



No 157
November
2023

AABR AGMs
1

President's Perspective
New members
2

regenTV at SER Darwin
Conference
3

Happenings at AABRFest
4

Songs at AABRFest
6

Restoration Decade Statement
Towards a National Restoration Plan
New EMR project summaries
8

Scotch Broom Control Program
in Barrington Tops National Park
9

Blue Signatures
10

1930s restoration at
Balls Head Reserve
12

AABR NSW
13

Vale: Jenifer Lewis
14

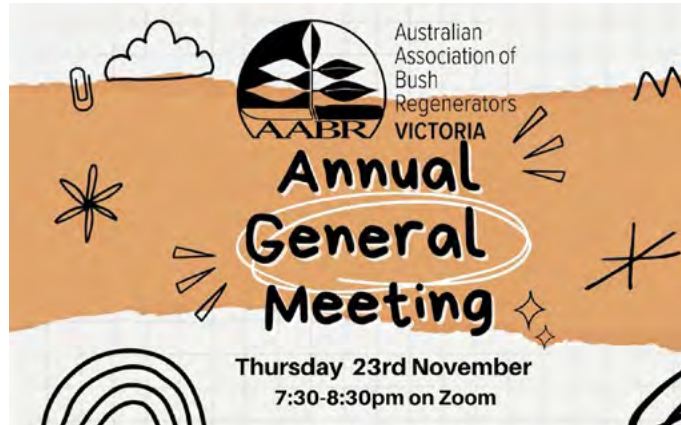
Books
15

What's on
16

AABR NEWS

Australian Association of Bush Regenerators
working with natural processes

AABR Victoria Annual General Meeting



More information: <https://www.aabr.org.au/event/aabrvic-agm/>

AABR Board

Annual General Meeting



To be held online

More information:

<https://www.aabr.org.au/event/aabr-board-annual-general-meeting/>

AABR NATIONAL FORUM

The Rs of Restoration: Restoring biodiversity through resilience, regeneration, reintroduction and reconnecting to country.

Friday March 22, 2024 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Fitzroy Town Hall, 201 Napier St, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

See Page 16 for more information

<https://www.aabr.org.au/events/>

President's Perspective

It has been a busy few months since the last AABR News.

AABRFest

The inaugural AABRFest was held at Topi Topi, on the mid north coast of NSW. Tickets sold out and it was fantastic to see both the old faces as well as a myriad of non AABR members and early career bush regenerators. The event was a mixture of formal and informal, with a number of guided activities, presentations and forums, along with a lot of opportunities for sitting down with people you knew or not, and yarning about regen.

We managed to get into a number of quite meaty discussions regarding biodiversity decline, management and restoration, the dumbing down of bush regeneration programs by funders and councils, the importance of supporting volunteer regeneration programs and volunteers, the AABR Accreditation Program, industry issues, and how to tell one bloody eucalypt species apart from another bloody eucalypt species!

One thing that both surprised and delighted me was the number of bush regenerators in their 20s and early 30s who attended, and how passionate they were about bush regeneration and the need to make it a viable career. I have heard so many times how much more difficult it is to make a long term career out of bush regeneration, so it was inspiring to see so many early career regenerators who want to be able to keep regenerating and want to engage to make the industry more viable

AABR Fora

Another positive thing to come out of AABR Fest was an initiative by a group of attendees who are bush regen students at Ryde

TAFE in NSW. With their teacher, Paul Gadsby, they approached AABR with the idea of running a joint forum with Ryde TAFE. Planning has started and the event will be held in the first quarter of next year. All credit to these students for this initiative!

AABR Victoria will also be holding the annual National AABR Forum next year, *The Rs of Restoration*, at Fitzroy in Melbourne.

The annual fora were put on hold during COVID and it is great that the 'reinaugural' will also be the first one held outside of NSW. We hope to move these around the country as our State and Territory branches are set up. (See elsewhere in this newsletter for more information). The AABR E-news which you receive is a source of information about AABR events. I would like to acknowledge Ryde TAFE and City of Yarra for their very generous sponsorship of these events.

AABR AGM

The AABR AGM is coming up in early December. If you have ever had aspirations of World Domination, unlimited power and influence, fame, fortune and celebrity, then the AABR Board is calling out for you! Seriously though, we are very keen to find AABR members who would like to influence our agenda around practice, research, education, volunteer regeneration and the industry to come on to the AABR Board, especially from states and territories that don't have any Board members yet (Northern Territory, Western Australia, ACT, Tasmania). If you would like to have a chat about being a Board member and what it entails, please call me.

Peter Dixon, President

president@aabr.org.au or call 0478 741 111..

Welcome to new AABR Members

Congratulations on Accreditation

Alex Mackenzie
Samual Dryden

Members

Andrew Kelly
Barry James
Bronwyn Sanders
Celia Freeman
Charlie Browning
Christopher Davies
Clive Carlyle
Colin Ruffels
Connor Donnelly
Daniel Stuart
David Worboys
Deborah Gray
Eliza Middleton
Elliot Budd

Evan Turner-Schiller
Gemma Campbell
Helen Schwencke
Helen Rubeli
Isaac Van Haeff
Jack Clarke
Jack Sampson
Jake Platt
Jarrod Fleming
Jason Peters
Jason de Haan
John Temme
Jonatan Zethner
Kaila Paarlberg
Karen Oliver
Lachlan Curran
Lindsay Nichols
Lola Topsom Southwood
Mads Dwyer

Nathan Housman

Nick Randall

Nikki Hodgson

Paul Cotton

Peggy Svoboda

Peter Rowles

Peter van Erk

Phillip McGrath

Stephanie Truin-Vincent

Talia Sawers

Thomas Brodribb

Agency

Willoughby Council

Rebekah Steel

Rory McCracken

Rosemary Hans

Ruth Cannon

Ryan Moore

Sam Fisher

Sam Holt

Skye Virgin

Not For Profit

Campbell Page EcoCrews

Northside Enterprise Inc -
Bushlink

Business

Environmental Golf
Solutions Aust.

"AABR acknowledges Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations of this continent and recognises their custodianship and continuing connection to its land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to the Elders past and present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of Indigenous peoples across the nation."

SER2023 World Conference

Regentv reports from Darwin

The in-person SER2023 World Conference in Darwin was an outstanding success in so many ways – more than living up to its theme '*Nature and people as one: celebrating and restoring connection*'.

The conference was a unique opportunity for Australia to host 1000 delegates from over 80 countries – with four days of multiple concurrent sessions including symposia, workshops, training sessions and yarning circles. Topics ranged across social, technical, ecological, planning, monitoring and cultural themes, with a number of cutting edge meetings around issues ranging from Restoration Standards for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to national planning for restoration.

regenTV

It was a stroke of genius (plus generous support from sponsors) that allowed AABR to pull together a small regenTV team to report from the conference. This was done through interviews with many interesting speakers and a 'daily roundup'. AABR's 23 video offerings from the conference were uploaded to AABR's regenTV youtube channel daily during the conference. The whole playlist remains available to the public.

