

# SAVE BLUE GUM HIGH FOREST – RESTORE AND EDUCATE!

## overview of the project

The Friends of Lane Cove and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) carried out this project to conserve the natural vegetation in a Sydney reserve, giving priority to an important forest remnant. The Sydney Blue Gum High Forest is listed as an endangered ecological community under the *Threatened Species Act (1995)*. Sydney Blue Gum High Forest has been reduced by human activities to one per cent of its original area. Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve covers 10 hectares in the northern Sydney metropolitan area. With the adjoining Brown's Forest, it protects a significant remnant of Sydney Blue Gum High Forest, providing habitat for native animals and a reported 77 bird species. In addition, it is widely used by residents for walking and bird watching. With the help of a specialist bush regeneration company and local volunteers, the group carried out weed management including an ecological burn, to allow native plants to regenerate naturally. Good short term results have been achieved and will be strengthened by continued follow-up work.

## how the project was carried out

Volunteers played an important role in the regeneration of the reserve, participating in community bush regeneration days to plant native seedlings, close off unauthorised tracks and cut back any trees encroaching on the road or in danger of falling.



Volunteers working to remove fishbone fern

An important feature of the weed management program was a controlled burn conducted by NPWS. With effective preparation to gather target weeds into piles, small fires were used to aid in weed reduction and to help blue gums regenerate. The controlled burns heat the native seed stored in the soil and can trigger germination as well as eliminating the non-fire tolerant weed species. After burning, the group carried out crucial follow-up weeding, assisted by the community bush regeneration day.

The project included a community education component. Signs were strategically placed to inform the many visitors about the regeneration work and to discourage inappropriate use of the reserve. The NPWS coordinated two community open days incorporating bush walks and tree planting with displays and talks about this important environment. The NPWS also worked to enhance the relationship with neighbouring residents, writing to them to seek support and explain aspects of the bush regeneration work.

## outcomes now and in the future

The bush regeneration contractor has reported that all worked areas are regenerating well, and with careful follow-up the site will be a hardy ecosystem. The weed management program

was greatly enhanced by the ecological burn, which also helped native plants to germinate. Future work will concentrate on removing lantana and privet in preparation for another burn.

The outcomes from the community education have been very positive. The placement of signs has educated park visitors and reinforced management strategies, and has reportedly helped to keep vandalism at a lower level. Community support and involvement increased over the project period, with the number of participants for the open days doubling from the first to the second day. Organised walks attracted 20-30 people on each occasion and have continued as a popular activity. Two NPWS media releases and an article in the local newspaper have helped to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the natural vegetation in the reserve.



Clearing the site of weeds

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This project has been a successful step in the process of preserving a significant remnant of Sydney Blue Gum High Forest. The group has successfully developed partnerships with the community and improved the sometimes fragile relations with immediate neighbours, which will benefit the long term conservation of the reserve. The project proceeded without any major challenges, although delays were caused by natural phenomena such as prolonged rain, which delayed the burn, and extreme fire danger conditions, which delayed the community bush regeneration day.