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In this issue

- Council Roadside Reserve Grants Announced
- Adaptive Management to Minimise Impacts to Linear Reserves
- Enhancing Roadside Vegetation to Support Threatened Species Project
- Squirrel Glider Biodiversity Enhancement Project
- A little furniture goes a long way
- A conservation recipe
- Galore Hill Scenic Reserve Biodiversity Assessment
- Draft EIA Guidance Series on public exhibition
- VicRoads Roadside Environment Committee pilot
- 2018 Australasian Network for Ecology and Transportation Conference
- 19th NSW Weeds Conference
- The Australasian Ornithological Conference
- The importance of corridor protection
- US Wildlife Corridors Get A Whole New Look

Latest news from the REC

The NSW REC has released its Annual Report for 2016-17.

Highlights of the year included:

- Developing the new REC strategic plan (2016-19)
- Sponsoring the NSW Roadside Environmental Management Award as part of the 2016 Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards
- Holding a REC meeting in a regional area of NSW to discuss and learn more about local and regional issues to assist in improved linear reserve management.
- Promoting linear reserve environmental management initiatives through the NSW Landcare Gateway.

Council Roadside Reserve Grants Announced

The Council Roadside Reserves (CRR) project has awarded 21 grants to local government projects totalling \$1,205,206. The CRR project is designed to assist local councils to further embed management of roadside reserves into planning, reporting and asset management systems. The project will enable councils to streamline their management of roadside environments across council divisions, protecting significant biodiversity, connecting vegetation across the landscape and providing valuable wildlife habitats.

Grants have been awarded to councils to build their capacity and enable the value of natural assets in roadside reserves to be embedded into councils' planning, reporting and asset management systems Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) systems. A range of assessment tools and templates have also been developed as part of a framework to help councils establish a baseline to protect this important natural asset.

This framework further looks at councils' many complex road responsibilities holistically and aims to support councils in NSW to navigate complex legislation, meet regulatory requirements, minimise risk and make the process of improving roadside environments more efficient and cost effective.

Embedding roadside environmental management within IP&R has the benefit of streamlining the process by linking it with existing planning, reporting and asset management systems, which is the core focus of many of the successful applications.

A number of projects are also focussed on trialling a new rapid assessment methodology to assess the environmental values and using this information to manage, monitor and protect roadside reserves.

The grant assessment process was highly competitive with 42 applications for funding received. A full list of [successful projects](#) and a summary description of each project is available. These projects will be commencing work over the coming months.

For further information contact CRR Project Officer – Kathy Godfrey on 9242 4053 or kathy.godfrey@lgnsw.org.au or visit [CRR website](#).

This project has been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.



Trialling the new rapid assessment methodology near Albury (photo: LGNSW)

Adaptive Management to Minimise Impacts to Linear Reserves – A Case Study from Junee Local Government Area

In mid-2016, Junee Shire Council undertook a one-kilometre pavement upgrade, widening and realignment of an intersection at Gundagai Road and Wantiool Rd, Junee NSW. The project was funded by NSW Roads and Maritime Services.

Council developed the draft design and development footprint and engaged Tumut-based Stokks Consulting to conduct a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP). The REF identified several environmental and ecological constraints such as Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC) - White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland, state- and federally-listed threatened species, a second order stream, dispersive soils and Aboriginal sites within the search area.

Stokks Consulting collaborated with CTEnvironmental, a Wagga-based consultancy, to undertake a Flora, Fauna and Riparian Assessment (FFRA) which confirmed the presence of the CEEC, numerous hollow bearing trees and potential for several threatened species to be present. To manage these constraints, Council established an exclusion zone between the development footprint and the CEEC. Within the development footprint, three hollow bearing trees were identified for removal; however, this was reduced to just one following a site inspection by Council staff and CTEnvironmental, and minor adjustments to the road design.

Throughout the project an ongoing dialogue was maintained with Council which enabled a flexible and adaptive approach to managing the potential environmental impacts of the project. As a result, project time constraints were reduced from potentially six months to six weeks, and likely environmental impacts to the roadside linear reserve were significantly minimised.