Go to the [List](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEruDwuDGw6XL7qVjEIPNOLkM6TigMhcY) here or at this address <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEruDwuDGw6XL7qVjEIPNOLkM6TigMhcY>

As well as the daily roundup where the AABR team talk about the presentations, the videos cover a range of happenings including chats with delegates including those from the UN and SER, plus regenerators and restoration practitioners and researchers who talk about their work and what they hope for the future. Others cover Tein McDonald's address to the UN Advisory Board on behalf of Australia's Restoration Decade alliance, and talks with delegates about what motivates them.

Summaries

Summaries of each day of the conference are available on the Latest Updates section of the conference homepage <https://ser2023.org/news/>. The recordings of the presentations will be available to registrants (and to others for a fee) later in the year.

The 'virtual only' section of the conference will be held on 7-8 November. Registration to hear the talks live and participate in the discussions is still open - and registrants to the virtual component will also be able to access the recordings of the in-person component.



Click above to watch the regenTV video with a special message to those who care for country from Miliwanga Wurrben, a Rembarrnga woman, originally from Central Arnhem Land.

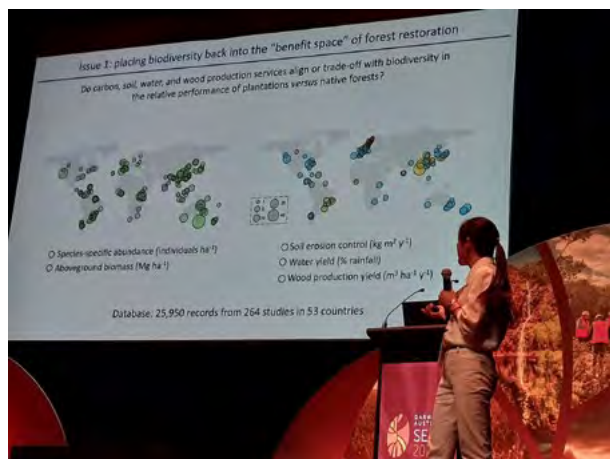
Yarning Circles

A special initiative of this conference – and a highly satisfying one for many delegates - was to have 'yarning circles' that would enable more personal contributions from delegates including indigenous people from many countries.

Message sticks were created by one of the indigenous Noongar delegates, Heidi Mippy. These sticks carried a sentiment of gratitude and hope from Noongar people in south west Australia to the Larrakia people of the Darwin area who were the indigenous hosts of the conference. At the end of the conference the sticks were ceremonially passed to the indigenous hosts of the 2025 conference in Denver, Colorado, to continue the tradition of talking circles.



Above: Noongar representatives Christian Miller-Sabbioni (far left) and Heidi Mippy (far right) presented the conference's message sticks to the conference's North American Indigenous representatives (including Keynote Speaker Marina Best who is a Métis woman from the Red River Settlement in what is now known as Canada) and the convener of the SER2025 conference to be held in Denver Colorado.



Left: AABR members who attended the joint AABR-SERA field trip to the Big Scrub region in association with the 2018 SERA conference in Brisbane will know A Prof. Fanguan Hua who delivered a Keynote address at that Conference. Fanguan delivered a follow up keynote at SER2023, reporting on Peking University's research into the value of incorporating native biodiversity into reforestation programs. (Photos T. McDonald)

AABRFest 2023. What a great time

Sally Alldis

Regenerator and AABR Board Member

Amongst the rolling hills of Topi Topi, Mid-North-Coast NSW, on Worimi Country, a unique winter gathering transpired from the 18th-20th August 2023. The festival's overarching goal was to create a space for organic discussions and community connections, to bridge gaps, encourage learning and promote friendship. As the event unfolded, it became evident that the goal was not only met but exceeded expectations as it brought together a diverse community to connect, exchange ideas and have fun.



Attendees travelled from Sydney, Newcastle, the Mid-North-Coast region, Southern Highlands, and even as far as Queensland to be part of this memorable event. The age bracket was equally as remarkable, spanning from children to teenagers and individuals aged 20-80. This eclectic mix of backgrounds and generations added depth and richness to the festival. Interestingly, most of the crowd were non-members and many of those were students. The value of non-AABR members and students is astounding as it is a testament to the reach AABR has outside of membership. The event created opportunity to introduce newcomers to the AABR community whilst strengthening the bonds of the existing membership.

Throughout the weekend a range of activities, discussions and workshops were held for the community to engage with. As organisers we aimed to have a rich tapestry of planned activities to cater to all. Educational and informative activities



Above: Scott Meier showing us the location of Topi Topi on the NSW Mid North Coast

and discussions included, Paul Gadsby's Eucalyptus ID workshop, ecological burning discussion, AABR accredited discussion, Biodiversity Conservation Trust discussion, a facilitated discussion using World Café Method. The community also engaged in walks & talks over the weekend on Conservation and grazing property management, Tramlines Walk & Talk - to discover the local logging history and experience the area's natural resilience - and an edible plant tour. These planned activities gave space to foster and stimulate an intellectual yet accessible environment for attendees.

Other activities were on offer with a more hands on approach, from learning how to operate a tractor and water pump through to potting up plants, dancing, slack-lining and playing with hoola hoops in the paddock. The organic free-flow style of the event gave space for attendees to bring their own activities and knowledge for people to share with the community.

Friday and Saturday night came alive with laughter and entertainment, featuring a captivating trivia night, a spirited song contest and open mike and live band performances from Lukai, Motel Myall, Futures Revenge and Turtle Custard. Camp fires scattered the festival for people to sit fire-side and engage in thought-provoking conversation.



Eucalyptus Workshop

One of the most popular activities of the AABRFest weekend were the two Eucalypt identification workshops run by Paul Gatsby, a CEM (Conservation and Ecosystem Management) Ryde TAFE teacher who has become passionate about Eucalypt identification and has the unique talent of being able to convey that passion to others. (Paul has come up with a brilliant carrying case for organising specimen collections of buds and fruits - i.e. standard double-sided 'nuts and bolts' carrying cases - one of which was raffled on the day!)



Photo below: Tein McDonald

Other photos: V Bear, Little Gecko



The true essence of AABRFest lay in the connections made. The festival's emphasis on community connection underscored its success as a platform for forging meaningful relationships. The community's enthusiasm and engagement were inspirational, showing the potential for future gathering of this type to continue to aid in knowledge and community building.

A big thank you to the property owners and dedicated organisers, Scott Meier and Mandy Martin. Their commitment and visionary approach were evident in every aspect of the festival, underlining their unwavering commitment to ecological restoration.

