



# BUSHLAND NEWS

KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY NEWSLETTER

Winter 2022

The recent wet weather caused a delayed start to the open season with Katandra remaining closed to visitors on the first two Sundays of July. On the first day it did open, a couple of birdwatchers visiting the Sanctuary reported seeing a Rose Robin (*Petroica rosea*) darting about the bushland.

Like many small birds, these Robins seem to be rapidly disappearing from urban areas due to loss of suitable habitat caused by land clearing and development. Results from the "Aussie Backyard Bird Count" (ABBC) organised by BirdLife Australia reflect this decline with lower count numbers for small birds despite higher overall bird count numbers due to greater public awareness and participation in the ABBC (see article inside for more details).

This year's count activity will again be in October so you can be participate if you wish. Go to the BirdLife Australia website for details.

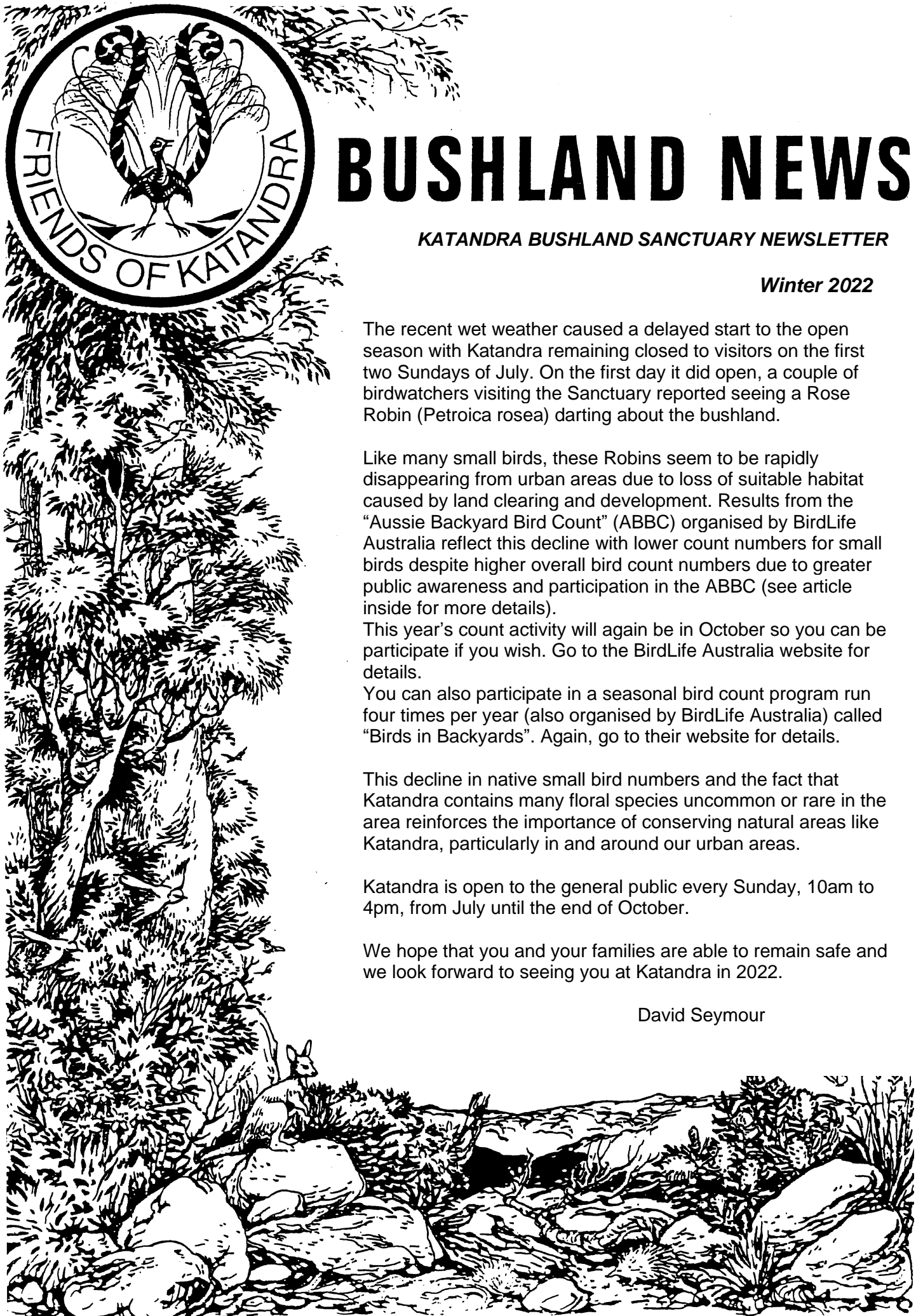
You can also participate in a seasonal bird count program run four times per year (also organised by BirdLife Australia) called "Birds in Backyards". Again, go to their website for details.

