



# UnderStories

*promoting preserving protecting  
& rehabilitating native vegetation*

Summer 2014 - 2015, No 68

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and memberships to:*

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### Editor

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## COORDINATOR'S REPORT

It has been fantastic to see so many Understorey Network members out and about lately; helping out on our displays at various expos and festival, working hard at the Tolosa nursery, attending workshops or picking up materials for the growers' scheme. Although we may not have the funding to match, the organisation seems to be going from strength to strength.

This year most of our projects we had funding for (and were taking up most of my time as coordinator) have finished up so it has been a time of transition. The Understorey Network has had to let the office on Elizabeth Street go after more than six years there. We are transferring most of our activities to the Tolosa nursery, although the committee has been offered the use of a space in Salamanca Square thanks to Banjos. I will be working from home for all my office based duties and am now working part time.

We do still have a number of interesting projects that we are involved in, including growing food and roosting plants for the captive breeding program of the orange-bellied parrot (see article by Ruth Mollison in this newsletter) and protecting seedlings of the endangered morrisby's gum at Calverts Hill Nature Reserve (more on this in future editions). Both of these projects are funded by NRM South.

The nursery is also as busy as ever and we are continuing to improve facilities there, including a new watering system, thanks to our sponsorship from the Westpac Foundation and Landcare Australia. Summer is a busy time with lots of pricking out to be done, so do drop by if you are interested in volunteering there on a Monday.

Summer of course is also seed collecting time, so please keep your eyes out for ripe seeds when out and about and collect some to help replenish our seed bank. Feel free to contact me for any tips on seed collecting, or maybe see you at one of the upcoming seed collecting walks.

Have a safe and happy festive season.

Cheers, **Oliver**

## FROM PRESIDENT

### The annual general meeting

We are a quarter of the way through our year and there have been many changes to your organisation. I need to begin by mentioning the AGM, even though it was held a long time ago, because it was lovely to see so many familiar and new faces in attendance. This year we met in the education pod at the Botanical Gardens because the usual meeting room was undergoing refurbishment and many of us felt that it was a better venue because it was smaller and full of interesting educational material. Given that one of the aims of the USN is to educate the Tasmanian population about the value of understorey we seemed to be in the right space.

The guest speaker was Dr Sally Bryant from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy and she spoke about the ideal conditions required to maintain threatened species, particularly bird species. For anyone who may be considering undertaking revegetation work on their own property the mantra should be “as big an area as possible and as near round as possible”. While animals and birds need to have long corridors to enable them to move between living areas the actual living spaces need to be safe and the safest ones allow small threatened species to hide deep within the understorey. Or put it another way, it takes less work to defend the relatively short boundary of a large circle than it does to defend the longer boundary of any other shape.

Sally commended the USN for the work the group has undertaken to support her favourite bird, the Forty Spotted Pardalote and mentioned that it took 20 mature white gums to support one breeding pair. I remembered this when I heard a recent radio report about the discovery of a previously unknown colony of Forty Spotted Pardalotes near Southport in the state's far south. University researchers, who were counting Orange Bellied Parrot numbers, found a breeding pair on a nest and concluded that there must be other pairs in the area. This is evidence to support the need to retain our bushland areas.

### Administrative matters

Since the AGM there have been a number of organisational changes that you need to be aware of. To start, Ollie now works three days a week being Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. If you need to contact him you may do so by telephone on one of those days or by email at any time and he will respond when he is able to. Please do not try to telephone him at other times as he has another job to do.

By the time that you receive this newsletter we will have vacated our Elizabeth Street office and I want to thank Ollie and all committee members who spent many hours sorting through the material in the office, disposing of some items to recycling and relocating the rest to an office at Ollie's home or the Glenorchy nursery. For the future Ollie will split his time between these two venues. We needed to retain a drop off point in the city for those members who volunteer to manage membership applications and for a committee meeting space and I want to say a huge thank you to Banjos in Salamanca for providing us with space in the shop. By now people who need to access the space will have been shown it and may be using it. The first committee meeting will be held there in February and I look forward to trying some of the Banjos goodies for our mid meeting refreshments. To make the move to Banjos work we needed to obtain a laptop computer to be set up in that space and I want to thank Anna Povey for her donation of a suitable computer.

