

United for Nature

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#### 28/6/2022

# Landscape-species conservation—Pink-tailed Legless Lizard habitat in the Googong-Burra region project (Googong Township) 2021-2022 project update

The Molonglo Conservation Group (MCG) is a grassroots organisation working with local communities to rebalance nature for a stronger, more resilient future. We exist to strengthen the health of communities and ecosystems for mutual benefit. Through our work we build a more harmonious and helpful relationship between people and nature, for everyone's future. We engage communities and collaborate with government and other organisations to raise awareness and implement practical initiatives with positive environmental outcomes.

It is in this context that MCG is pleased to provide our 2021-2022 update on the Landscape-species conservation—Pink-tailed Legless Lizard habitat in the Googong-Burra region project (Googong Township).

## **Aprasia Sanctuary block**

Priorities are based on the agreed works schedule with the understanding that cultural sites need to be left undisturbed.

## Boundary fence monitoring and repair

The upgrade of the sanctuary fence and improved water trough was successfully completed in May 2022. Increasing the height of the existing fence line was done, instead of replacement, to protect preidentified cultural sites.

Our next step is to review sanctuary management now that the fence is complete.

Focus will be for the remainder of 2022 and 2023 will be:

## Feral animal control

Monitoring foxes / rabbits will continue now that the fence is completed.

#### Weed removal

MCG will monitor for weed control. Because of the back-to-back mild weather and wet years, the services of spraying contractors have been stretched and their services almost impossible to procure. Most contractors were fully booked till July 2022 and missed our seasonal window of opportunity. We intend to monitor invasive weeds over coming months and secure a weed contractor as appropriate.

While inspecting the fence extension in May, we noticed African Love Grass either side, and along, the fence line. With the new fence and skirt in place, something will need to be done about lovegrass and other weed regrowth since it was slashed by the fencing contractor.

Blackberry will also need to be controlled.

Thistles are likely to be outcompeted by native grasses unless groundcover is disturbed by grazing. Thistles prefer high phosphorus and bare ground, depending on groundcover management and shouldn't need to be sprayed.

## Re-establishment of native grasses in S/E block

Grazing is not recommended except for fire fuel management (and landholder relationship).

NB: With changes in insurance requirements over the past years, cool burning, while preferable, is no longer possible for MCG to facilitate. Reduced grazing would also limit disturbance of cultural sites.

Revegetation needs to be monitored and undertaken were necessary. However, there may not need to be any more revegetation work done, depending on survival of plants. Aprasia need rocky areas to be predominantly grass. The creek line has several rocky outcrops that should be managed.

Glossy Black Cockatoos - planting of more food trees and education program for 9ha hilltop park.

## Monitor creek lines for erosion

Monitoring of erosion along the creek line should be undertaken since previous consecutive wet seasons have increased surface run-off and the moisture content of the soil.

## Monitoring of Aprasia habitat condition and threats

Ecologist to be engaged for October-November presence and absence survey.

## Convene community meetings and workshops

Rather than focusing on the establishment of a Googong Landcare group our aim will be to assist in reinitiating the defunct Friends of Googong Foreshore Parkcare group in the Googong Foreshore Reserve and to encourage Googong residents to join it. This will provide the group with long-term ACT Parks and Conservation support in the ACT reserve.

Further, we believe that installing a stile over the dividing fence between the Googong Foreshores and the area where the Googong Sanctuary is located will help preserve the fence and will assist in amalgamating local people engaged in the Googong Foreshore and with those also interested in conservation volunteering in the Googong sanctuary.

## **Engagement Activities**

## Hold public education and presentation walk

COVID and weather has once again reaped havoc with our best laid plans to actively engage the community in the Googong landscape. After the first cancelations began occurring in 2021, we abandoned our attempts to stage on-ground events. We, instead, concentrated on developing online resources and improving website and social media presence with which to steer people when we can be face-to-face.

Actions included:

- Googong Dam webinar in partnership with ICON Water–engaging people in the importance of water quality in Googong and living in the drinking water catchment.
- We replaced our intended educational walks and some of our intended workshops with a social media campaign about weeds, living with Aprasia and native grassy woodland flora.
- Reconnecting with the local school program is still to be achieved, delayed when we
  discovered the local school as gone through several principals over the last couple of years
  and previous contacts have moved on. Engaging school children remains a priority for us, as
  we see that as a great way to engage with their parents too. Use of the Wonderous
  Woodlands colouring book, reported in the communications section, below, will contribute to
  that purpose.