If you have any ideas for a future AABRFest event, we are eager to receive your suggestions. We are enthusiastic about the prospect of extending this event to various regions across Australia, spreading AABR knowledge, and connecting with a wider audience. Your input and proposals are highly valued in our mission to make this event even more impactful.



Relaxing in the lounge



The red tent at night



Left: Watch the video and meet some of the bush regeneration contractors who were at AABRFest.

There is a range of videos of AABRFest featuring both people and activities. View these on youtube.

Go to

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=regentv+AABRFest

Bush Regen song contest at AABRFest 2023

The 2023 Topi Topi AABRFest also saw the inauguration of the **AABR Song Contest**.

Punters were invited to send lyrics, recordings - or perform live - their novel bush-regen lyrics to an existing popular song.

Largely because none of us had the time to send out promotion for the contest because there was so much else to do. We actually didn't expect any entries. However on the Saturday night, after the excellent Trivia quiz, the following two wonderful songs were performed. The first (copied below) drew lots of laughs and hearty applause from the audience, while the second created absolute hilarity because the sheer repetition of the verses conveyed precisely the repetitious nature of much of our work.

Needless to say we can declare both songs as winners of the 2023 inaugural AABR song contest. What a great start to what we hope will be a regular component of every future AABRFest!

From Seal Rocks to Darawank

Adaptation of Paul Kelly's "From St Kilda to King's Cross" by Joël Dunn

The title of this bush regen ditty is a reference to where Joël does most of his regen work. (Paul Kelly fans might notice a surplus two lines in the last verse, Joël simply had to squeeze in a rhyme on WHS-friendly posture)

From Seal Rocks to Darawank
on sand dunes, forests, river banks
We take our Felcos in our hands
and kill all the bad weeds we can
And all around the bush comes bouncing back
and the birds are singing,
and the river's running

Have you ever seen Seal Rocks
when the rain is falling soft
The morning glory's going off,
the fishos' bitou thrives and scoffs
but if the rain don't fall too hard
we'll work all day and have a good laugh
'cos if we didn't come, shit would be worse

Fair weather weeds are the nastiest weeds
They love a rainy year, but then, so do we

With arses out and shoulders back
we don't care if you see our cracks
We want to see the bush come back
from the Tops down to the tides
The ticks and snakes and angry bullants -
we take it all in our stride
I'll give you all that cosy desk work
All that coin and all the best perks
for this job - I'm satisfied
I'll give you all that cosy desk work
All that coin and all the best perks
for this job - I'm satisfied



Above: Joël Dunn singing *From Seal Rocks to Darawank*

Peel the Banana Remix

Adapted from the children's song by Charlie De Jager and performed by Charlie and the team from Waratah Ecoworks.

Pick the Ehrharta
Pick Pick the Ehrharta

Pick the Ehrharta
Pick Pick the Ehrharta

Pull the fishbone
Pull Pull the fishbone

Raft the fishbone
Raft Raft the fishbone

Smut the Trad
Smut Smut the Trad

Smut the Trad
Smut Smut the Trad

Crown the Asparagus
Crown Crown the Asparagus

Bag the Asparagus
Bag Bag the Asparagus

Pile the Lantana
Pile Pile the Lantana

Burn the Lantana
Burn Burn the Lantana

Cut the Privet
Cut Cut the Privet

Paint the Privet
Paint Paint the Privet

Scrape the Ochna
Scrape Scrape the Ochna

Paint the Ochna
Paint Paint the Ochna

Skirt the Morning Glory
Skirt Skirt the Morning Glory

Skirt the Morning Glory
Skirt Skirt the Morning Glory

Metho your gloves
Metho Metho your gloves

Ask for Funding
Ask Ask for Funding

Deseed the Bidens
Deseed Deseed the Bidens

Metho your gloves
Metho Metho your gloves

Beg for Funding
Beg Beg for Funding

Bag the Bidens
Bag Bag the Bidens

Dig tubestock holes
Dig Dig tubestock holes

Bush Regeneration
Bush Bush Regeneration!

Scoop the Salvinia
Scoop Scoop the Salvinia

Dig tubestock holes
Dig Dig tubestock holes

Bush Regeneration
Bush Bush Regeneration!

Solarise the Salvinia
Solarise Solorize the Salvinia

Plant the Rhodamnia
Plant Plant the Rhodamnia



Drill the Camphor
Drill Drill the Camphor

Plant the Rhodamnia
Plant Plant the Rhodamnia

Hear Charlie and The Regenerators perform their song in this timelapse video from AABR Fest 2023.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENk1hB9fmPM>

Fill the Camphor
Fill Fill the Camphor

Plant the Toona
Plant Plant the Toona

Nuke the Madeira
Nuke Nuke the Madeira

Plant the Toona
Plant Plant the Toona

Testing knowledge at the AABRFest Trivia Night

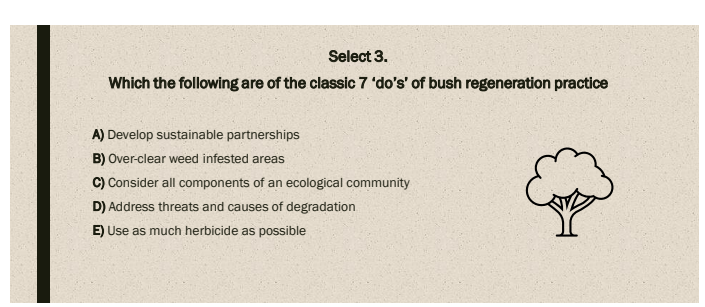
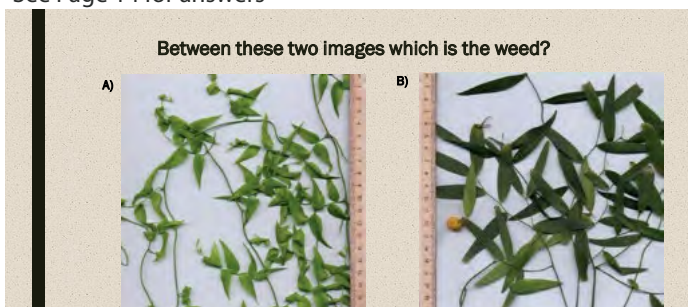
Taking part in the Trivia night was a great way to learn more about bush regeneration.

The Trivia night, in its warm, wine-bar-like setting, was thoroughly enjoyed by all, whether you'd been in the regen community/industry for decades or weeks. The questions were cleverly written by Peta Lilley - (and hilariously compared by President Peter Dixon) to not only test our knowledge of botany and regen but to subtly inform us about the history and current organisation of AABR. (Each table had at least one long-term member to whom the younger ones eagerly plied for the answers).



Check your knowledge with some trivia questions.

