

CASE STUDY

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BUNDANON TRUST

BACKGROUND

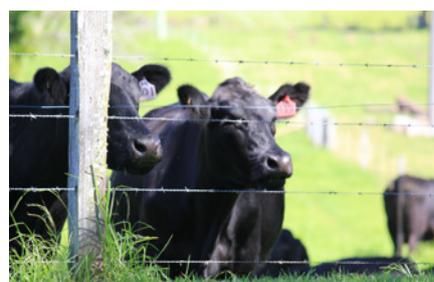
Bundanon Trust was gifted to the Australian people by Australian artists Arthur and Yvonne Boyd in 1993, and supports arts practice and understanding of the arts through its residency, education, research, exhibition and performance program. The intention of the gift was for all Australian people to benefit from the rich cultural and environmental heritage of the landscape.

Bundanon Trust includes four properties situated on the Shoalhaven River, west of Nowra, NSW. It is a unique destination where excellence in the arts, creativity, education and learning is fostered and nurtured in a unique, natural environment. Bundanon Trust presents a dynamic arts and education program which contributes to cultural development in the Shoalhaven, nationally and internationally.

THE LANDSCAPE

Occupying 1,100 ha, the four properties are connected geographically along the Shoalhaven River. An escarpment runs parallel to the river off the central plateau between the river bends, and gives way steeply to terraces and lower slopes. The higher areas consist primarily of native bush and the lower slopes open up to flood plains that have seen various agricultural practices since the 1830's, including cropping and grazing for dairy and beef production. Steeper areas were originally logged by early settlers, who travelled up the Shoalhaven River in search of building materials, such as Red Cedars.

Approximately 90% of the territory is native bush habitat, with the remainder consisting of agricultural grazing land, cleared amenity areas and infrastructure. In a three-year partnership with Landcare Australia, and with funding from the Australian government, Bundanon Trust is restoring superfluous cleared land back to native habitat, while rehabilitating unhealthy habitat areas along the river. The Living Landscape project aims to boost the health of the ecosystem, encourage biodiversity and reestablish the link that once connected escarpment and river. This cultivation will reestablish vital environment values such as feed availability and water access for regional native animals.



ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

LANTANA – The aggressive noxious weed *Lantana camara* has dominated the riverfront landscape over the entire property. The infestation, so rife in some areas it has prevented all other vegetation from growing amongst it, devastating the available habitat, food supply and river access for the native wildlife that Bundanon seeks to protect.

BLACK WATTLE – The native Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) is a fantastic colonizer of open spaces. Although useful for preventing soil erosion after natural disaster, it quickly establishes a population that outcompetes regenerating native species for years. At its most severe, the Black Wattle dominates entirely and forms a monoculture, which occludes other species from inhabiting the land. Such rampant overgrowth is seen on the Bundanon property at Haunted Point and is equally detrimental to native flora and fauna populations as the Lantana.



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WHY?

Almost a century of agricultural enterprise has created significant environmental disturbance over many areas of the properties. Whilst livestock grazing through native habitat was an effective weed control method, the abrupt cessation of farming simulated a natural disaster, leaving an open space to be colonized by the most adaptive plant species. The ability for a landscape to regenerate to native habitat is very much dependent on seasonal conditions, remaining seedlings and seedbanks, the current species diversity and the presence of overly aggressive plant types. Conditions were not met for the bush to regenerate naturally, which led to a significant overgrowth of Lantana and Black Wattle within much of the riverfront property.

The unused bushland habitats on the properties have remained in their natural state, which has resulted in the landscape that we see today; a combination of high integrity native bushland, with few dense pockets of highly altered agricultural areas.



REGENERATION & RESTORATION

In 2012 Landcare Australia began a regeneration and re-vegetation process over approximately 70 ha across the properties. Pasture will be reestablished as native bush, and degraded bushland restored. The habitat regeneration is based on a large number of ecological surveys conducted in the region, which clearly identify species distribution and abundance.

The first step of the restoration process is to establish the upper- and mid-canopy (trees and shrubs), while maintaining access to the grounds to allow for weed control, until the area reaches the desired maturity. Secondly, the planting of appropriate ground covers (native grasses, herbs and forbs) will naturally flourish within the conditions of an established canopy.

THE FUTURE

The regeneration project, run in accordance with the carbon farming initiative methodology for environmental planners, gives Bundanon Trust the opportunity to apply for Australian carbon credits in the future, as well as biodiversity offsets if they choose.

The project's completion, set for 2015 hopes to significantly enhance the ecological value and restore the once awe-inspiring native areas of the Bundanon Trust properties. As with all bush land bordered by waterways, agricultural activity and urban areas, ongoing maintenance will be crucial to a successful regeneration. The diligent control of Lantana regrowth will be key in providing a hospitable area for the desired habitat. This will involve cutting new growth back, while applying herbicides to prevent regrowth of individual plants.

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EVERY SUNDAY.**

see www.bundanon.com.au



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