



United for Nature

Molonglo Conservation Group  
2 Dairy Road, Fyshwick  
ACT 2609

0427 803 896  
president@molonglo.org.au  
www.molonglo.org.au

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## **2022-2023 Summary of Works**

This summary includes all on-ground and prepared work undertaken in the 2022-2023 period for the landscape-species conservation project pertaining to *Aprasia parapulchella* in the Googong-Burra region including the Googong township.

In the wake of COVID-19, we've shifted most proposed on-ground events and community engagement into the digital sphere as part of a contingency response plan. The benefit of having a stronger online presence is that there is a longevity to the resources developed and an increased audience reach. With an online presence, we have also been able to more efficiently collaborate and share resources with the community. While the Molonglo Conservation Group website is still under development, we have had great success expanding into new demographics through social media. This connectivity cannot be understated heading into the conclusion of the project, as there are now tangible resources available to the Googong and broader community to support ongoing conservation efforts.

## **Monitoring of *Aprasia parapulchella* habitat conditions and threats**

### **Surveys**

Wildlife Ecologist and Herpetologist Damian Michael (Charles Sturt University) was engaged for the October 2022 presence and absence surveys. Surveys were conducted across 19 participating landholdings as well as 1 in the Googong township SE sanctuary block. The surveys were successful with 25 percent of sites containing the species, including four entirely new locality records. 10 individuals were found across these 20 sites in this period.

A survey prior to the beginning of the project found 4 individuals in the Googong township SE sanctuary block, and surveys conducted during the project prior to 2022 resulted in only one skin shed, so these results are a great success.







## Predator and Threat Control

In May 2023, 3 wildlife cameras were installed inside the Googong township SE sanctuary block and each camera recorded high fox presence. The cameras were installed at points of vulnerability in the boundary fence to determine if the foxes were accessing the site through these points, and we were able to determine that they were. This gives us insight into how to correct the fence and restrict access more efficiently. The timing of these cameras inside the site coincided with the Parks and Conservation Service scheduled arial fox treatment. The cameras will be reinstalled after PCS concludes their treatment and repairs have been made to the fence. Our findings for fox presence in May act as a baseline for ongoing monitoring in the site, ideally the next time we install the cameras and review the data there will be a reduced amount or total absence of foxes inside the sanctuary.

Mathew Zarb, site lessee, has been contracted to implement ongoing fox treatment into his current control regime. This has been determined to be the best way moving forward to ensure that the site is being actively protected against fox predation against *Aprasia* as Mathew has a strong knowledge base of the site as well as the movements and behaviours of the residing foxes.

Find below the presence/absence results of the wildlife camera installations.



Night	1 Karen	2 Glen	3 Neha
1	No	No	Yes
2	No	Yes	Yes
3	Yes	No	Yes
4	No	Yes	Yes
5	No	Yes	Yes



1 Karen



2 Glen



3 Neha





## Fence Upkeep

The apron of the boundary fence was pinned down in November 2022, significantly reducing points of vulnerability and predator access. The Conservation and Ecosystems Management class from Canberra Institute of Technology undertook this task, pinning 750 individual pins into the ground. Several turtles were also relocated, having become physically trapped in the fence apron. As aforementioned, there are still points in which need further pinning where predators have created access points, as shown in the images below.



## Revegetation

In November 2022 just under 250 individual tube stock were planted on site, including *Themeda triandra*, *Leucochrysum albicans*, *Xerochrysum viscosum* and *Wahlenbergia stricta*. These species were selected to promote the ideal habitat conditions for *Aprasia*, this small amount will increase the optimum native seed bank in the soil profile while not overwhelming the integrity of the grassland. Some further revegetation work is due to be done to address light erosion along the creek line.





## Project Engagement

### Podcast

In January 2023 Project Officer Elyssa Castles went on site with Henry Xu, a podcast producer for *Canberra: Conversations in the Capital* to discuss the project and increase broader community education about the species. The episode went live in May 2023 and had hundreds of listeners across multiple platforms including iTunes and Spotify. Cross promotion saw our social media audience increase and we were contacted with positive feedback about the project and ideas for further collaboration. This includes upcoming collaboration with Wildbark at Mulligans Flat to continue educating the broader network about *Aprasia* and supporting habitat network connectivity.