See Page 14 for answers



AABR supports 'Restoration Decade' Statement from the SER 2023 Conference 'Towards a National Restoration Plan'

The Restoration Decade Alliance (RDA) is a network of non-profit environmental restoration groups in Australia who have joined forces to support the goals of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

AABR is one of 21 RDA member organisations that endorsed RDA's Statement from the SER World Conference on Ecological Restoration calling for a National Restoration Plan for Australia.

Dr Kristin den Exter, Partnerships Manager, National Landcare Network and coordinator of RDA's 'Towards a National Restoration Plan' workshop series explained that such a plan is needed to guide and accelerate action to reverse environmental degradation, curb biodiversity loss and mitigate the impacts of climate change across Australia.

'People in communities across Australia have a high willingness to take action on the ground' says Dr den Exter. 'What these communities need is a supportive framework, greater investment and attractive incentives to scale up their efforts. Alongside this, we need to do better at communicating the benefits of reviving culture and restoring biodiversity, celebrating the wins so that people are motivated by a message of hope. We have a chance to secure a sustained stewardship of Australian ecosystems and leave a legacy that lasts beyond this UN Decade.'

The RDA appreciates that the federal government has already commenced the process of revising Australia's Strategy for Nature - Australia's national biodiversity strategy and action plan. This is in response to Australia signing up to COP 15's Global Biodiversity Framework which contains 23 important targets related to reducing degradation and effecting restoration. Of pivotal importance is the Framework's Target 2 - which is to 'have 30% of degraded lands and waters under effective restoration by 2030'. However RDA's Statement from the Conference calls for a specific national restoration plan either additional to, or a component of, the Biodiversity Action Plan. This is necessary to ensure that the precious government and community resources



Dr Simon Ferrier, CSIRO ecologist speaking during the SER 10th World Restoration Conference, in Darwin in later September 2023 about the need for a National Restoration Plan for Australia. (Photo RDA.)

available to restoration are directed towards the most important priorities.

A key recommendation of the plan is that the advisory panel tasked with identifying restoration targets and priorities must include independent ecosystem restoration experts with long experience in the restoration sector. This is necessary to optimise potential for successful outcomes that align with Australia's national and global environmental and climate commitments.

The **full conference Statement** can be viewed and downloaded at the following link <https://restorationdecadealliance.org/statement-from-ser2023/>.

A Discussion Paper will be released in the near future.

Five new EMR project summaries published online

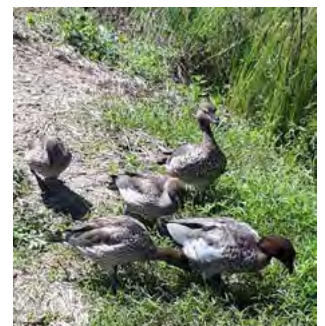
There has been an increase in new restoration project summaries published on the open access *Project Summaries website* of the *Ecological Management & Restoration Journal* (EMR). This is due to the recent expansion of the editorial team from one editor to four (including 2 AABR members, Sue Gould and Tein McDonald). This has seen the total number of summaries since the site's inception reach 200, many of which (particularly the most recent of these five) will be of great interest to AABR members. As three of these five have been contributed by AABR members (see author list below), these are also good examples of the sort of rapid publication notes EMR can offer bush regeneration practitioners.

The five summaries (most recent at the top) are:

- Eradicating weeds along the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA coastline – Jon Marsden-Smedley
- Shorebird habitat restoration in the Hunter Wetlands National Park - Tom Clarke
- Rewilding lake edges at Sherwood Arboretum, Queensland – Carole Bristow
- Holistic regenerative management on a grazing farm, Allendale, Boorowa – David Marsh

- Lake Bolac Eel Festival and Environmental Forum – Tein McDonald

Members will also be interested to know that AABR has an Affiliate relationship with the Ecological Society of Australia (ESA). This allows discount *Affiliate* memberships of ESA to be purchased by any AABR member. Membership includes electronic access to both ESA's journals: *EMR* and *Austral Ecology*, so it is well worth joining to gain access to some of the best science and practice articles coming out of our agencies and universities. For Affiliate membership go to the ESA website <https://www.ecolsoc.org.au/get-involved/become-a-member/>



Wood Ducks foraging along the regenerating lake edges – showing results of the regeneration work done by two members of the Friends of Sherwood Arboretum bushcare group, a Habitat Brisbane bushcare group which is supported by Brisbane City Council. (Photo Gordon King)

Post Fire Scotch Broom Control Works in Barrington Tops National Park

**Andrew Scott,
Bushcare Officer, North Sydney Council**

Readers may recall North Sydney Council's Bushland and Tree Team participated in the National Parks & Wildlife Service's (NPWS) Scotch Broom Control Works in early November 2020, as part of North Sydney Council's commitment to the Black Summer Fires bushfire recovery effort, a result of AABR's First Aid for Burnt Bushland initiative (AABR [Newsletter, No146](#)).

One of the aims of this trip was to investigate a prospective Bushcare volunteer trip. This came to fruition in late February 2023, when David Bell and David Yip joined the Bushland Team and NPWS for a Scotch Broom Control project at Polblue Campground. Although not a post burn site, Polblue is the location of a montane wetland, an endangered ecological community, with two-wheel drive access. Works at this location fit in with the NPWS strategy of containment for Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Scotch Broom has become a major weed in the Barrington Tops since it was first introduced as a garden plant from Europe in the 1840s. It infests approximately 10,000 hectares of the sub-alpine plateau.

Boyd Carney, NPWS Bush Regeneration and Volunteer Officer, coordinated the 4-day event from 23 to 26 February 2023 which was supported by 35 volunteers from Newcastle, the Upper Hunter, Sydney, Gloucester, and Mid North Coast.

Each day, Boyd provided an in-depth induction and safety briefing for all new volunteers. It was great to learn about Scotch Broom and strategies for its control. The plan of works focused on follow up weeding for brown stem (Stage 2) plants around the circumference of the wetland, about 5-10 m above the 3km loop track to the edge of the swamp. (i.e. Brown stem plants are 3-4 yr old stems and don't regrow when cut). We purposefully left green stem plants, mostly up to knee height, as they do regrow when cut and will require the use of herbicide. These plants will be controlled when they have developed to Stage 2. The hard work was made easier with the trial use of battery pack secateurs and loppers – the secateurs proved to be a crowd favourite! Qualified staff and volunteers were armed with brush cutters and pole saws that made short work of the broom. We noticed it was much easier to cut single stem plants as compared with multi stemmed ones. Boyd said, as a rule, broom under canopy will grow straight as they are protected. In open areas they coppice in response to heavier snow fall – a theory and a generalisation as there are always plants that break that rule. The



Polblue Swamp, Barrington Tops National Park Photo A.Scott, Feb 2023

weather was highly changeable. We found ourselves stripping down and layering up several times a day, but overall, it was a suitable temperature for labouring. It was a good feeling at the end of each workday to stand back and see the understory of the Ghost Gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) and Black Sallies (*Eucalyptus stellulata*) free of the green tsunami (the broom). Boyd said, at the conclusion of works, the volunteers had contributed 504 hours to clear approximately eight hectares of Scotch Broom at Polblue, and that's no mean feat.