This process provides an excellent example of a Council maintaining an adaptive approach to managing its road network and linear roadside reserves. The combination of strategic management, maintaining an open dialogue with consultants and following the recommended RMS Biodiversity Guidelines, resulted in the timely delivery of the road upgrade and ensured Council met their legal obligations with regards to the various ecological and environmental constraints identified by the initial REF.



Critically Endangered Ecological Community - White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum and Derived Native Grassland Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland found across the project site

Enhancing Roadside Vegetation to Support Threatened Species Project



Central Tablelands Local Land Services, in partnership with the Environment & Waterways Alliance have released an incentive funding round titled "Enhancing Roadside Vegetation to Support Threatened Species".

The project will provide incentive funding of up to \$60,000 and technical support for:

- Projects that demonstrate threatened species recovery actions in roadside reserves
- Increasing habitat corridors and connectivity of roadside reserves
- Weed control activities
- Other activities that will lead to improved roadside vegetation condition and connectivity, as well as threatened species recovery outcomes.

The on-ground incentives will be offered exclusively to member Councils of the Environment & Waterways Alliance within the Central Tablelands region. It is expected that applicants will demonstrate that they meet actions, strategies or recommendations from threatened species recovery plans or similar documents with a focus on federally-listed threatened species.

"This project demonstrates our commitment to roadside vegetation within the Alliance region and directly aligns with Strategies and Actions from the Environment & Waterways Alliance Five Year Plan," stated Project Support Officer for the Environment & Waterways Alliance, Mr Mick Callan.

"We are very appreciative of the fact that Central Tablelands Local Land Services continue to see the value of investing in Local Government within our region, and are entirely confident that we will deliver a highly professional project outcome that improves habitat for listed threatened species within our region."

More details: Mick Callan mick.callan@lls.nsw.gov.au

Squirrel Glider Biodiversity Enhancement Project

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and John Holland Rail (JHR), in partnership with Mid-Lachlan Landcare and Young District Landcare have been undertaking a Squirrel Glider Biodiversity Enhancement project to improve habitat along the non-operational Blayney to Demondrille rail corridor in the Central Tablelands and South West Slopes of NSW, since 2014. The project site is approximately two kilometres long within the Crowther and Bendick Murrell localities between Cowra and Young.

Prior to the commencement of the project, conservation priority mapping undertaken by JHR on behalf of TfNSW identified high, medium and low conservation value areas along the rail corridor between Cowra and Young. Spotlighting was undertaken within a subset of these areas and during November 2014 it detected two Squirrel Gliders near Bendick Murrell in a high conservation area containing important remnants of Box Gum Woodland Endangered Ecological Community (EEC).

The site was ideally suited to restoration with the existence of Squirrel Gliders using a woodland remnant within the rail corridor. The project therefore focussed on improving habitat through on-ground works. This included the construction, installation and monitoring of nest boxes and planting of a variety of native shrubs to enhance foraging resources.

Following installation in February 2015, nest boxes were monitored using a snake-eye micro camera ongoing between November 2015 and May 2017. All activity was recorded such as nest building or occupation by both native species and introduced species. Remote cameras were installed to monitor movement at nest boxes after Squirrel Gliders were detected nesting during the January 2016 surveys.

This project has beneficially impacted the local Squirrel Glider population at Bendick Murrell by addressing threats that have contributed to their decline. Squirrel Glider use of nest boxes in this project likely indicates that there is a lack of suitable hollows. Maintaining the nest boxes into the future and further supplementary planting would likely help the population persist and potentially expand.



Monitoring nest boxes using the snake eye camera

A little furniture goes a long way

The 'refurbishment' of an underground wildlife passage at Wentworth Falls has gone a long way to securing the safety of native species in the area.

Greater Sydney Local Land Services worked with Roads and Maritime Services, DownerMouchael Joint Venture and Narla Environmental to redevelop the underpass after monitoring found no native animals were using the structure.

Greater Sydney Senior Land Services officer Peter Ridgeway said the original underpass lacked roadside fencing, suitable refuges and 'furniture' such as logs to encourage wildlife use.

"Wildlife crossing structures are increasingly being installed during road upgrades across NSW and as more crossing structures are installed our knowledge on how best to maximise their ecological function is continually improving. To date there has been little consideration to improving existing structures," he said.