## Sanctuary information Signage

We plan to work with PEET to design and erect an educational sanctuary sign to provide on-ground information for locals. The use of QR codes on the sign will link to MCG website to provide further educational resources.

### Habitat for Wildlife program (HFW) implementation

HFW workshops were postponed. Engaging Googong residents in our new HFW program will encourage people to think about the impact of their actions on Googong wildlife (especially Aprasia habit) and waterways. Focus will be on residential backyards and the green spaces of Googong township. The program complements the Land For Wildlife program used to engage rural landholders in the Aprasia project outside the township. (See further below, Communications - online materials).

The value of HFW is that it guides residents to develop environmentally sympathetic behaviour at home and during recreational activities in the wider Googong landscape. HFW participants become part of a network of participating Googong residents. Urban backyards and parkland can be strategically used to create connective ecological corridors across the urban footprint. The HFW program will replace the, so far, unsuccessful attempts at forming a sustainable Googong Landcare group and will help to encourage people that want to get involved in more structured caring for the natural environment to engage with the Friends of Googong Foreshores and the Googong sanctuary, discussed above.

A cat education program will be developed and promoted through the HFW program and associated online resources and information signage.

#### Aprasia artwork.

MCG has applied for funds from ICON Water to commission an artist to create an Aprasia sculpture for Googong township. Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council are very supportive of the idea and have approved the use of a sculpture to raise Aprasia habitat awareness within Googong township. The sculpture will be used to create an awareness-raising focal point in a Googong park for educational workshops for Googong residents. QR codes will direct people to MCG online resources.

## **Communications Activities**

MCG has been actively promoting material to engage the broader community with the Landscape-Species Conservation Project: Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard (Aprasia parapulchella) in the Googong-Burra region. As well as a social media campaign, information has been made available across various platforms, generating engagement with Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard with the general public within the township and surrounds.

While the Molonglo Conservation Group website is undergoing redevelopment, our engagement outputs online have been redirected to a collection of community groups. Engagement has been made through social media, newsletters, brochures, factsheets, guest segments on radio as well as a colouring book.

These promotions are shown below.

### **Social Media: Facebook**





Molonglo Conservation Group

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Tomorrow is World Wildlife Day! A great day to celebrate the wildlife we share a home with, whether it's the ones in your backyard or elsewhere on our beautiful planet earth. Which creature would you like to celebrate tomorrow (tell us in the comments)? With all the amazing creatures that call the Molonglo region home it's tough to pick just one, but how about the elusive Pink-tailed Worm-lizard or Aprasia parapulchella (pictured)? No it's not a snake, it's a legless lizard ... See more



The above Facebook post was also posted separately to the ACT Native Flora, Canberra Wildlife Photography and Our Molonglo Valley Facebook pages.

## Social Media: Instagram



#### Newsletter

Googonian Gazette Issue 31, May 2022



# **OUR HOME IS THEIR HOME: CARING FOR THE PINK-TAILED** WORM-LIZARD IN GOOGONG

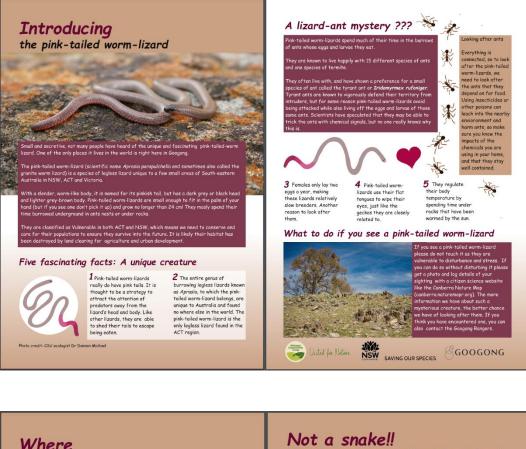
The Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (Aprasia parapulchella) is a unique but little-known legless lizard that is found in and around Googong. The lizard often lives in the burrows of ants and is small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. Classified as Vulnerable in both NSW and the ACT, it has been adversely impacted by land clearing and grazing, as well as predation from feral animals as well as predation from feral animals.