On Friday night, we were treated to a spotlight walk with our guide John Simpson, a keen volunteer and an ecologist for Hunter Water who helps monitor Greater Glider and we were thrilled to see five individuals. The Greater Glider is a threatened species that requires old growth tree hollows for habitat, and along with other wildlife has been impacted by the bushfires. The gliders were easy to spot because their long chocolate tails draped over the branches in which they sat. The Bushland Team would like to thank Boyd for running a fantastic event and to NPWS for allowing our team to stay at quaint Little Murray Hut - a luxury.

Dates for future volunteer events in November 2023 and February 2024, at Barrington Tops NP, Polblue and Little Murray have been posted on the NPWS Website at <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/scotch-broom-control-barrington-tops> and a promotional video for the program will be aired on NPWS social media platforms in the near future.

For further information contact:

Boyd.Carney@environment.nsw.gov.au



Barrington Tops NP - Scotch Broom Control Volunteers and Staff at Polblue Swamp, February 2023.



Boyd Carney Bush Regeneration and Volunteer Coordinator for the Scotch Broom Control Program in Barrington Tops National Park at Polblue Swamp. Photo. Andrew Scott, February 2023

Blue hands - blue signatures – restoring nature as an art practice

Tein McDonald



Above: Signatures to a manifesto of 'regen as art' - created by bush regenerators at Topi Topi AABRfest – 19th August 2023.

The commitment to **blue signatures** started for me in November 2019 after thinking about it for many years and discussing it with other restoration practitioners also interested in art and art philosophy. It is certainly not intuitive that restoration practice could also be considered art, given that it is so often laborious and even mundane (not to mention eminently useful). And restoration often involves killing biota and other often uncomfortable interventions. But art is often uncomfortable, as the name implies - it is work, not play. Similarly, it is not intuitive that restoration could also be considered art when we aim for outcomes indistinguishable from a healthy natural ecosystem and our actions need to be indistinguishable from best practice restoration. But when you think it through you realise that the landscape alone is not the art work, nor are our restoration actions alone. Rather it is the human, cultural activity working in relationship with the landscape – a deeply radical act – that makes our practice eligible as art action. Ideally, when the site transformations are mature there will be little evidence of the intervention or the artwork. It is a work of nature and culture – an instance of humans once again in a creative relationship with the rest of nature.

Some distinction from straightforward restoration practice is necessary. However, some level of performance or documentation that neither interferes with the work nor distracts from the statement. Installing our signatures on the site, ephemeral though they may be, is the least we can do and perhaps the most for now – although the sky is the limit for environmental art. For this particular piece titled 'Blue signatures' I focus on creating simple signatures at each work site, signatures comprising the participant's hands pointing to blue-painted objects representing the degradation drivers we are working to transform.

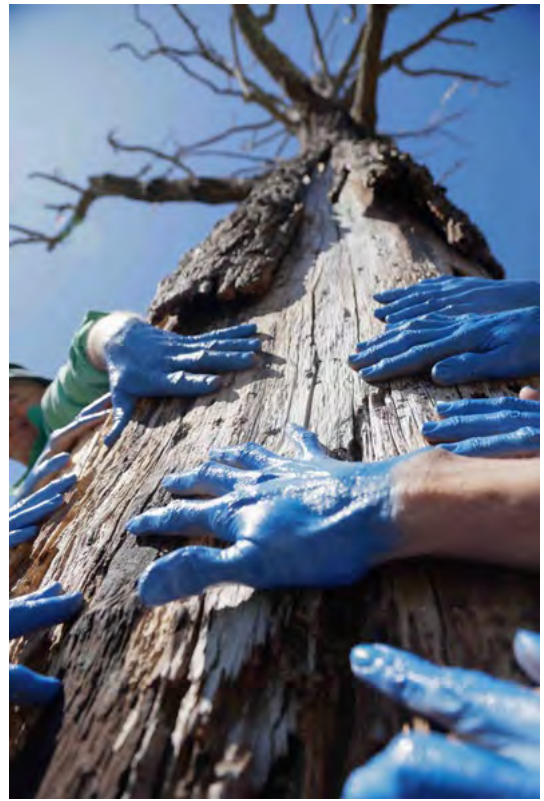
Why is this art – or even to be taken seriously?

- because art frames must be leaky and have unexpected dimensions or they are simply delusions
- because art very often conveys aspects of nature in a way that helps others to see it too
- because we wish to move as many others as possible to act restoratively
- because we wish the work to be bigger than individuals or individual sites
- because the work IS bigger than individuals or individual sites

Invitation to other regenerators

In an exhibition of my last couple of decades of paintings and photos in Cooma's Raglan Gallery (5 December 2023 to 1 February 2024) I will include documentation of the 'signatures' that I and my co-workers performed at restoration sites – including those included in the collage at the top of this article. I welcome other restoration practitioners to join in the project and create their own blue signatures at their own sites. I can include your photos of these in the exhibition should you wish. But please email me at teinm@ozemail.com.au so I can send you the instructions!

Right: Dead tree at Topi Topi around which the Blue Hands signature was installed. (Photo V. Bear.) See also a video of the blue signatures activity that took place at AABRfest shot by Virginia Bear https://youtu.be/ez85Qxx_BrY Topi Topi AABRfest – 19th August 2023.



Below: Some blue signatures from restoration art actions. Clockwise (from top left):

- (i) Scottsdale High Country (3 Nov 2020),
- (ii and iii) Scottsdale Rutidosis Ridge (2 April 2021),
- (iv) Top Hut TSR (1 April 2021),
- (v) Korinderie Ridge (4 Aug 2023),
- (vi) Topi Topi NSW -19 August 2023.

My 'blue signature' art project uses photos to document 'signatures' performed at restoration sites at which I have worked in the last 3-20 years. They testify that the actions undertaken at the sites are intentional art activities rather than solely earth repair activities.



Walter Froggatt and 1930s restoration of indigenous vegetation, Balls Head, Sydney

Peter Ardill. Accredited practitioner AABR.

Balls Head reserve, North Sydney, was the site of an early settler natural area restoration project. An enlightened conservation ethic inspired participants.

