

MURRUMBATEMAN VILLAGE GRASSY WOODLAND

Update on Murrumbateman Landcare Group community project

A Crown Reserve in the middle of Murrumbateman village is a natural remnant of a critically endangered ecological community of box gum woodland and derived native grassland (Box Gum Grassy Woodland).ⁱ A group of volunteers regularly monitors the reserve to photograph and record plant and animal species.

In September 2019, Murrumbateman Landcare Group (MLG) joined with concerned residents in a community project to protect and enhance this jewel in the Murrumbateman landscape. A Crown licence over the land and a grant from the **Commonwealth Stronger Communities Program** allows for environment protection and enhancement including weed management and an ecological survey to be done in Spring.

Since 2017, local volunteers have recorded 72 native flora species, 13 native grasses and 3 native tree species.

Fauna observed includes 60 bird species, 14 amphibian/reptile species, 12 bee and wasp species and 9 mammal species. A large number of golden sun moths was recorded last November.

The reserve has

- Healthy mature woodland eucalyptus trees – Yellow Box and Blakeley’s Red Gum.
- Grasslands with high diversity – native tussock grasses (Kangaroo, Wallaby, Poa species), forbs, ferns, herbs, sedges, lichens, mosses, daisies, lilies, bluebells, blue devils and orchids.
- Many animals actively foraging, nesting or using the land – golden sun moths, superb parrots, swift parrots, owls, lizards, snakes, grey kangaroos, bats, gliders, frogs and many others.

Project activities have been limited due to COVID 19 restrictions but much has still been achieved this year.

Recently (20 June 2020) Friends of Grasslands (FoG) members (<http://www.fog.org.au/>) visited the reserve. Luckily, the rain held off and we spent two hours looking at the wonderful vegetation and also identified more plant species. Some remarks from FoG members were: 'this is out of this world', 'what an amazing place', 'can't believe we didn't know about this place before', 'Can I come back again'. This is great feedback. Only a couple of plant species are flowering during Winter but already we can see that many more orchids and wildflowers have germinated this year – it will be spectacular in Spring.

March activities

- Community Walk and talk where 22 people (mostly in raincoats and gumboots) saw and heard about the high diversity and conservation value of species present and planned protection activities.

- Hand weeding session where Landcare members and local residents, weeded a patch of African lovegrass. Seed heads were cut off and destroyed, and clumps dug out. Some serrated tussock grass was also dug out.

April to June activities

- Noxious and broad-leaved weed control by a local contractor assisted by volunteers undertook chemical control of noxious invasive weeds (targetting serrated tussock, chilean needle grass, cape weed, patterson's curse etc). Careful spot spraying was done targetting specific weeds and avoiding native species. We have now finished for this season and already the effects can be seen, although treatment of the noxious weeds will be ongoing. We expect to recommence spraying/daubing in August to target woody weeds.
- Ongoing plant identification by experts and volunteers continues. Recent rain and a warm Autumn resulted in a flurry of growth with plants flowering and seeding out of season allowing for identification.

Thanks to all for protecting and respecting the conservation value of the reserve. It is hoped that as COVID restrictions are further reduced we can achieve the activities planned for enhancing this site and maintaining it as an open space within Murrumbateman village.

CONTACT:

Murrumbateman Landcare Group through:

<https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/murrumbateman-landcare-group/>

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ⁱ Box Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grasslands are:

- endangered ecological community under the NSW *Biodiversity Management Act 2016*
- critically endangered ecological community under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- The majority of the crown reserve is classed as 'terrestrial biodiversity' in the Natural Resources Biodiversity Map of the Yass Valley Shire Local Environment Plan 2013