

Introduction

Welcome to the 3rd issue of the Gills Bridge Creek Community Newsletter. As put forward in our first two publications, each issue is intended to provide an update on the works proposed, planning updates as they are confirmed, and, the status of any tasks undertaken. It is also intended to support and promote the Gills Creek Community in developing better outcomes for their local living and working environment. For more information contact Nathan Hegerty or Allister Gee (Sustainable Development Services) at Kempsey Shire Council on 6566 3200.

Detailed Vegetation Surveying

Field work and reporting has been completed by Saltair Fauna and Flora consultancy on the detailed vegetation surveying of the riparian zones (along the banks) of the main channel of Gills Bridge Creek (GBCK) and its 2 major tributaries - Green Wattle and Boat Harbour Creeks.

This detailed survey is now being used to assist identification of weed hot spot areas as well as those remnant areas of important intact native vegetation along the GBCK riparian corridor. Kempsey Shire Council (KSC) Environmental Officers with the support of other stakeholders are currently using this information to prioritise management and rehabilitation works based on the extent of degradation, prospects for rehabilitation, access availability and relationship with crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.



West St Harry Boyes Ave. Wright Ln.

3 Views of riparian vegetation along Gills Bridge Creek showing the changing character of the corridor.

Remote Sensing equipment was successfully employed at key sites identified as likely to have high habitat value along the stream. Support was also given to the fauna survey by the use of Sand-plot Monitoring (animal tracks recorded in sand beds) and records from the NPWS Fauna Atlas as well as opportunistic observation by field officers. Analysis of these recordings has provided an important understanding of the animal movements through the GBCK vegetation corridor. Several types of animals were recorded to utilise these corridors and therefore help further prioritise management and rehabilitation actions. Species observed included the introduced fox and cat, as well as several natives such as the Grey-headed Flying Fox, the Brush-tailed Possum and Koala! The endemic Macleay River Turtle (*Emydura macquarii dharra*) is also suggested to have been sighted.



Remember the recent Bushfire photos of Koalas? Well GBCK has its own resident corridor users...



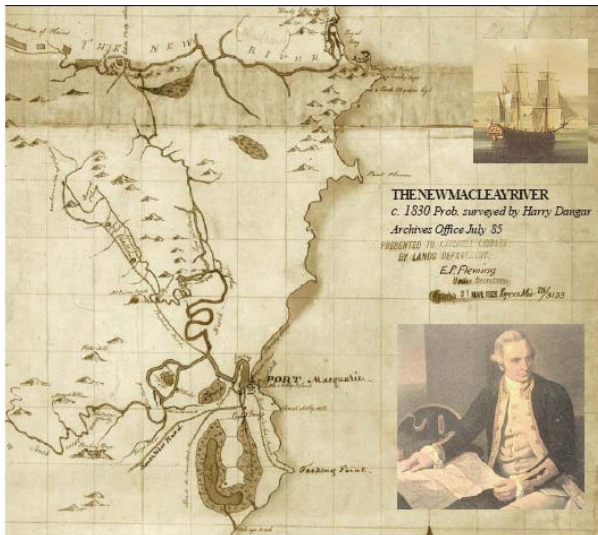
Female Koala and mature Joey sighted near South Street Bridge in the GBCK Riparian Corridor.

Watch for more updates on the GBCK Koalas!



History of Gills Bridge Creek

Post European settlement, the creek was named after an early settler named Silas Gill. Silas was a colourful character who stood out as a preacher when settlers were flocking to the valley to take up small farms. He came to the Macleay in 1859. It was not an uncommon thing for Mr. Gill, his sons and helpers to be occupied for up to twenty hours on a Sunday, rowing a boat twenty to thirty miles and conducting three services along the river. An historical marker erected by the Macleay River Historical Society beside the Pacific Highway near Gills Creek is a tribute to this man. The historic map below shows the main access to the 'New River' (the Macleay) from the colonial settlement at Port Macquarie, as upstream via the Maria River then overland into the Boat Harbour Creek down to the Gills Bridge Creek junction then to the Macleay.



Source : SECTION TWO of the Kempsey Shire Community based Heritage Study with support from the Macleay River Historical Society (pers.comm B.Crawford)

Council Looking to Form Partnerships

Council is looking forward to working with the local GBCK Community and friends in rehabilitating the native bush corridor nearest to them. Already interest has been expressed by local business people and local schools in assisting with creek-side rehabilitation work, monitoring creek health and in native wildlife observation and recording. Although seemingly quite

degraded in places, the creek and its bush fringe is a valued home to many special native wildlife. It is exciting to find the iconic and increasingly rare native Koala living among our working environment. If you are interested in assisting rehabilitating your local GBCK area or have ideas or observations to share please contact the Council Environment (GBCK) project staff.



Nocturnal Koala Activity (caught by remote camera) - GBCK corridor.

Qualified Bush Regenerators Sought

Council staff are currently developing a database of locally available, qualified Bush Regenerators as part of the proposed future works program. It is hoped to engage them in a works program at a key rehabilitation site along GBCK in the near future. In addition GBCK rehabilitation works will also be assisted by Council's Open Space and Recreation work crews (as explained below).

What's Next ?

A Council work crew will soon commence on a program for the strategic removal of weeds, targeting invasive and noxious species such as lantana, privet, camphor laurel, madeira vine and morning glory. The plan is for the work crew to commence work to the rear of HF Hand & Co and work their way downstream on the northern side of the creek towards the Macleay Vocational College. Following completion of this section, the work crew will then commence works on the southern side of the creek, targeting an area between the Queen Street culvert and South Street Bridge Crossing.



This program has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust



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