Following European invasion in 1788 and displacement of Aboriginal Traditional Owners and Custodians, resource exploitation and urbanisation resulted in extensive clearing of Sydney's indigenous vegetation communities. *Toona ciliata* red cedar was soon extinct along the Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury-Nepean River). Director of the Royal Botanic Garden, Joseph Maiden, in 1921 lamented the destruction of Sydney's once abundant wildflowers, the 'Waratah, the Rock Lily, Christmas Bush, and the Giant Lily of GyMEA'. Much of Sydney Harbour's foreshore vegetation was destroyed.

Alienation of the harbour's remaining public spaces was another topical conservation issue. A campaign commenced in approximately 1920 to have Sydney Harbour headland, Balls Head, declared a reserve. Part of the Cammeraygal peoples' traditional lands and an important repository of their cultural heritage, the headland exhibits Hawkesbury Sandstone geology, with shallow soils and steep rocky outcrops. Settler firewood collection, industrialisation, frequent fires and vandalism had severely degraded the previously abundant indigenous vegetation.

North Sydney Council and a coalition of nature conservationists, including Annie Forsyth Wyatt, founder of the National Trust (NSW), successfully pressured the state government to conserve the headland. On 13 April 1926, NSW Premier, Jack Lang, declared Balls Head a reserve, to be managed by the Council.

Distinguished Australian entomologist and botanist, Walter Froggatt, was also distressed by the destruction of Sydney's indigenous vegetation. A founder of the Naturalists Society of New South Wales and many other conservation organisations,

he regularly contributed informative articles on Australia's plants, animals and their conservation to Sydney newspapers. Froggatt is now best remembered for his opposition to the introduction of *Bufo marinus* cane toad to Australia in the 1930s.

Froggatt pursued recovery of Balls Head's indigenous vegetation, and in approximately 1929 he commenced liaising with North Sydney Council and conservation groups. 'A combined committee has been formed to carry out the regeneration of the flora, and the replanting of more native trees.'

An intention to restore and conserve the headland's indigenous vegetation was evident. Froggatt publicly enunciated a specific revegetation objective: to establish at Balls Head 'home for the trees, flowers and birds of old-time Sydney Harbour'. In approximately July 1931, conservationists and council officers surveyed and catalogued the remnant indigenous trees and shrubs.

An initial Arbor Day tree planting event was conducted on 25 July 1931, with the 'object of restoring the head to the condition in which it was before many of the trees were destroyed.'

Politicians, councillors, members of the Naturalists Society, Linnean Society, Town Planning Association of NSW, Australian Forest League, residents and local school children participated.

Conservationist and president of the Australian Forest League (NSW), David Stead, addressed the event, and commented on the natural regeneration of the indigenous vegetation that was occurring. 'The day had been when the headland was covered with magnificent timber, which had grown and flourished on barren sandstone. Some of the trees were undergoing natural regeneration.'

Tree and shrub planting events continued in succeeding years. For example, in August 1932 a large number of 'Blackbutt', most likely *Eucalyptus pilularis*, were planted by Naturalists Society members and North Sydney councillors. The newspaper report noted that 'the species were among the original flora of the area.'



Steam ship rounding Balls Head, Sydney 1930s, showing the cleared and rocky landscape. Source: National Library Australia

Right: An aerial photo of Balls Head reserve in ~2021, shows the bushland covering the site
Source: supplied by North Sydney Council

By 1933 'extensive planting of native trees and shrubs allied to those which originally covered the area' had been undertaken.

However, trees that were not indigenous to Balls Head were also planted in the reserve. Froggatt commented in 1934 that 'as well as bringing back the old flora formerly found on Balls Head...The place was becoming a botanical garden, in which shortly would be found specimens of all the Australian flora'.

Why were non-local Australian tree species planted? Natural regeneration and planting of locally indigenous species on a degraded site promotes recovery of evolved ecological functioning. There is always a risk that species planted outside their natural range will behave as environmental weeds.

The planting of non-local indigenous species is likely to have been inspired by a North Sydney Council plan to 'beautify' the reserve. Recreation and visitor facilities were enthusiastically developed throughout the 1930s.

Walter Froggatt appears to have supported the council beautification plan. Ecology was a young science in the 1930s, and ecosystems and their functioning were not well understood. Also, there is a likelihood that inappropriately planted indigenous plant species in Australia were not yet exhibiting weed behaviour, or their weed behaviour had not been encountered or recognised. For example, *Acacia baileyana* Cootamundra wattle, endemic to the Cootamundra-Temora region, NSW, had been extensively cultivated throughout south-eastern Australia by 1900. Now declared noxious in many Australian localities, Froggatt had only praise for its flowers in 1929.

Unsurprisingly then, well-intentioned conservation groups, such as David Stead's Australian Forest League, did encourage the indiscriminate, ecologically inappropriate planting of Australian species. They did not actively promote planting of local indigenous species on a site, although fortunately, planting of overseas species was discouraged.

AABR NSW

One of the discussion groups held at AABRFest 2023 was in relation to the formation of a NSW Branch of AABR. The majority of AABR members are in NSW and anecdotally I hear that many NSW members don't realise that AABR is now a national organisation and that there is no representative body in NSW.

We followed up from that discussion with an on-line meeting in early October to tease out with interested parties whether there was an appetite for forming a branch. The answer was yes, there is an interest. There was an agreement to continue to meet over the next half year or so to work out what an AABR Branch could do, who might be interested in going on the committee and how it might engage with members.

I'd like to thank Rob Scott, Chair of AABR Victoria for coming to the on line meeting to share Victoria's experience in setting up an AABR Branch.

Peter Dixon, President

president@aabr.org.au or call 0478 741 111.



Walter Froggatt died in March 1937. A memorial to his work, erected in July 1937, may be seen in Balls Head reserve. Since 2003, the Invasive Species Council of Australia has presented its annual Froggatt Awards, to celebrate distinguished contemporary campaigners against destructive, introduced plant and animal species.

The heavy resource demands of World War II (1939-1945) appear to have finished off the formal revegetation program in the reserve. Temporarily, anyway.

Reflecting the uniqueness of Walter Froggatt's Balls Head restoration vision, David Stead remarked during the initial 1931 tree planting event that 'he hoped the day would come when Balls Head would be a natural monument to those who had worked for its restoration to its early glory'. That wish has been fulfilled.

Approximately 50 years after the first vegetation recovery project commenced at Balls Head, restoration work resumed in the reserve. From 1980, professional regeneration teams from Annie Wyatt's National Trust, undertook bushland regeneration work in selected North Sydney Council reserves, including Balls Head reserve. Volunteer bushcare supported by council, recommenced in approximately 1990. Despite introduced species exhibiting extensive weed behaviour, locally indigenous vegetation communities have made a strong recovery at Balls Head.

The revegetation campaign undertaken at Balls Head reserve by Walter Froggatt and North Sydney Council did feature tree planting that was, by contemporary standards, ecologically inappropriate. Horticultural, beautification and landscaping themes influenced the work. However, the 1930s work does illustrate that interest in the restoration and conservation of degraded natural ecosystems has permeated the Australian settler environmental ethic for many decades. As Walter Froggatt, David Stead and Annie Wyatt would have hoped, restoration and conservation of Australia's natural heritage continues today.

