

Regeneration, Conservation and Wildlife Sanctuary

The Cleary Property, Bawley Point Road, Bawley Point



Angus Cleary and his uncle Jon take in the remnant rainforest which has returned to gully on their property. Inset, Milton Rural Fire Brigade volunteer Stacey Wilson at the bushfire front on Murramarang Road in Bawley Point. Pictures by John Hanscombe, Sitthixay Ditthavong

The 333-hectare family property at [Bawley Point on the NSW South Coast](#) has been tracking the astonishing speed at which nature has rebounded since the devastating bushfires impacted the property and local area in December 2019 in the Black Summer Bushfires.

From a vantage point near Armchair Beach in the national park, Bawley Point township is in the distance and the almost unbroken forest that spans the property and runs down to Meroo Lake. It's this physical connection the family wants to preserve for future generations.

The Cleary family is determined to convert the former cattle farm into a wildlife sanctuary and protect it for future generations.

Nuggan sits between Willinga Lake and Meroo Lake in the Meroo National Park to the north, forming an important wildlife corridor. For the past three years, the Cleary's have been monitoring as life returns to the blackened landscape. "Some of the things that we were aware of before the fires, such as greater and yellow-bellied gliders, powerful owls, masked owls, we actually managed to observe within a year or so after the fires, which we were incredibly relieved to see". As well as direct monitoring the family has installed remote cameras to observe the species return. Audio capture is also employed to identify different animals. In addition to their own efforts, researchers from the University of Wollongong have been on site conducting habitat surveys. Landcare has provided plants & volunteers to support this.

"This here is a shrub turpentine," Jon says, pointing to an unremarkable-looking sapling growing between two larger trees. "They're critically endangered. So, we're lucky in that we've had a few pop up after the fires." Selected Excerpts from The Canberra Times, John Hanscombe. December 15, 2024

The Cleary family are working with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust, professional ecologists, researchers at the University of Wollongong and others.

Andrew Cleary summed up "It would break our hearts to see the destruction of nature at it's best here, through any future property sale or sub-division. We are intent on making sure it counts for wildlife conservation and future generations. If people can't experience nature like we have here locally, they don't appreciate it". "We are proud of where we live, the natural environment here is unique, we want to look after it".