### Activities, past and future

Despite being busy with the need to relocate, the USN was able to participate in the recent Sustainable Living Festival and I understand that it was one of the best. I want to thank all members who volunteered their time for this event and can report that there was a lot of interest in the activities of the USN. As an aside, we recently discovered that they USN is one of only three groups that has taken part in every Sustainable Living Festival since its inception in 1999, when it was called the “The Environmental Home Expo”.

Successful northern and southern Depot Days were held in October and I hope that all seeds are now planted. Please remember to maintain a record of your successes and failures to be returned to Ollie when the plants are ready to be planted out.

By the time that this newsletter is sent out we will have had our Christmas party, held this year at the Glenorchy Nursery. I expect that I will be able to report that a great time was had by all.

For the future, I hope that you have Saturday 31 January 2015 marked in you diary. That is the day that the USN plans to have a seed collecting field day at the property Bangor.

### Committee membership

I usually start this edition of the newsletter by thanking all those people who agreed to serve on the committee for the forthcoming year and I certainly do that now. However, I must admit to being somewhat disappointed that we did not get a lot of interest from new people in joining the committee, especially when we needed to find a new secretary.

At the last committee meeting Annie Griffiths resigned from her position of Vice President to take up the position of Secretary while De Degan accepted a nomination to become Vice President. Thus our problem is resolved for 2014-15 but I shall spend the rest of the year nagging and pleading with you to consider joining the committee in future. As I have previously said the lack of a viable committee could mark the end of the USN as a functioning organisation and it would be a shame if that was to happen as we have much to offer the Tasmanian community and a very good reputation within conservation circles.

Joan Rodrigues

### SUMMER'S FLOWERING PLANTS ENDEMIC TO TASMANIA



*Ricea scoparia*



*Acradenia frankliniae*



*Wahlenbergia stricta*



*Leionema montanus*



## FEEDING THE BIRDS

The Botanical Gardens is assisting in feeding a very important bird.

*The Orange Bellied Parrot (OBP) is one of the most endangered birds in Australia. The wild population has decreased over the last decade to fewer than 70 individuals and is now supplemented with released birds from the captive insurance population.*

The seed producing plants of buttongrass moorlands in southwest Tasmania provide an essential food source for the orange bellied parrot during late spring and summer. The birds breed here, and need to feed their growing nestlings, before preparing for the arduous migration across to mainland Australia.

The adults leave the buttongrass plains at the end of summer and head up the west coast of Tasmania, resting at saltmarshes along the way to feed on flowering and seeding plants to replenish their energy. They then spend winter along the south eastern coast of Australia before returning to Tasmania in spring.

The RTBG is assisting the Orange Bellied Parrot captive breeding program in the short term by providing green pick from the community vegetable gardens. In the long term, germination trials at the seedbank will target difficult-to-grow plants from the wild. The information from these trials will be useful when rehabilitating OBP habitat in Tasmania and on the mainland. As well, volunteers with the Understorey Network are growing native roosting and food plants at the Tolosa Nursery. These plants will be delivered to the Taroona aviaries on a regular basis, and removed to regrow, once the OBP's have pecked them down.

Hopefully the supply of extra plants and green pick will enhance the aviaries at Taroona, and assist the busy staff to look after with their very important charges.



An OBP on the feed table at Melaleuca, SW Tasmania.

Ruth Mollison

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING CONSORTIUM

**Vision: to support a volunteer community which is informed, safe, inspired and effective**

A training program for volunteers working in natural resource management was initiated in August 2012 by a collaboration between: NRM South; Parks and Wildlife Service; Landcare Tasmania; Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania; Crown Land Services; Understorey Network and Southern Regional Councils including: Kingborough, Glenorchy, Huon Valley, Hobart, Clarence, Sorell and Tasman. The training courses support volunteers to build knowledge, skills and capacity.