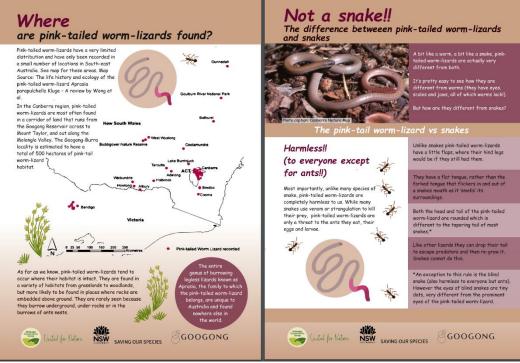
Googong Township Pty Ltd (GTPL) has committed to establish, Googong Township Pry Ltd (GFP) has committed to estation, rehabilitate and dedicate to public ownership a 54 hectare fenced Pink-tailed Worm-Jizard Conservation Area to protect this species be lizard habitat. at the eastern edge of the township. Additionally, GTPL has established a \$1m Fund for another 30 hectare Sanctuary on the south-eastern boundary of the township.

Googong is one of the few areas known to provide habitat for the lizards. So, it is really important that everyone helps to look after these lizards in the areas where we live, work and play. By looking after the Pink tailed Worm-lizard, we are looking after lots of other important and rare species of our region as well.

- Leave reserve areas intact. Don't dig up plants or
  - disturb the ground.
  - be lizard habitat.
  - Control weeds in your garden and on your verge to prevent them spreading to neighbouring bushland.
  - Do not go into the fenced conservation areas.

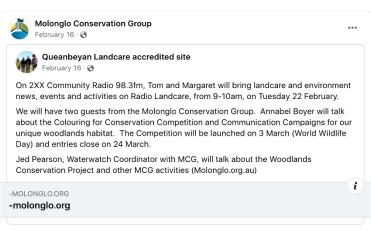
#### **Fact Sheet**







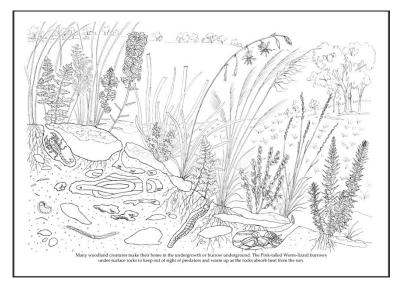
#### Radio



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## **Colouring Book**

Wondrous Box Gum Grassy Woodlands Colouring Book by Paula Peeters, Jed Pearson and Martin Henery, page 12



The promotion of this colouring book was used to engage ACT and NSW community, including a page for grassy woodlands habitat Aprasia live in. PEET benefits from the content of this material and our campaign to increase our reach in the online community.

A report was made pertaining to the results of the increased online activity on 08/06/2022 by Annabel Boyer which included the following analysis:

MCG embarked on a social media campaign a week prior to the launch of the Wondrous Box-gum Grassy Woodlands Colouring Competition, which provides roughly a month to monitor the result of activity. During that time, Molonglo Conservation Group's Facebook and Instagram engagement dramatically increased, as can be seen by the following metrics:

- Post engagements (likes and clicks and the most meaningful metric) has increased by 2,439 in that period. This equates to an increase of 879%.
- Facebook reach (number of people who see our posts) has increased by 18,157 in that period. This equates to an increase of 1.7 thousand %.
- Instagram reach has increased by 154, an increase of 111 %.
- Visits to our Facebook and Instagram pages have increased by 137.7% (145 visits) and 312% (33 visits) respectively.

#### Website

This article including information about the Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard was published on the Molonglo Conservation Group Website and generated traction within the community.

#### The precious species that call the Canberra region home

Updated: Mar 1

What do you know about the plants and animals where you live? You might be surprised to learn that many of them are unique to this part of the world and have important conservation value.

The remnant woodlands and grasslands in our region are home to incredible and unique diversity, including many vulnerable and beautiful woodland birds, mammals and the secretive **pink-tailed worm lizard**. In spring rare orchids and lilies can be seen peeping out amongst the grasses and now that summer is here there are swathes of native grasses.



Molonglo Conservation Group (MCG) is working to restore and protect the habitat of these species by restoring and conserving six different sites in Canberra and its surrounding regions. This work is funded through the NSW Environment Trust.

The sites are Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs). Previously used by graziers to accommodate stock as they walked to market, these days TSRs are normally agisted to nearby landholders or used during tough conditions, such as drought. Due to the fact that they've been only intermittently grazed, much of the plant diversity that has been lost elsewhere remains here.

The TSRs contain remnant patches of box-gum woodland, snow-gum woodland and natural temperate grasslands, all important threatened ecological communities. The trees, shrubs and grasses on these sites provide precious remnant habitat to four woodland bird species of particular significance – the Scarlet and Flame robins, the Dusky Woodswallow and the Speckled Warbler.



MCG are working with local landholders and Landcare groups to connect remaining pockets of remnant vegetation and protect what is already there. The program includes monitoring, weed removal and replanting.