"This particular wildlife underpass was installed near Wentworth Falls in 2014 in response to identification of the site as a roadkill hotspot for the vulnerable Spotted-tailed Quoll. However, six months of monitoring showed no native animal activity."

Mr Ridgeway said the refurbishment saw the installation of a continuous log platform running the length of the corridor and linking to woody debris added to nearby habitat as well as works to improve the natural soil floor.

"Since installation the underpass has been used by a number of native species including the Common Wombat, native reptiles, and native microbat species," he said.

Greater Sydney Local Land Services will continue to monitor the underpass and hopes over time it will function as a link for Quolls and other terrestrial wildlife between the Northern and Southern Blue Mountains World Heritage area. The project was made possible through the NSW Government's Catchment Action program.



Wentworth Falls wildlife underpass

A conservation recipe

Transport for NSW, John Holland Rail, The Hunter Great Eastern Ranges Partnership and Taronga Zoo have partnered for a second year to run their highly successful Regent Honeyeater Project along a disused rail corridor in the Upper Hunter. Each partner offers a crucial ingredient to a conservation recipe, combined to help halt the decline of the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and many other woodland animals.

The Hunter Great Eastern Ranges Partnership offers extensive knowledge in connectivity conservation, which seeks to connect people and nature by restoring and revegetating patches of private land that create 'stepping stones' to the protected, public reserve system. Work undertaken by the partnership across the Hunter has helped fund, deliver and align many projects with private landowners that have ecological and agriculture benefits.

Taronga Zoo has a longstanding and well-respected conservation ethic, which not only educates the community about animals through captive enclosures but also undertakes important recovery projects for species such as the Regent Honeyeater, involving reproduction and eventual release into the wild. This year Taronga Zoo will place a record 100 Regent Honeyeaters into the wild.

Transport for NSW owns many kilometres of used and disused rail corridors within NSW. In this project, it offers the corporate funding and on-ground space to create unique restoration sites for the Regent Honeyeater along a disused rail corridor stretching from Merriwa to Sandy Hollow.

As part of this year's project, the partners have delivered school workshops and a planting day for students from Sandy Hollow, Denman and Martindale Public Schools. Workshop activities included school nature surveys, close encounters with Australian native animals during a visit by the Taronga Zoomobile, plant propagation and school ground habitat assessments. Workshop activities were followed by a tree planting day at a restoration site along the disused rail corridor from Merriwa to Sandy Hollow.

"Tree planting along the disused rail corridor will involve the community in habitat protection for locally occurring, threatened woodland species such as the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater," said Amber Grant, Environment Manager for John Holland Rail. The workshop and planting day aims to develop a sense of stewardship among students for the protection of their local environment, a message that can then be communicated back to their families and the wider community.



School planting day

Galore Hill Scenic Reserve Biodiversity Assessment

Lockhart Shire Council has received the completed Galore Hill Scenic Reserve Biodiversity Assessment Report. This project was supported by Riverina Local Land Services through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

The Galore Hill Scenic Reserve is one of Lockhart Shire's greatest natural assets. This nature reserve is located 14 kilometres north of Lockhart and consists of 510 hectares. The reserve is an important recreational resource in the Eastern Riverina of NSW, and ecologically important, being one of the few remaining areas of natural environment.

Assessment of the ecological status of the reserve was essential in providing a foundation to review the reserve's management plan. The vegetation composition of the reserve shows an encroachment of the Cypress Pine (*Callitris* sp.) dominated community onto the Currawang (*Acacia doratoxylon*) dominated community. In order to rectify this, ecological burning or manual thinning will be incorporated into the management plan.

Five species of tree dwelling microbats were identified during the survey. These microbats were previously unrecorded at the site. The microbats found are: White Striped Freetail Bat, Gould's Wattle Bat, Southern Freetail Bat, Inland Broadnosed Bat, and Little Forest Bat.

Eight species of threatened birds have been identified at the reserve: Dusky Woodswallow, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Speckled Warbler, Brown Tree Creeper, Rainbow Bee Eater, Superb Parrot, Grey Crowned Babbler subspecies eastern, and Diamond Firetail.

