

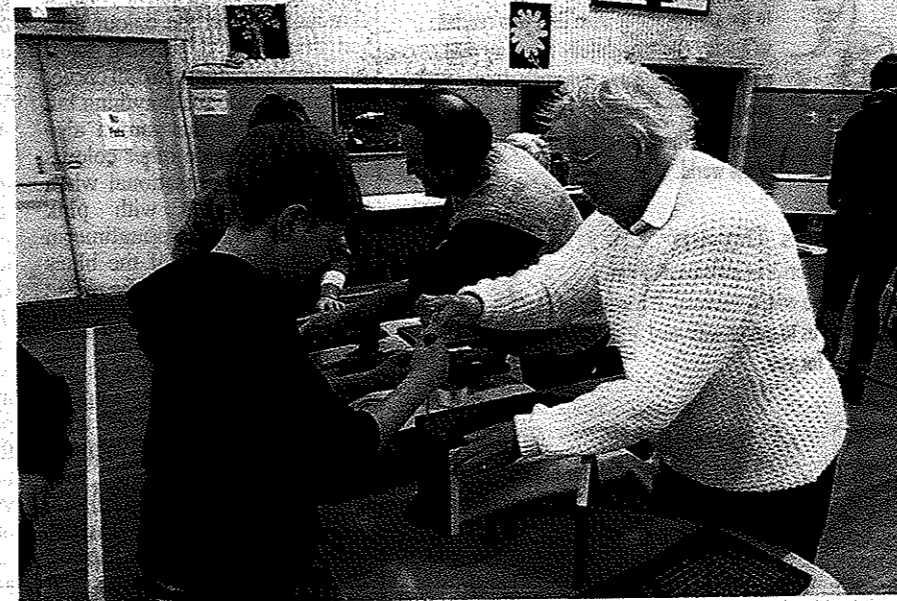
Bats at Ben Lomond.



Luncheon in Drummond Park.



A blind snake.



The school holiday crowd gathered at the Uralla Neighbourhood Centre to make nest boxes for parrots, bats and sugar gliders.

Wonderful woodlands week

Story: Ellen Nyberg

The New England is home to some of Australia's best woodlands. To celebrate their significance, the High Country Urban Biodiversity (HiCUB) project coordinated the New England's first 'Woodlands Week'. The week aimed to raise awareness of woodlands, their flora and fauna, the threats they face and management options.

It all kicked off in Armidale on a Sunday in September. The official launch was held in Drummond Park and Snow Gums Bush Reserve. These bushland reserves have received a lot of attention from volunteer bush regenerators over the years, especially Kate Boyd, who is a champion for the area. With the community gathered around, Deputy Mayor, Jim Maher

launched the week and talked about the importance of maintaining natural woodland remnants in towns. Visitors were treated to a tour of the remnant, and able to compare "before" photographs taken at regenerated sites. The remnants are a showcase of local urban biodiversity. Three species of microbats, koala scats, four species of reptiles, two frog species and 27 birds were observed, as well as many interesting invertebrates and wildflowers.

Despite being delayed by an electrical storm and heavy rain, spotlighting at UNE went ahead that night. While the group huddled under cover, Phil showed them some of the frogs and reptiles he had found in the remnant on North Hill. Once the storm broke, the group set off to find some nightlife. They were

able to find sugar gliders, brushtail possums, several species of bats, and various invertebrates.

On Monday night the festivities moved to Ben Lomond. Over 30 locals turned out to learn about the flora and fauna of the high altitude woodlands in the district. The first stop was the Ben Lomond railway cutting, just north of town. After inspecting rare orchids and the railway line, everyone headed back to the hall for dinner and a fauna show-and-tell with Phil Spark. After dinner the group headed out into the freezing night to climb half way up 'The Brothers' with spotlights. The night finished with a campfire in town to thaw out frozen fingers.

Wednesday focused on Walcha with a woodland walk through the Town Common and adjacent travelling stock route. Phil Spark

and Lachlan Copeland led the group through the woodland, pointing out plant and wildlife species on the way.

The Uralla Neighbourhood Centre was host to an enthralled school holiday crowd gathered to Celebrate Uralla's Woodlands, on the Friday. First up, the group built nest boxes for parrots, bats and sugar gliders, to be installed on Mt Mutton and in The Glen. Extra habitat on Mt Mutton is needed due to the small number of hollow-bearing trees found amongst the Silver-top Stringybark. The highlight of the evening was a spotlight tour of Mt Mutton guided by Phil. Thanks to some harp traps, the participants were able to come up close and personal with local microbats.

To conclude the week the Armidale Tree Group had prepared

a fabulous program of speakers, bird-watching tours, tree planting, a barbecue and a jumping castle. Everything was set for a great day, except for the weather. The field day at the Woodland Centre and the Mike O'Keeffe Memorial Woodland highlighted the restoration of grassy woodlands. A steady stream of people joined in site tours to look at the Tree Group's trials to restore grassland plants. A quick tour of the dam area discovered many aquatic birds using different habitats. In the afternoon, volunteers planted 200 trees.

Next time you are looking for something to do, take a walk through your local woodland. These provide irreplaceable habitat and resources for many animals and plants, and you never know what you might see.