## Publication of Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat

In May 2023 the first 3 parts of Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat were published. This series was created to help young people learn about cat containment, what it means for the environment and their home. This series supports a curriculum aligned resource that helps promote the idea that it is the responsibility of pet owners to ensure that their pets aren't a danger to themselves, the public or wildlife. This series showcases that cats are able to live fulfilled and enriched lives in the home, and provides children and their families with a tool to open dialogue within their communities about the importance of cat containment in relation to the environment.

This series is part of a broader cat containment campaign that will involve onsite demonstrations and education building within the community. The Anglican School Googong and Googong Public School have been involved in this process and are eager to engage in upcoming presentations. The activity resource, critical thinking curriculum alignment and the books are being provided to the schools and we will continue to engage and offer our ongoing support if these resources are being utilised in classrooms.

These books were published as ebooks and are accessible through the National Library of Australia [www.trove.nla.gov.au](http://www.trove.nla.gov.au). Large physical copies have been printed for internal use only, this includes going onsite for presentations.





Science			Geography
Stage (Grade)	Living World		The Earth's Environment, People and Places, Factors that Shape Places
	Knowledge & Understanding	Skills	Knowledge & Understanding
Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten & Foundation)	- A student explores the characteristics, needs and uses of living things (STe-3LW-ST)	- A student observes, questions and collects data to communicate ideas (STe-1WS-S) - A student develops solutions to an identified need (STe-2DP-T)	- A student identifies places and develops an understanding of the importance of places to people (GEe-1)
Inquiry and Focus Questions	- What do we notice about living things? - What do living things need?	- What can we do to meet the needs of living things?	- What makes a place special? - How can we look after the places we live in?
Stage 1 (Grade 1 / 2)	- A student describes observable features of living things and their environment (ST1-4LW-S)	- A student observes, questions and collects data to communicate and compare ideas (ST1-1WS-S)	- A student identifies ways in which people interact and care for places (GE-1-1)
Inquiry and Focus Questions	- How can we improve a local environment to encourage living things to thrive?	- How do humans interact with plants and animals?	- How are people connected to places? - What factors affect people's connection to places - A student describes the ways people, places and environments interact (GE2-2)
Stage 2 (Grade 3 / 4)	- A student compares features and characteristics of living and non-living things (ST2-4LW-S) - A student investigates the suitability of natural and processed materials for a range of purposes (ST2-7MW-T)	- A student selects and uses materials, tools and equipment to develop solutions for a need or opportunity (ST2-2DP-T)	- A student examines differing perceptions about the management of places and environments (GE2-3)

Extended Critical Thinking Questions broken down into Series Parts

Questions	Part One	Part Two	Part Three	Part Four
Literal	- Does the quantity of Luna's favourite things change? - Does Luna keep any of her favourite things? - Have you ever seen a cat outside? - What type of things have you seen outside cats doing?	- Have you ever seen a cat scratch carpet or furniture? - Have you ever played with a cat before? - What games have you played with a cat? - Does Luna stop her bad behaviour? - Why does Luna's human call her "cheeky?" - Why was Luna bored?	- Have you ever seen a catio before? - Have you ever seen a cat sitting at a window? - Does the catio keep Luna contained? - Is there a difference between glass and net?	- Have you ever seen a cat being walked on a lead before? - Have you ever seen a bell on a cat's collar before? - Have you ever noticed different sized cats? - Why do cats sometimes wear bells on their collar? - Why does Luna need to exercise? - Do you think cats can be exercised enough inside?
Inferential	- Why does Luna have to stay inside? - Why doesn't Luna's human like her gifts initially?	- What do you think enrichment means for Luna? - How do you think Luna's human felt about having their house messy? - Does Luna's behaviour improve? - Does the vet blame Luna for her bad behaviour? - Does the vet blame Luna's human for her bad behaviour? - Do you think Luna's relationship with her human will improve with enrichment?	- How do you think Luna felt when she couldn't see, smell or feel the environment behind the glass? - Is it more sustainable to build a catio using recycled and repurposed items or to buy new material from the shop? - What types of things would you put in a catio if you could build one? - Is Luna safe in a catio? - Why is it important to provide safe ways to experience the outdoors?	- What purpose does a lead have? - Do you think cats walking on a lead is just as healthy as dogs? - What dangers does Luna face on her walk? - What threats does Luna pose on her walk - Do you think Luna enjoys going for a walk? - What other ways can Luna exercise? - What other ways can Luna stay healthy?
Evaluative	- How are environments and living things interdependent?	- What are some opportunities for problem solving and what is required to develop them?	- How does the environment support the lives of people and other living things? - How can people use places and environments more sustainably?	- A student explains interactions and connections between people, places and environments (GE3-2) - A student compares and contrasts influences on the management of places and environments (GE3-3) - How do people and environments influence one another? - How do people influence places and the management of spaces within them?
Inquiry and Focus Questions	- A student examines how the environment affects the growth, survival and adaptation of living things (ST3-4LW-S)	- A student plans and uses materials, tools and equipment to develop solutions for a need or opportunity (ST3-2DP-T)	- How do physical conditions affect the survival of living things? - How do the structural and behavioural features of living things support survival?	- What are some opportunities for problem solving and what is required to develop them?