Reference:

Ardill P. J. (2023) "*Historical settler understandings of Australian indigenous vegetation management: Walter Wilson Froggatt and 1930s restoration of locally indigenous vegetation, Balls Head, Sydney*" Repair Press Sydney.

See <https://ecologicalrestorationhistory.org/articles/>

More about David Stead and Walter Froggatt can be found at <https://ecologicalrestorationhistory.org/ecological-restoration/>

Refer to AABR Newsletter, No 156, p13 for details of the recent Froggatt awards.

Trivia Answers

Page 7:

Question on left



Weed: *Asparagus asparagoides*



Native: *Eustephus latifolius*

Question on right:

Develop sustainable partnerships, consider all components of an ecological community, address threats and causes of degradation

Podcast Listening

Big conservation in small spaces

On ABC - Ockham's Razor

An interesting podcast from Professor Wintle, Biodiversity Institute, University of Melbourne, talking about the high conservation values of small patches of native vegetation.

On the ABC listen app

<https://abclisten.page.link/sBydA8SsX9K6KNFRA>

or ABC web page

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/ockhamsrazor>

Vale: Jenifer Lewis

Jenifer Lewis who died in September 2023, was well known as a bush regenerator in the Hornsby area in northern Sydney.

Being inspired by reports of the work of the Bradley sisters and later John Stockard's work at Wingham Brush, she went to a demonstration of the no disturbance Bradley method where a spoon was used to gently tease the root of a privet out so carefully that there was minimum disturbance. She realised that as well as being slow it was impractical, as did John Stockard!

On moving to a bush block in Sydney in 1953 she removed weeds from the garden but its diversity dwindled because of its small area and the indifference of neighbours. In 1983 a move to Beecroft in northern Sydney found her backing onto Beecroft Reserve, and she worked on the degraded garden and into the reserve following regeneration principles. She became an AABR member in 1992.

Later she assisted John Noble in his work on Observatory Park, a small, degraded island with a few tall blue gum trees, at the junction of Pennant Hills Road and Beecroft Road. She made a list of over 20 native species. Several years of working in the reserve, found the list growing to well over 120 native species. The result was written up with the assistance of Robin Buchanan and published in *Cunninghamia*.

It can be found on the internet at <https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/our-science/publications/cunninghamia#volume-7-2001>, and can be downloaded *Regeneration of remnant Blue Gum High Forest vegetation following the cessation of mowing*.(PDF)(80.13 KB)

From 1995 Jenny established the Hornsby Herbarium Group, a team of Australian Plants Society North Shore Group members who were not only bush regenerators but then undertook the collection of plants across Hornsby Shire on private land, council land, crown land and national parks.

The group carried out surveys of plant species along fire trails, walking tracks and selected locations in Hornsby Shire. Because of these surveys, extensive knowledge of the existence and location of rare plants in the shire was obtained. Unusual plants were sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens for confirmation of identity. Many rare plants were found and organisations informed, including the Royal Botanic Gardens herbarium and NSW Parks & Wildlife Service. The pressed specimens of plants for the Hornsby Herbarium

Seeking Sponsors for the AABR Forum

AABR is looking for sponsors for our Forum.

- Be part of a collaboration of restoration leaders securing the long-term conservation of urban remnants.
- Align your brand with best practice and current research on bush regeneration practice.
- Be recognised for your leadership within the restoration industry.
- Connect with individuals and organisations who deliver change within their industry-community sector.
- Access and engage with up to 200 people from the bush regeneration, conservation, government, land management agencies and consultancy sectors
- Increase your brand visibility through:
 - pre-event promotion
 - regenTV videos recorded at the forum
 - a Forum edition of AABR's newsletter.

Download the sponsorship flier

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FfLcVeiP-6bEEg7WkeilwR4VIWv-mH8d/view?usp=drive_link.

Call Suzanne 0407 002 921



Hornsby Online Herbarium

The Hornsby Online Herbarium has about 950 native plants found in Hornsby Shire, and about 300 introduced plants. The plants in the herbarium over a broad area not confined to Hornsby Shire It can be accessed at:

<https://hornsbyherbarium.imagelibrary.me/>

were mounted in large folders and housed at Hornsby Library. In 2003, collaboration between the Hornsby Herbarium Group and Hornsby Shire Library and Information Service led to the establishment of the Hornsby Online Herbarium of scans and photographs of plants. This is used by a wide variety of people.

She received a Lifetime Membership of the Australian Native Plants Society in 2005 for her work in establishing the Hornsby Herbarium. In recognition of her contribution to bush regeneration, she was made an AABR Pioneer Regenerator in 2017.

Books

THE POWER OF TREES

How ancient forests can save us if we let them

Author: Peter Wohlleben (Translated by Jane Billingham)

Published: by Black Inc, April 2023, 288 pages, RRP \$34.99

Paperback ISBN: 9781760643621

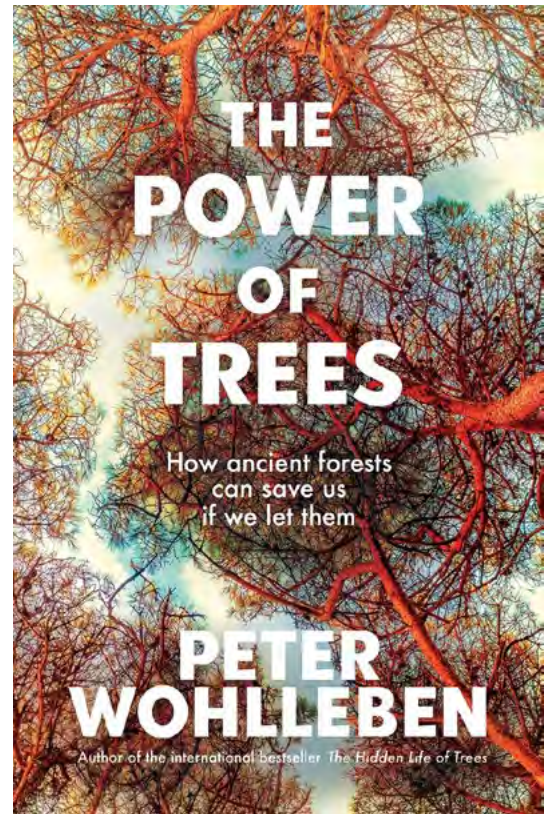
The author of this book, Peter Wohlleben, is a German forester, who has moved away from the 'traditional' methods of mainstream industrial forestry that Germany is famed for the world over. Peter has adopted a deeper ecological view of forest management, by looking to how forests actually work and, in this process, developed deeper insights into forest ecosystems that he shares with us. Although a European based text, I think that he gives deeper understanding to how forests work that can be beneficial to us as Bush Regenerators.