Consortium members have made in-kind or financial contribution to help deliver a range of training in first aid, remote area first aid, safe use of chemicals, Chemcert, safe use of brushcutters and chainsaws, understanding fire ecology, weed identification and control, photopoint monitoring and native seed collection and propagation.

In 2012/13, 85 individual volunteers benefitted from 13 separate training opportunities and in 2013/14, a total of 76 volunteers benefitted from 4 different training opportunities.

"Most of the financial contribution provides accredited training in core competencies to meet workplace health and safety responsibilities, such as first aid and safe use of brushcutters." says Ruth Osborne from NRM South who co-ordinates the collaboration. "Additional informative or inspirational workshops are run in-house by consortium staff, and our survey responses indicate there is good demand for this kind of training."

### **Volunteer Training available in 2014/15**

#### **Provide First Aid (also known as Senior First Aid, Workplace Level 2 or Apply First Aid)**

The flagship St John Ambulance first aid course covers a broad range of topics to enable participants to confidently manage emergency situations, providing care for the ill or injured until medical aid arrives. The Provide First Aid qualification remains valid for three years.

The consortium's intention is to ensure as many community groups as possible have at least one volunteer as designated first aider, such as the group convenor or a member who consistently attends working bees. Once every group has at least one volunteer trained in first aid, we can then work towards ensuring a second group member has training. Please talk with your group coordinator (local council, PWS, Landcare, SCAT etc) if you would like to be the designated first aider for your group.

Please note; St Johns also run an annual reaccreditation training which is not an essential requirement for maintaining a current first aid certificate. Unfortunately, this training is not able to be funded through the volunteer training consortium.

#### **First Aid course structure and timing:**

2 days for new first aid training/expired certificates OR 1 day as renewal after 3 years

**2 day option** for people doing initial training or who trained more than 3 years ago.

The next course will be delivered on **Tues 24<sup>th</sup> March and Wed 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2015** at St Johns training centre, Moonah

An additional training course may be scheduled in May based on demand.

#### **Fees:**

From 2015, there will be a small charge of \$40 pp to volunteers undertaking first aid training through the training consortium payable to NRM South to confirm your place on the course.

**1 day renewal** - For volunteers who received first aid training in Oct/Nov 2012 we may schedule a 1 day renewal training in November 2015, funding permitting.

Contact your Understorey Network co-ordinator Oliver Strutt, for more information and to register your interest in this training.

Other training opportunities will be advertised as they become available.

#### **National Volunteer Week Celebration – a date for your diary!**

Please join us on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 at the Sustainability Learning Centre, Mount Nelson, for a free BBQ and celebration of natural resource management volunteers.

## NATIVE PLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP

Native plant lovers from all over the southeast region attended the most recent propagation workshop at the Understorey Network (USN) nursery in Glenorchy. Ten participants including two youngsters joined Oliver around the potting bench on a perfect October blue-sky day to talk native seeds and get their hands in the dirt.



Workshop participants propagating native seeds at the USN nursery



Mike from Lenah Valley selecting seeds

While Ollie explained a few things about collecting and caring for seeds, and how natives like a low-phosphorus potting mix, participants filled tubes with dirt and shared stories about their own gardens and what they wanted to learn from the workshop.

Christine and Stephen from Salt Water River took part in the Dunalley growing scheme and wanted to learn more about planting natives. Teresa from Taranna was looking for suggestions for fire-resistant varieties and a gardener who runs a permaculture business on the Peninsula wants to offer native seedlings to her customers.

Everyone took notes about the best times to propagate seeds and cuttings, longevity and native seed varieties, and how to simulate the effect of fire on thick seed coats by boiling them in water. After potting tiny yellow bottlebrush seeds to take home with them, Ollie gave a tour of the nursery.

This free workshop was a great way of spreading the word about how USN works with communities to promote native vegetation and educating the public about how they can get involved as members. And, we even sold a few plants.

**Jeannie Mooney**



## SEED COLLECTING HINTS

### Before you go.

Obtain permission from the landholder/council/government department. On the day you visit, pay a courtesy call to let the landholder know you have arrived. Leave gates as found – open or closed. Use existing roads/tracks where possible. Do not disturb stock. Leave dogs at home.