## Activity Resources

Activity resources have been developed to support the education package and upcoming school site visits with ACT Snake Remover Gavin Smith. These activities were aligned with the NSW curriculum to build understanding and strengthen engagement with the Googong landscape and *Aprasia* habitat. See below some examples of the activities created to support the education package developed.

### Scenarios

Think about each scenario and how it could impact Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard habitat.

Consider if these scenarios might also impact any other types of wildlife.

As a group, discuss ways to change these scenarios and what to do instead.

Riding your bike off paths through nature reserves or grasslands

Leaving rubbish behind after a picnic or bush walk

Rolling rocks down hills or throwing rocks into waterways

Letting weeds grow in your garden and spreading into nature reserves

Letting your cat roam freely outside and through native grasslands

Taking rocks from the environment to put in your garden at home

Building cubbies and forts in nature reserves using fallen sticks and logs

Using chemicals in your garden to kill weeds or pest insects

### True or False

Answer the following questions with either True or False in relation to Pink-Tailed Worm Lizards



1. They have a forked tongue. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Building rock cairns is good for the environment. \_\_\_\_\_
3. They are closely related to geckos. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Foxes and cats are a threat to them. \_\_\_\_\_
5. They like to sleep in cold, moist areas. \_\_\_\_\_
6. They can drop their tails to escape predators. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Females can lay over 100 eggs a year. \_\_\_\_\_
8. They are completely harmless to humans. \_\_\_\_\_
9. They're commonly seen during ant brooding season. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Only the females have pink tails. \_\_\_\_\_
11. *Aprasia parapulchella* is their scientific name. \_\_\_\_\_
12. They climb trees to find food. \_\_\_\_\_





## Build a Pinky Home

Circle the things that Pink-Tailed Worm Lizards like for their habitat



Flat rocks      Lots of worms to eat      Plastic waste      Giant boulders  
Mossy puddles      Weeds      Native grasses  
Dark, cool shade      Lots of ants to eat      Busy pathways  
Compact soil      Burrow tunnels  
Moisture      Rainforests  
Open grasslands      Deep, wide holes      Warm sunshine

An additional activity was created for a more tactile learning approach, as it's unlikely young people in Googong will see *Aprasia*, this activity acts as substitute. The activity has children making their own "pinky pet" to act as a representation of the species through size, colours and length. Tactile activities like this provide a multi-sensory experience that stimulates various aspects of cognition and development, allowing children to learn in a fun and engaging manner.





## Community Poster

In May 2023 a poster was created, printed and distributed around the Googong township. The poster was created to match the previously developed brochure by Annabel Boyer and intends to provide basic information and education about *Aprasia parapulchella* and highlight that Googong is home to the species. This poster compliments the ongoing education we are providing in the Googong township including at the schools. This poster is now on display at The Anglican School Googong, Googong Public School, Our Place Early Learning, Moker Bean Cafe, Googong Foreshore Depot, the community noticeboard and a copy was provided to the Googong Sales Office.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT**

# GOOGONG

**IS HOME TO**

## PINK-TAILED WORM LIZARDS?

**THEIR TAILS REALLY ARE PINK AND CAN BE DROPPED IF THREATENED**

**FEMALES ONLY LAY 2 EGGS A YEAR, MAKING THEM VERY SLOW BREEDERS**

**THEIR SCIENTIFIC NAME IS APRASIA PARAPULCHELLA AND THEY ARE CLASSIFIED AS VULNERABLE**

**IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO TOUCH THEM AND TO REPORT SIGHTINGS TO RANGERS**

**KANGAROO GRASS IS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE IN THEIR HABITAT**

**THEY MOSTLY EAT ANT EGGS & LARVAE AND CAN BE FOUND LIVING INSIDE ANT NESTS**

**THEY SLEEP UNDERNEATH ROCKS TO REGULATE THEIR BODY HEAT IN THE SUN**

@molongloconservation

This project has been supported by the New South Wales' Government's Saving our Species program through its Office of Environment and Heritage and by PEET Limited.

