



International Environmental Weed Foundation **Annual Report – June 2021**



International Environmental Weed Foundation is pleased to present a report covering activities for year ending 30th June 2021.

International Environmental Weed Foundation (IEWF) trading as Habitat Network and The Habitat

This was a bit of a challenging year but not nearly as challenging as the previous 12 months which had drought, fires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. We only had floods and the COVID-19 to deal with and have had plenty of rain to water our project sites, nursery and garden.

We have connected well with volunteers and with schools and Councils for workshops and plantings. And have learnt to be flexible as access to volunteers, sites, events and activities move around due to lockdowns and restrictions.

The Habitat nursery and garden have been flourishing in all senses. And even during lock downs have seen plenty of visitors who through having to work from home are walking more locally.

Our habitat corridors have continued to develop albeit with some restrictions on working with Councils, volunteers and community at times. Most Saturdays when not under restrictions we have had up to 20 young (14-17 year olds) and a few older volunteers helping us weed and plant along Shrimptons Creek. People walking past are always complementing us on how great the areas we have worked are looking.

A highlight was winning the 2021 Greater Sydney Regional Partnerships for Landcare Award for our partnership with Hunter’s Hill Council and our 9 km habitat corridor. See below for more details.

We have kept our websites up-to-date and remained active on social media. Check out:

www.iewf.org

www.habitatnetwork.org

<https://www.facebook.com/HabitatNetwork>

and also HabitatNetwork on Instagram.

We haven’t used the GoVolunteer website at all this year to attract volunteers. They have been finding us through their own networks such as mothers groups. There is a waiting list of non teenage volunteers waiting to join us—these are people who have been walking past, some having more time as they are not travelling to their offices or are thinking of retiring.

The Google AdWords grant is still helping to promote our Habitat Network website.



The Habitat - community native plant nursery and community food garden

The Habitat started growing more tree tube stock this year to support the NSW Premier's Greening Our Cities Initiative to plant 1 million trees by December 2022. All trees that we sell or giveaway with this program are registered with this program. We grew trees to be given out at the National Landcare Conference and for City of Ryde. The National Landcare Conference due to the pandemic has been postponed for a 2nd time and moved to later in 2022. City of Ryde did their free giveaway and will be planting left over trees around their parks.

Following building our plant shade areas last year we invested in a watering system to automatically water under the shelters. For the past 8 years all watering has been done by hand by our volunteers. This now saves them a little time.

In calendar year 2020 we had 67 regular/semi regular volunteers and 113 who only attended a couple of days mostly for school community volunteering giving a total of 180 active volunteers. This was down a bit mostly due to Covid and us restricting volunteers. As always we have tried to support disability volunteers and their carers and students undertaking community services as a priority.



As usual The Habitat provided 50 plants free of charge to local schools for National Tree Day and we gave plants to local bushcare groups throughout the year. See below for details of workshops etc.

The Habitat statistics by financial year:

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total volunteer hours	4301	4337	4554
Recorded visitors	1559	2260	2617
Total plants out (sold, donated or planted)	6259	6083	6512
Total out plus in-stock at EOY	9757	9635	12293

Promotions, events and workshops

We had fun this year doing workshops and planting events at Victoria Avenue Public School and Concord High School. We did walks and talks from The Habitat along Shrimptons Creek looking at the habitat corridor for Greater Sydney Landcare Network's Creating Canopies project and for the Australian Conservation Foundation volunteers. Canada Bay Council, Greater Sydney Landcare, Georges River Council and Explore and Develop Day Care also benefitted from our talks and workshops for their communities. We have consulted with several schools, kindergartens and child care centres about where and how to plant and provided them with appropriate plants.

We continue to work with Greater Sydney Landcare Network and Landcare NSW and continue to support the bushland committees of both Ryde and Hunter's Hill Councils.

To see photos of more activities please visit <http://www.habitatnetwork.org/> activities photo pages.

Hunters Hill Small Bird Corridor and Lower Parramatta River Habitat Corridor

Following are excerpts from the nomination for the Greater Sydney Regional Partnerships for Landcare Award for this project. Our project won this award and was presented with a Certificate at the Regional Landcare Conference in May 2021 and have been nominated for the State award decided in March 2022.