OzArk Environmental & Heritage Management conducted the field surveying. An OzArk representative stated, "Overall, the property possesses the best example of Inland Grey Box Woodland habitat I have seen in many years, particularly the abundance, diversity and type of tree hollows."

During this project the Galore Hill Community Network was established, reconnecting the community with this unique ecosystem, and providing a platform for communication between individuals interested in the preservation of this reserve. For more details: www.lockhart.nsw.gov.au



Swamp wallaby

The Draft EIA Guidance Series on public exhibition

The NSW Department of Planning & Environment has developed a Guidance Series relating to Environmental Impact Assessment for State Significant projects. There are nine documents on public exhibition:

1. Overview of the EIA Improvement Project
2. Community Guide to EIA
3. Scoping an Environmental Impact Statement
4. Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement
5. Responding to Submissions
6. Community and Stakeholder Engagement
7. Approach to Setting Conditions
8. Modifying an Approved Project
9. Peer Review

Submissions are due by **1 September 2017**. The Department will also be conducting a series of community workshops throughout NSW.

Find out more at <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/EIAreview>

VicRoads Roadside Environment Committee pilot

The VicRoads Roadside Environment Committee (VREC) is currently being piloted to demonstrate the function that it can play for VicRoads.

NSW REC Chairperson Martin Driver attended the April VREC meeting to provide an insight into roles and activities of the NSW REC.

More details: Amy Orlowski amy.orlowski@roads.vic.gov.au

2018 Australasian Network for Ecology and Transportation Conference



The Australasian Network for Ecology and Transportation (ANET) is excited to announce that the next conference will be held from **30 April to 2 May 2018** in the RACV Goldfields Resort in Creswick, Victoria.

The theme for the conference is 'Connecting Nature, Connecting People', and ANET is busy creating a program that will be of immense value to delegates from government, industry, research and community groups from around Australia. The program will include the latest findings in road ecology research from around the world, best practice in government and industry, as well as ample opportunity for networking and creating collaborations.

At just one hour from Melbourne, the regional venue is easily accessible by train or car, and we will be running a number of shuttles from downtown Melbourne and the Melbourne International Airport to Creswick. The well-equipped facility and on-site accommodation is nestled in natural bushland and is perfectly located to inspect VicRoads projects along the Calder Freeway and Western Highway.

The ANET2018 Connecting Nature, Connecting People conference is co-hosted by the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ), and is proudly sponsored by VicRoads.

Engaging with industry is a key focus of the conference and there will be opportunity for industry to participate through trade displays, advertising and sponsorship. For more information about this, please contact the ANET secretariat for a sponsorship prospectus.

For more information and to register your interest in the conference, please go to <https://www.eianz.org/events/event/anet2018> and check back periodically as ANET finalises key dates, arranges inspiring and informative presentations and friendly social events. There will be an open call for you to submit abstracts and proposals for presentations, posters and workshops.

To find out more about ANET and previous ANET events, please go to <http://www.ecologyandtransport.com/>. To find out more about EIANZ, go to www.eianz.org. Check out the venue here <https://www.racv.com.au/travel-leisure/racv-resorts/our-destinations/goldfields-resort.html>

19th NSW Weeds Conference



Weed conferences held throughout Australia offer an opportunity for weed professionals, land managers and researchers to progress the challenges faced and share ideas, best practice and current research. Starting in 1971 as "Weeds schools" for Local Government Weed Officers, and then continuing as Biennial

Noxious Weeds Conferences from 1981, the New South Wales Weeds Conferences have evolved to become one of the primary forums within the State for the management of weeds that impact primary production, the community, societal values and the environment.

The 19th Biennial NSW Weeds Conference will be held at the University of New England campus, Armidale from 16 – 19 October 2017.