This decline in native small bird numbers and the fact that Katandra contains many floral species uncommon or rare in the area reinforces the importance of conserving natural areas like Katandra, particularly in and around our urban areas.

Katandra is open to the general public every Sunday, 10am to 4pm, from July until the end of October.

We hope that you and your families are able to remain safe and we look forward to seeing you at Katandra in 2022.

David Seymour



## Rare and Uncommon Flora

Katandra Bushland Sanctuary contains a variety of vegetation types including open woodlands, heathland, moist tall open-forest and along the creek lines moist closed-forest (rainforest). In addition to providing valuable habitat and food sources for native birds and other fauna, Katandra is important for the conservation of a number of plant species that are rare or uncommon in the area. These include some members of the well-known Australian flora families Myrtaceae, Fabaceae and Rutaceae as well as lesser-known families such as Euphorbiaceae, Lobeliaceae and Psilotaceae.



*Boronia mollis* in Katandra

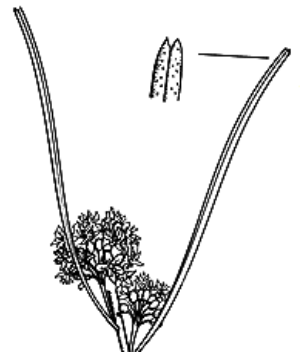
***Boronia mollis*** (Soft Boronia) is used as the flora emblem of Katandra due to its prevalence throughout the Sanctuary, however it is considered uncommon in the Sydney area. An erect shrub growing to 1 – 1.5 metres in moist sandstone gullies, it provides an abundance of rich pink flowers in spring, each flower with four petals and 8 anthers (see below).



The branches and leaf stalks are densely covered in soft stellate hairs, hence its common name. The leaves are pinnate with 5 to 9 leaflets, the terminal leaflet slightly longer and narrower than the lateral ones.

Boronia's belong to the Rutaceae family which also include Correa, Eriostamon, Phebalium and Zieria genera. The leaves of all Rutaceae species are dotted with glands containing strongly aromatic volatile oils. When crushed, the leaves of *Boronia mollis* have a strong lemon-bitumen odour.

***Leionema dentatum*** formerly ***Phebalium dentatum*** (Toothed Phebalium) is another Rutaceae species that is considered uncommon in the Sydney region but is found growing well in Katandra. Normally found in the northern ranges of NSW, *Leionema dentatum* is a tall, erect shrub growing to about 3 metres in sheltered sandstone gullies. The leaves are slender and thin, 4 to 8 cm long, with a prominent midrib and 2-toothed at the end (shown right). The recurved leaf margins hide the small-toothed edges. The underside of the leaves and the stems are covered in fine stellate hairs. In spring there are dense masses of small white flowers which form at the end of branches. Each flower has five petals with raised pale yellow anthers (see right).



*Leionema dentatum* – first described in 1998, formerly known as *Phebalium dentatum*



## Rose Robin (*Petroica rosea*)

Recently seen in Katandra, the Rose Robin is considered the most acrobatic of the Australasian robins.



Rose Robin (*Petroica rosea*) – image Wikipedia

Australasian robins are passerine birds that belong to the Petroicidae family of Aves (birds) and are only distantly related to the European robins which are part of the Muscicapidae family. All 49 Petroicidae species of birds are endemic to Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and/or the Pacific Islands. The 14 species in the *Petroica* genus of these birds are collectively known as “red robins”, distinct from the “yellow robins” in the genus *Eopsaltria*.

Found in the south-eastern areas of Australia, Rose Robins generally prefer tall open-forests and rainforests, often feeding high in the canopy. The male has a distinctive pink breast with dark grey throat, head and back. The underparts are white. The females have greyish brown upper parts and greyish white throat, breast and underparts.

