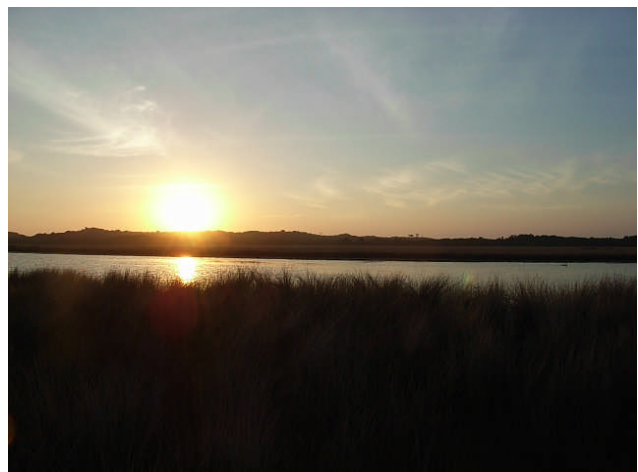
We have a target of 3,000 tubestock – so please consider growing plants this year for Victorian landcare Groups to help us achieve this.



An Ulverstone High School student planting out at Buttons Beach



Ogilvie High School students receiving plants for their native garden, grown by residents of the Mary Ogilvie Home.



Sunrise on King Island (Sea Elephant Estuary).