Peter asks us to consider the intelligence of trees and their ability to respond and adapt to environmental changes. A big part of his discussion revolves around climate change and tree's ability to communicate with each and how to respond to seasonal change and variation and more importantly through the transmission of experience (epigenetics) to subsequent generations. He gives an example of a pine forest where some trees were watered and some allowed to dry out. Seeds were collected from both watered and unwatered trees. The seedlings of the trees that had experience drought survived better when drought conditions occurred. In my professional experience, species that we work with that are affected by Myrtle Rust, if they are fortunate enough to flower and seed, can often produce seedlings that appear to be more resistant to Myrtle Rust than their parent.

In Germany and Australia, part of our current discussion for surviving climate change and how we best manage natural areas is that we need to plant species from closer to the equator than our current location, to account for temperature rises. This for my mind has always been an ill thought-out idea, and Peter gives a great example - the European Beech - *Fagus sylvatica*. They can produce on average almost 2,000,000 seeds over their lifetime, all of which have different characteristics statistically speaking to their parents. Only one seedling needs to grow to maturity to replace its mother and that one is, logically enough, the one most suited to the environment where it is growing. These locally adapted trees are always going to be the best, which certainly speaks to us and our work in Assisted Natural Regeneration.

I haven't even touched on his discussion on the importance of managing forests to achieve old growth ecological development, that in turn can mitigate and provide a solution to global warming, that in itself is worth a read. Definitely a thought provoking text for any bush regenerator and natural areas manager, covering the complexity of the forest ecosystems that we are fortunate enough to work in.

Reviewed by Spencer Shaw



South Coast ferns. A complete guide to the ferns and fern allies of the NSW South Coast.

Kevin Mills

Envirobook, Sussex Inlet. 193 pages. \$45.00

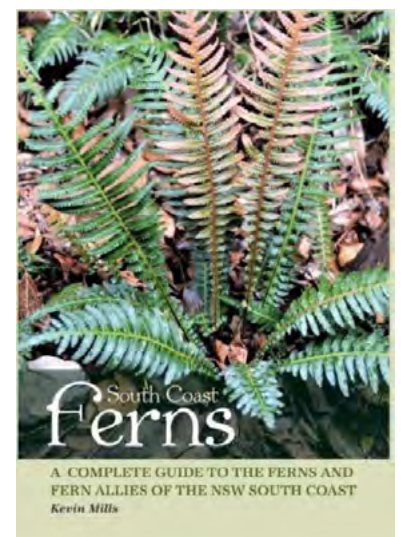
Kevin Mills has been working for several years on this book which covers the ferns of the NSW south coast. The book includes ferns and fern allies recorded for the region between Port Hacking in the north and Batemans Bay in the south. The many photographs along with descriptions and distribution maps covering all species allows for easy identification.

Emma Rooksby, coordinator of [Growing Illawarra Natives](#) says

'The book is excellent. It covers 136 fern species including native/indigenous ferns and also several species that have naturalised in the area. It's compact and easy to use, you can just slip it in your bag or pack when going on a walk. It includes a handy guide to fern terminology and an accessible glossary – hurrah!

And the photographs are high quality and for most species show the plant 'in the round' plus a shot of the sori, which are important for identifying ferns to genus or even species level!

The book can be obtained by contacting the publisher Envirobook at sales@envirobook.com.au, and in all good bookshops.



What's happening

22 March 2024

AABR NATIONAL FORUM

The Rs of Restoration: Restoring biodiversity through resilience, regeneration, reintroduction and reconnecting to country.

With continued biodiversity decline and fragmentation of natural places across the country, there is an increasing need for restorationists, land managers, planners and on-ground practitioners to understand and recognise the importance of working with nature's resilience and restoration techniques consistent with the National Standards for Ecological Restoration.

Friday March 22, 2024 :
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Fitzroy Town Hall, 201
Napier St, Fitzroy,
Victoria 3065

Go to the **AABR
Events webpage**
for information and
updates.

[https://www.aabr.org.au/
events/](https://www.aabr.org.au/events/)



early 2024

JOINT SYMPOSIUM

RYDE TAFE and AABR

Keep an eye out for further
information.

25 - 28 August 2024

Australasian Weeds Conference

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in
Queensland.

The proceedings of the 2023 conference are available at
<https://caws.org.nz/22nd-australasian-weeds-conference/>



Australian Association
of Bush Regenerators
working with natural processes

The National Board President

Peter Dixon president@aabr.org.au

Secretary

Jane Gye secretary@aabr.org.au

Treasurer

Matthew Pearson
treasurer@aabr.org.au

Board members

Tein McDonald, Scott Meier, Agata Mitchell, Rob Scott, Mark Cachia, Sally Alldis, Chloe Mason, Joab Wilson and Andrew Scott.

Administration and Public Officer

Suzanne Pritchard admin@aabr.org.au

Membership Officer

Louise Brodie membership@aabr.org.au

Website advertising

Mitra Gusheh advertise@aabr.org.au

Victorian Branch

Enquiries please contact Rob at
rob.scott@naturelinks.com.au or
phone 0412 865 027

Australian Association of Bush Regenerators

The Australian Association of Bush Regenerators Inc (AABR) was incorporated in NSW in 1986, and has several hundred members from all over Australia. AABR is pronounced 'arbor'.

Our aim is to promote the study and practice of ecological restoration, and encourage effective management of natural areas.

All interested people and organisations are welcome to join. AABR members include bush regeneration professionals, volunteers, natural area managers, landowners, policy makers, contractors, consultants, nursery people, local, state and commonwealth government officers—and lots of people who just love the bush and want to see it conserved.

AABR also offers accreditation for experienced practitioners.

AABR News is usually published in January, April, July, and November.

AABR C/O Total Environment Centre
P.O. Box K61 Haymarket NSW 1240
0407 002 921

www.aabr.org.au
enquiries@aabr.org.au

ABN: 89 059 120 802 ARBN: 059 120 802

Membership fees

Individuals \$35 (unwaged \$20)

Organisations (*does not confer membership to individuals in the organisation*)

- business (< 5 staff) \$120
- business (5-20 staff) \$300
- business (> 20 staff) \$480

Government/Agency \$480

Not for profit \$30

Benefits of Membership:

- discount admission to all AABR events
- four newsletters per year
- increased job opportunities
- discount subscription to the journal Ecological Management & Restoration
- opportunities to network with others involved in natural area restoration
- helping AABR to be a strong and effective force to promote natural area restoration, and support the industry.

Newsletter contributions and comments are welcome

Contact Louise Brodie newsletter@aabr.org.au 0407 068 688

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of AABR