

Restoring the landscape together

By JEN MITCHELL
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Caring for the environment is the aim of Landcare groups but the 20 people who gathered at the Gunnedah Aero Club last Friday learnt that it is the combined efforts of all that makes the difference.

Gunnible and Tamworth Regional Landcare groups with NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust held a workshop for recovering biodiversity in the community.

Chair of Tamworth Regional Landcare Association Wayne Chaffey said the day was aimed at all people, regardless of their land capacity.

People from Dungowan, Bendemeer, Manilla, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Willow Tree, Emerald Hill and Bogabri with varying levels of land space attended.

"It is all about trying to raise awareness and the importance of our natural ecosystems and our incredibly unique flora and fauna," he said.

He stated the landscape has changed a lot since colonisation, making it hard to imagine what it was like before.

"Anything we can do to bring just a few species back that will encourage a whole lot of other local natives is worthwhile," he said.

Ecosystem Thinking ecologist Liz Blair agreed that there is more to recovering the landscape than just the aesthetics of it all.

"We have lost a lot of animals from our landscape like small mammals and birds because some of the shrubs, fallen logs and old timber have been taken out," she said.

She explained that leaving some of those items in the landscape can help the ecosystem function better - and maybe even provide benefits for the humble farmer.

A research project from the University of New England found a cotton farm had 13 species of bats.

"Each bat will eat half its body weight in insects every night," Liz said. "They are pest control in a cotton crop and you do not have to pay for it ... as long as you give them somewhere to live."

"If we provide more habitat for these animals, they provide all these services for free."

Liz believes environmental damage is not the fault of just one person, but there is now opportunity to work together to improve the land.

"I think that we need to get back to our roots and appreciate that we are a part of nature," she said.


"It should not be about battles of who is right and wrong, legislations and environmental politics."

"We all need to live in this environment and we all benefit from an enhanced natural environment."

Chair of Gunnible Landcare Tony Bernays said one the groups focus is on a river restoration project in conjunction with Ozfish.



Chair of Tamworth Regional Landcare Association Wayne Chaffey, Liverpool Plains and Gunnedah Landcare coordinator Nicky Chirlian, Kathy See-Kee, Ecosystem Thinking ecologist Liz Blair, NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's Rachel Payne and Gunnible Landcare chair Tony Bernays.

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ECOLOGIST LIZ BLAIR

He said the floods of 2022 were devastating for river bank erosion and now the group is aiming to create a system for restoration that works for many.

"It is that bad that if the erosion continues, the river will change course," he said.

To better understand what people's priorities are for the group, a survey is circulating.

It is a mere six questions but can help them achieve goals of what affects people in the area.

At the workshop, participants saw examples of what Tony has done through plantings on his own land.

People are reminded their local Landcare group can assist with environmental questions.

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Small environment, big difference

Kathy See-Kee's land is an example of what can be done in a small space.

The land that she transformed was a privately owned thoroughfare.

"I tried to think of it as a blank canvas," she said.

She planted tall trees for a micro environment and watched as the Willie Wagtails, Blue Wrens,

Honeyeaters, Blue-tongued Lizards and other reptiles found home in the small environment she created.

"Sometimes it can feel too hard but start small," Kathy said.

What she created provides a significant role as a new habitat for animals and a link between environments.