Hunters Hill Bushcare and Habitat Network have engaged a range of stakeholders including the local community in rehabilitating 9 km of small bird habitat corridor. The population of small birds in this corridor are stable and healthy which is positive as in other areas these lovely little birds are in decline.

Describe who is involved in the landcare partnership that you are nominating....

Habitat Network has been working since 2008, in partnership with Hunter's Hill Bushcare, to create a continuous small bird habitat corridor throughout the Municipality of Hunter's Hill. The original corridor is 3.8 km and encompasses a number of land owners. For example: RMS has provided access to its lands for planting habitat connections; University of NSW has been undertaking habitat planting near its rowing facility; Riverside Girls High School manages its areas of remnant bushland; and NPWS started a bushcare group at Bedlam Bay. Hunter's Hill manages 6 bushcare groups within this corridor and has co-ordinated 18 community planting events such as National Tree Day and plantings undertaken by local school, scout and corporate groups. In addition residents in the corridor have been encouraged to plant small bird habitat in their gardens.

City of Ryde was a partner with Hunter's Hill Council for developing the River to River Corridor (R2R). The entire R2R corridor includes two wildlife-enhancing corridors (1 in Hunter's Hill), connecting the Parramatta River and Lane Cove Rivers, with the key habitat in Field of Mars Reserve and the Lane Cove National Park. Habitat Network was involved in running habitat planting workshops for this project. The R2R adds 3.2 km to the Hunter's Hill small bird corridor.

In 2016 Hunters Hill Bushcare, NPWS and Habitat Network won a grant for \$98,000 from the NSW Environment Trust to improve habitat along the lower Parramatta River estuary, extending the corridor by around another 2 km. This corridor is an extension of the Parramatta River Catchment Group's Native Habitat Recovery in the Parramatta River Catchment Project and is supported by Greater Sydney Landcare Network. The funding has facilitated community engagement throughout the corridor and habitat extension. The Hunter's Hill small bird habitat corridor now extends for a total of 9 km.

Describe why the partnership was formed, the issues it is addressing and what it has achieved...

The partnership was formed because local bird extinctions are happening in our suburbs and in fragmented bushland areas. Habitat with the right structure and complexity for small birds is disappearing through "death by a thousand cuts". Increasingly the suitable areas for small birds are becoming isolated with no protective connections with other bushland or habitat areas. The Habitat Network and Hunters Hill Bushcare are helping people do their bit for small birds and other native fauna by putting habitat back in gardens and by working with local agencies, schools, scouts and other habitat projects to improve



Planting small bird habitat at Betts Park

the habitat values of our bushland and corridor linkages. Small native birds, such as the superb fairy-wren, variegated fairy-wren, red-browed finch, eastern spinebill, eastern yellow robin, spotted pardalote, white-browed scrubwren, silvereeye and other “lbbs” (little brown birds), are the birds that people ‘used to see around’.

Habitat Network started when International Environmental Weed Foundation (IEWF), a Sydney based not-for-profit organisation, received a grant in 2008 to run community workshops about understanding and restoring local natural capital (native flora, fauna, soils, water quality, air quality and general landscape function). These workshops and subsequent discussions revealed that many people have noticed the disappearance of small native birds from our gardens – and in some cases from our local bushland. From these ideas and other observations and advice Habitat Network was created with a focus on small birds as a way of connecting with people and as a way to reconnect people and habitats for the benefit of our native flora and fauna – and for people’s enjoyment. Habitat Network has grown from an idea in 2008 to a group with now close to 800 members which includes schools, businesses, Councils, community groups as well as families and individuals. Members are mostly in Sydney but are also in other States (in urban and rural areas).

Habitat Network in partnership with Hunters Hill Bushcare encourages all land managers, bushland workers and home gardeners within the small bird habitat corridor to consider how to help small native birds and to create and reconnect habitat areas. The partnership has been very successful in engaging with a range of key stakeholders in the local community and connecting and extending habitat within the small bird habitat corridor throughout the Municipality of Hunter’s Hill. Future works include implementing a recently prepared Biodiversity Conservation Strategy outlining potential corridors linking the western and eastern corridors.