Like all of the Petroicidae species Rose Robins are primarily insectivorous. They can be seen clinging sideways to a tree trunk or on branches without moving while scanning the area around before pouncing on prey. Unlike other robins, Rose Robins generally do not return to the same branch while foraging.

Nests are a neat deep cup shape usually made by the female and situated in the fork of a large tree. Two or three dull, mainly white eggs are laid during the breeding season from September to January.

Like many small birds, these robins seem to be rapidly disappearing from urban areas. While the Rose Robin is not considered to be endangered, it is recognised that the population trend is decreasing following some local extinctions due to loss of suitable habitat caused by land clearing and development.

## Where are the small birds?

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count (ABBC) is an annual activity organised by BirdLife Australia. First conducted in 2014, the ABBC gives an indication of the populations of birds seen in many areas across the country. The results of these counts strongly suggests that populations of small birds particularly seem to be declining in urban areas. BirdLife Australia reported that the counts revealed “a loss of many of our once common small

garden birds, such as the Superb Fairy-wren, Silvereye and Willie Wagtail”. In some areas reporting rates of these birds “have almost halved over this time”.

“The much-loved birds are usually found in suburbs that have corridors of native bushland close by so their rapid disappearance, along with a number of other small bush birds,

is cause for grave concern.” “Smaller bush birds are most likely losing out in urban areas due to the loss of richness and diversity of habitat. With fewer bushy gardens for these small birds to retreat to, we are losing them entirely from our cities.” “The downward trend may also be exacerbated by the rise of larger and more aggressive birds, in particular the Noisy Minor which can drive away smaller birds.”

There does seem to be serious concern if the following results of the last two counts\* are an accurate reflection of the trend in the bird populations.

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Superb Fairy-Wren	30039	21099
Silvereye	5582	3156
Willie Wagtail	20052	15023
Rose Robin	73	40

Total bird counts 1376889 1644056

\*NSW ABBC counts



Superb Fairy-Wren (top)  
Silvereye (bottom)

Katandra website -  
[katandrabushlandsanctuary.com](http://katandrabushlandsanctuary.com)

**KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY**  
Foley's Hill, Lane Cove Rd, Ingleside NSW  
Department of Lands Reserve No 86487  
Founder: the late Harold Alfred Seymour  
Managed by Katandra Bushland Sanctuary Trust.  
Phone: 0431857407

OPEN: Every Sunday: July, August, September,  
October  
HOURS: 10 am — 4 pm  
ADMISSION: \$3 donation

**KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY TRUST**  
**PO Box 365 Mona Vale NSW 1660**

President: David Seymour  
Vice-President: David James  
Secretary: (acting) David Seymour  
Treasurer: Peter Hammond  
Minutes Secretary: Julie Emerson  
Bushland News Editors: Marita Macrae  
Roberta Conroy

(Cover Design by the late Walter Cunningham)

**Enquiries: phone 0431857407 or by email  
[information@katandra.org](mailto:information@katandra.org)**

**Volunteers are needed**

If you can assist on maintenance days or with  
welcoming visitors to Katandra on open days,  
please phone 0431857407

**DIARY DATES 2022**

**FOUNDER'S DAY**

**Sunday 14th August, 12 noon**

Bring your lunch to cook on the wood-burning  
BBQs. The trust will provide 'dessert', drinks, tea  
and coffee.

**CHRISTMAS PARTY (to be confirmed)**

**Sunday 4th December, 4.30 pm**

Cold meats, drinks and salads are provided, but  
please feel free to bring along some sweets or  
savouries to share before or after. Also enter the  
raffle to win one of Ruth's sort-after Christmas  
cakes.

**SANCTUARY MAINTENANCE 2022**

(3rd Sunday March–November)

9 am Sunday 20 March  
9 am Sunday 17 April  
9 am Sunday 15 May  
9 am Sunday 19 June  
9 am Sunday 17 July  
9 am Sunday 18 September  
9 am Sunday 16 October  
9 am Sunday 20 November

**PUBLIC OPEN DAYS 2022**

Each Sunday of July–October

10 am – 4 pm

Picnic tables are available for use should you  
wish to bring along a picnic lunch to enjoy in the  
Sanctuary

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Katandra Bushland Sanctuary Trust  
PO Box 365 Mona Vale NSW 1660