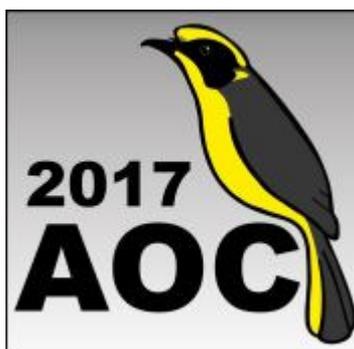
With the introduction of the new *Biosecurity Act 2015* and proposed Regulation in 2016 that provides a framework for the prevention, elimination and minimisation of biosecurity risks posed by pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants to the economy, environment and communities of NSW, coupled with the Invasive Species Plan 2015-2022 objectives, there has never been a more important time for weed professionals to be able to meet the challenges of the practical implementation of these changes within the industry.

The conference theme of 'Experience the highs – working smarter together' looks to build on the successes of the past whilst looking to the future for the transition into this new era in weed management and control, an approach that must be based on regional cooperation as well as providing a common focus for the actions of the numerous land managers across all tenures. With this in mind Session themes will broadly revolve around Biosecurity in Action; Technology & Innovation; Community, Extension & Social Marketing; Collaboration & Case Studies with a special feature being the Open Debate.

More details about the conference:

<http://conferencecompany.com.au/weedsconference/>

The Australasian Ornithological Conference



The Australasian Ornithological Conference provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas between researchers, conservationists, and those interested in the natural history of birds throughout the Australasian region. The conference is held through [BirdLife Australia](#) and [Birds New Zealand](#) and is being hosted from **8-11 November 2017** by [Deakin University](#).

Presentations at AOC will consist of short oral presentations (approx. 15 mins) and poster presentations. Delegates can express their preference when submitting their abstract.

Abstracts should be no more than 200 words in length and will be evaluated based on the quality of the science, interest to the conference delegates, and completeness of results. Deadline for submission of abstracts is **15 August 2017**.

For more details go to <https://aoconference.wordpress.com/>

The importance of corridor protection for delivering long term infrastructure projects



Infrastructure Australia (IA) has released a policy paper outlining the importance of corridor protection for delivering long term infrastructure projects.

The paper, titled *Corridor Protection: Planning and investing for the long term*, explains that 'corridor protection' is a broad term covering actions that governments can take to identify and protect land required to deliver future infrastructure projects, and is an important part of long term strategic planning.

The IA report reveals the key findings from three separate scenario modelling exercises, showing that increased costs, delays and disruptions can be prevented with careful project planning.

"By protecting required land today, governments can minimise the future cost of building new infrastructure. Early acquisition protects against the possibility that the cost of the land will increase over time, increasing the future cost of delivering the infrastructure."

The paper recommends the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments establish effective corridor protection mechanisms to ensure the timely preservation of surface, underground and air corridors, as well as strategic sites, for future infrastructure priorities.

"The mechanism should include long-term strategic planning and project development work to identify corridors and lands, a stable and independent governance framework and shared financial responsibility between the Australian Government and its state and territory counterparts."

The paper mostly focuses on long distance corridors, particularly pointing out rail link corridors as an example. However, it also includes planning for first and last mile deliveries and logistics.

More details at <http://roadsonline.com.au/controlling-future-infrastructure-costs/>

US Wildlife Corridors Get A Whole New Look



Migrating pronghorns make use of wildlife crossing in Wyoming (Photo: Jeff Burrell)

Something of a novelty in the US a decade ago, wildlife crossings are proliferating according to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal. The wildlife crossings are increasingly being built into the construction of new highways where vehicle and wildlife crashes are a major threat.

Collisions between vehicles and wildlife have increased by 50% over the past 15 years. About 200 people die and 29,000 are injured per year in wildlife-vehicle crashes each year in the US. It is estimated that up to 1.5 million animals die each year.

Do the new wildlife crossings work? Cameras in 29 crossings in 2015 showed 23,000 crossings, almost double from five years earlier. The cameras showed bear and deer teaching their young how to use the wildlife crossings. Other data showed that roadkill dropped by up to 80% where there were wildlife crossings available and increased where there were none present.

Read more at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/wildlife-crossings-get-a-whole-new-look-1497967411>

The aim of this newsletter is to share information about the management of NSW linear reserve environments and profile the NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC). For more information on the REC, including how to develop roadside vegetation management plans, go to:

<http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/about/what-we-do/committees/roadside-environment-committee.html>

Please contact the REC Executive Officer if you wish to subscribe or unsubscribe.



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