## Aprasia parapulchella Sculpture

ICON water supported and funded an *Aprasia parapulchella* sculpture to be installed in Aprasia Park along with corresponding signage. We commissioned a Mastersmith artist who designed and fabricated the sculpture, and it is due for installation prior to an upcoming event (potentially falling on World Lizard Day in August). Queanbeyan-Palarang Regional Council have been supportive throughout this process.



## Social Media

We have continued to upload regular posts to social media including Facebook and Instagram to bring attention to *Aprasia* and to celebrate the achievements of the project. In the 2022-2023 period the Molonglo Conservation Group reached a cumulative 18,951 individual reach on Facebook, and Instagram increased to 1,438 which is a 376.2% increase from the last financial year.





## **Planned Work Schedule for 2023-2024**

There are already plans for the coming financial year to build off these successful outputs. Community engagement and education remains a strong theme, intending to build in kind support after the conclusion of the project. The following schedule is subject to change depending on circumstance and opportunity.

### **July 2023- Wildbark**

Matthew Balken, the Education & Experiences Officer for Wildbark at Mulligans Flat, listened to the podcast with Project Officer Elyssa Castles speaking about *Aprasia* and invited her to be a guest speaker for their upcoming school holiday program. This is a great opportunity to engage in broader community education and to help strengthen *Aprasia* awareness and the importance of cat containment. Elyssa will be onsite with the children twice, with an expected audience of sixty individuals.

### **July 2023- Fence Upkeep**

These repairs will address the gaps and points of vulnerability in the sanctuary block fence to further restrict pest access.

### **July 2023- Wildlife Camera Reinstallation**

The wildlife cameras will be reinstalled inside the sanctuary block to determine ongoing fox presence in the site. This will be done repeatedly throughout the year concurrent with contracted fox control treatments undertaken with the lessee to measure the efficiency of the treatment method.

### **August 2023- Habitat for Wildlife**

Associated Professor Gavin Smith, sociologist, snake ecologist and founder of ACT Snake Removals will be accompanying Molonglo Conservation Group staff to Googong Public School and The Anglican School Googong to engage in Habitat for Wildlife presentations with the student cohorts. These presentations will consist of live reptile displays, education about reptile habitat, specifically grasslands and *Aprasia* habitat, hands-on activities as well as providing *Themeda triandra* seeds for students to take home and plant, increasing native grass connectivity inside urban spaces.

### **August 2023- Icon Water Sculpture Installation**

There will be an event in *Aprasia* Park to unveil the *Aprasia* sculpture along with community education about the species. There will also be a guided tour of the Googong dam hosted by Icon Water, and additional education support from Waterwatch.

## **September 2023- Weed Control**

*Eragrostis curvula* (African Lovegrass) has been detected inside the sanctuary block, so backpack spot spraying will occur as the plants start to actively photosynthesize. This is the best time to efficiently control the plant before it goes into seed.

## **October 2023- Presence/absence surveys**

Another presence/absence survey will be conducted across the 20 sites including the Googong township SE sanctuary block and 19 participating landholdings.

## **November 2023- Erosion Works**

Small scale erosion control will be implemented inside the sanctuary site to address the light erosion along the watercourse. This will potentially include plantings and coir logs.

## **January 2024- Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat**

Another 2 parts of the series will be published, finishing the campaign. The series will be promoted, with digital copies and supporting educational material provided to Googong Public School and The Anglican School Googong. All resources will be available on the Molonglo Conservation Group website with additional links for further information. QPRC and the Conservation Council are eager to collaborate on a cat containment event and use Luna in ongoing resources.

## **February 2024- Weed Control**

This will be the second round of backpack spot spraying inside the sanctuary block. This is the recommended time for follow up spraying of *Eragrostis curvula* (African Lovegrass).

## **February 2024- Fox Traps**

Fox traps will be purchased to be placed around the sanctuary site to be tended to in kind by the lessee.

## **March 2024- Interpretive Signage**

An interpretative sign will be designed, fabricated and installed at the sanctuary site to inform the broader community about the project, the site and the species. This will ensure that the site is safeguarded in the public conscience after the conclusion of the project.