### Things to take with you.

Paper or cloth bags for seeds/pods. Plastic bags for 'sweat' seeds. Clean, sharp secateurs. Plant identification guides. Tags and pencils for labelling specimens. Markers, pegs or coloured tape for finding a plant once the flowers have gone. Pieces of stockings, rubber bands or string to make bags around developing seed heads, to catch seed as they fall. Camera for help with identification or shots of the environment/habitat.

### Back in the car.

If you collect pieces for identification, or if you have cuttings to strike, it is a good idea to keep them cool so they don't wilt. For this, take wet newspaper to wrap the cuttings. An esky with ice bricks will keep them fresh.

### Time to go Seed Collecting.

Generally seeds ripen throughout summer, so plan some trips starting late December. Plants set seed at different times, according to species and local habits and climatic variations. It's worth going regularly to catch seeds of different species. Some seed can also be collected throughout the year. A pleasant walk in Spring, among the flowers, is a good time to identify plants and mark them for later seed collection. Make sure you've got some seed in the capsule, before you collect a lot. How do you know when the seed is ripe? Observe colour changes of seeds, usually from green to brown, black or red when ripe. They usually become easier to remove from the plant. Then collect the seeds or the pods/capsules they are in, preferably by cutting with clean secateurs so as not to damage the plant. Hard cone seeds sheoaks, banksias, tea trees and other Myrtaceae – collect the oldest cones that have not yet opened (ie. The valves should be closed). They will be greyish, and further down the stem than the younger and unripe cones. These can be collected at anytime of year. What if you miss seed ripening? Some plants (eg. most Myrtaceae) hold onto their heads for a long time and so can be collected from at almost anytime of the year (see above). Others release their seeds almost immediately they are ripe, so it is easy to miss them. If you think The seed may drop while you are away, tie a bag around the fruit to catch the seed, ready for collection later. Old stockings make good bags.

### What to do once you are home.

If you collected into plastic bags, remember when you get home to move them into a paper or cloth bag so they don't go mouldy. Then just leave the bags somewhere warm and dry (in a cupboard, near the fire). Pods/capsules usually open quite easily, releasing their seeds into the bag. Store the seeds in a container, preferably in the fridge where they will last longer. Label the container clearly with the date, location and plant name.

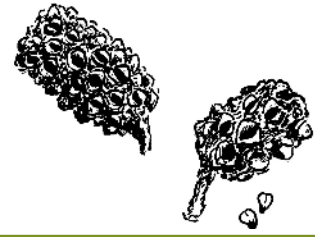
### Some things to keep in mind.

Collect from healthy plants where possible. Collect above the 'splash zone' to avoid phytophthora cinnamomi contamination. Collect from at least ten seed plants of the same species, spread over at least 100m to ensure genetic diversity. Do not remove more than 25% of the available crop from any one plant. If the plant seems rare, bear in mind that seed collection is reducing the plant's ability to reproduce in its own environment.



# What's happening

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Please call the mobile 0407 352 479 or email [oliver@understorey-network.org.au](mailto:oliver@understorey-network.org.au) for more information or to RSVP for any of the workshops.

## Seed Collecting Workshop (North)

Come for a walk through native bush and learn more about native plants whilst helping to collect seed for the seed bank

When: Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January

Where: Lilydale

## Seed Collecting Workshop (North)

Come for a walk through native bush and learn more about native plants whilst helping to collect seed for the seed bank

When: Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January

Where: Badger Head

## Seed Collecting Workshop (South)

Come for a walk through native bush and learn more about native plants whilst helping to collect seed for the seed bank

When: Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> January

Where: "Bangor" Dunalley

## Understorey Network Committee Meetings

When: 5:15pm – 10<sup>th</sup> February, 16<sup>th</sup> March,

Where: Salamanca Square, Hobart

All members are welcome to come to our regular meetings – please RSVP for catering purposes



Anopterus glandulosus - Tasmanian laurel