The key challenges include limited resources, engaging local residents and the protection of weedy habitat within the corridor areas. Strategies to overcome the key challenges have included applying for grant funds, use of traditional and digital media, offering free native plants to residents and community groups within the corridor as well as ongoing education via workshops, planting events and liaison with the range of key stakeholders within the small bird habitat corridor.

Describe how the partnership has led to outstanding natural resource management outcomes....

Three key examples of how the partnership has led to outstanding natural resource outcomes include:

River to River Corridors Project (2010-13)

Urban development (and other factors) had fragmented the wildlife corridors between the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers. Scientific work including bird surveys were completed to inform the project in the early stages, community surveys were conducted to engage residents and gauge interest on local environmental issues, and many planting based community events were held to connect the corridors. Residents who live directly along the project corridor zones were invited to attend these events which included workshops on: how to create habitat for small birds and fauna within their garden; how to care for wildlife; and small native birds.

The project has enhanced over 9 kms of identified corridor space in 25 planted sites. This was achieved with the help of over 900 community members, school and volunteer groups. Collectively over 16,000 plants were planted that provided habitat for small birds and other native fauna. In addition, the City of Ryde and Hunters Hill prepared a “Habitat-Friendly Gardens” Guide and received a Local Government NSW Award for Excellence in the Environment in 2013 in the category of Education, Empowerment & Communication.

Restoring EECs along the Lane Cove River estuary Project (2013-16)

Three bushcare groups and contractors conducted a strategic approach to bush regeneration along the

Lane Cove River. Baseline and progress assessments including bird surveys were completed to establish the condition of core bushland connecting bushcare and EEC sites. Overall 7.6 hectares of strategic bush regeneration works was completed. These works improved vegetation condition and connectivity between the bushcare sites. 15 organisations were engaged.

The project has increased community awareness of the ecological values of the Lane Cove River corridor via media, activities, community networks and events, and a weed education program. An additional 28 volunteers were recruited.

Habitat restoration along the Parramatta River estuary – stages 1 and 2 (2016-21)

Four bushcare groups and contractors conducted a strategic approach to bush regeneration along the lower Parramatta River. In addition, the project increased awareness of the ecological importance of small bird habitat along the river. This was achieved by inviting the local community, corporate volunteers, school students, and 1st Boronia Cub Pack to strategic planting events in reserves from Gladesville to Woolwich. A total of 272 volunteers have planted 3,909 native species that will assist in connecting 45 hectares of a habitat corridor. The project engaged 19 stakeholder organisations including a local ornithologist. In stage 2 so far, 1,096 plants have been planted; 5 volunteers recruited and; 2 community planting events held.

This project followed a Parramatta River Catchment Group Project “Native Habitat Recovery in the Parramatta River catchment” which produced the “*Our Living Catchment Fauna and Habitat Report*”, a catchment-wide fauna species richness study outlining biodiversity hot spots, priority vegetation corridors and management actions. This project included habitat restoration, 745 volunteers from Bushcare and National Tree Day events and 19 monitoring sites were established by Birdlife Australia to correlate with the on ground works.

Shrimptons Creek small bird habitat corridor

We have had a fun year this year working with our youth volunteers and others on Saturdays and once a month on Wednesdays with Believability work experience volunteers on weeding and planting the creekline in Santa Rosa Park. This park is where The Habitat is located and provides a close by and safe environment for our volunteers to work. The people walking in this park are delighted by the progress we have made.

Care has had to be taken not to remove too much weedy habitat to keep the huge population of frogs happy. We have found many Striped marsh frogs and Common eastern froglets and carefully relocated them from the weeded areas to better habitat. And a big thank you to one of our volunteers Steve who has been following up to ensure weeds do not return in our planted and regenerating areas.

More weeding and planting has been undertaken at the RMS site. Monitoring has been the main focus in other parks within this corridor. As previously reported there were only 8 small birds (white-browed scrub wrens and superb fairy wrens) remaining in this corridor. With the extensive re-development happening all around Wilga Park and removal of weedy understory by developers we believe we have lost 4 of these birds plus the 2 Eastern whipbirds who were resident in Wilga Park. Regardless we will continue to improve the habitat for better biodiversity outcomes in the future.

Planting a weeded area of Santa Rosa Park.