Since the project began a number of surveys have been

carried out on the sites, indicating a diversity of plant and animal species. Weeds like briar rose, thistle and African love grass have been removed and stepping-stone enclosures have been built for new plantings. These will eventually provide understorey amongst larger trees which operates as habitat for smaller birds.

Raising community awareness about the precious species that live on their doorstep is another important part of the project. Molonglo Conservation Group (MCG) will raise awareness about some of the unique species who call the region home, with a new colouring book *Wondrous box-gum grassy woodlands:* a colouring exploration of a diverse ecosystem.

Wondrous box-gum grassy woodlands is the work of artist and ecologist Paula Peeters. Created in collaboration with the MCG, her beautiful work depicts a variety of different habitats in our surrounding regions, the animals and plants that live there and how we, as their neighbours, can care for them. It was commissioned by the Australian Capital Territory Government and the Molonglo Conservation Group, with funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

As part of the campaign, the MCG will also be holding a colouring competition for primary school aged kids aged from 9-12, to be held from March 3, World Wildlife Day.



These projects are supported by funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the NSW Environment Trust.

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List of Associated Documents and Links

Book

Peeters, P., Pearson, J., Henerey, M. (2022). *Wondrous Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands: A colouring exploration of a diverse ecosystem.* Paperbark Writer, pg. 12. Colour Australia's unique and beautiful Box-gum Grassy Woodlands (molonglo.org.au)

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- Facebook
   <u>Molonglo Conservation Group | Facebook</u>
- Googonian Gazette Issue 31 May 2022
   <u>cgoo5287-googong-news-may-2022-fa\_web88.ashx (azauestsc10prd-cm.azurewebsites.net)</u>
- Instagram
   <u>Molonglo Conservation Group (@molongloconservation) Instagram photos and videos</u>
- Website article
   <u>The precious species that call the Canberra region home (molonglo.org.au)</u>
- Website
   <u>Home | Molonglo Conservation</u>



Become a part in restoring our urban landscapes - both the beauty and health of our environment. Make our landscapes a habitat not only for humans but also the wildlife that we want to connect with.

This program offers urban landholders' information and support to conserve and improve habitats for wildlife. We aim to bring neighbours together in protecting their own backyards, local reserves and urban parks. Whether you own or rent a house, townhouse, apartment, unit or flat you can do something for our native birds and wildlife:

This Kit will provide you with seeds to propagate at your place of residence and then the opportunity to plant in your own yard along with planting back into urban open spaces and reserves.

Rewilding the Greater Region!

## Habitat for wildlife Kit has been put together by Molonglo Conservation Group

Kit Includes:

- Container
- Native seeds
- Potting mix
- Planting pots
- Gloves
- Spade
- Watering Can
- Plant Species Labels
- Registration form
- Monitoring form



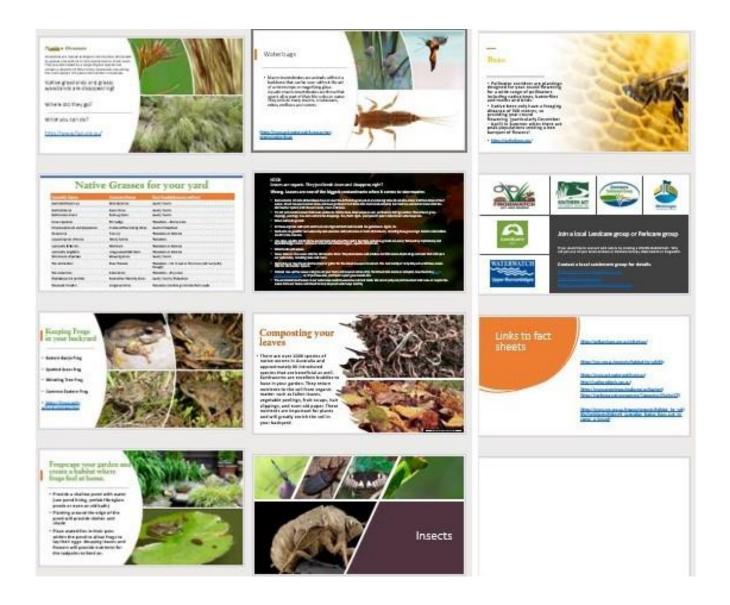
Workshop will be held for the Googong community at Aprasia Park.

This will include Demonstration on Propagation, wellbeing through therapeutic horticulture and program registration.

### Habitat for Wildlife powerpoint presentation, links to fact sheets and websites

Draft





Karen Williams MCG President