



Hawkesbury River County Council updating its Roadside Vegetation Management Plan

Hawkesbury River County Council (HRCC) is a local weed control authority in Western Sydney, operating across the Council areas of Blacktown, Hawkesbury, The Hills and Penrith. Since 2019 it has been operating under a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP) to guide the effective management of weeds in the roadside environment.

The plan strategically prioritises both biodiversity and biosecurity outcomes to assist with the weed management operations. The development of this plan involved collecting data through field assessments of roadside vegetation across 819 kilometres. From this data, roads were classified as high, medium, or low conservation value. A map was produced with and accompanied by a list of roadsides under which are included in the RVMP plan.

Currently the RVMP 2023 plan is on exhibition for review. HRCC considered its use and made only minor changes. The annual operational plan sets targets, such as “five hectares of weed control within a High Conservation Value (HCV) roadside”. HRCC then reports against this progress quarterly and annually.

Recent works have included treating a Lantana infestation with cut and paint methods along Cattai Ridge Road in Glenorie. This road is listed under the RVMP plan as HCV and provides habitat linkages across the landscape. Also, from a biosecurity perspective, staff also treat and survey this section of road for priority weeds such as Boneseed and have reported Boneseed on private land to Biosecurity Inspectors to engage the landholders. This demonstrates how the RVMP plan is integrated into operations at HRCC.

More information at <https://hrcc.nsw.gov.au/>

Contents

Hawkesbury River County Council updating its Roadside Vegetation Management Plan	1
Koalas now safer on Port Stephens Drive	2
2023 ANET Conference.....	3
Covram (Condition of vegetation rapid assessment method) – A tool for better native vegetation management	4
Yam daisies appear again on the Hay Plains.....	5
First trial of virtual fencing to reduce wildlife roadkill on NSW South Coast deemed a major success	6
From "massive squishings" to the insect apocalypse, roads are terrorizing nature.....	7



Photo: Lantana camera on a HCV roadside reserve Cattai ridge Road Glenorie (Hills LGA). (Natalie James Weed Control Coordinator Hawkesbury River County Council).

Koalas now safer on Port Stephens Drive

Koalas in the Port Stephens area are now better protected from vehicle strikes on Port Stephens Drive thanks to funding from NSW State Government.

The Port Stephens Drive Koala Vehicle Strike Project, delivered in partnership with the NSW Koala Program was completed this month aiming to reduce Koala fatalities along one of the worst Koala road-strike locations in NSW.

Port Stephens Council delivered the project which was funded by the NSW State Government as part of the NSW Koala Program.

Port Stephens Council Deputy Mayor and Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) Chair, Leah Anderson said this project significantly benefits our koala population with over 80 koala road strikes recorded on Port Stephens Drive during a 10 year period.

This project brought together a range of stakeholders and specialists from Port Stephens Council, the Port Stephens Koala Hospital, Koala Coalition, Transport for NSW and the NSW Koala Program team to deliver an important project for conserving our local Port Stephens koala population.

“Port Stephens Council will continue working with our partners to identify future opportunities for conserving and enhancing our local koala population,” Cr Anderson said.

“We’ve recently started a Landholder Partnership Program to encourage community members on private land to work with Council to provide safe environments for our koalas.

“We’re looking for landholders to plant koala food and shelter trees and remove weeds to create koala friendly backyards.

“Those that register for the program before 30 November, go in the draw to win a stay at Koala Sanctuary,” Cr Anderson added.

To become a Koala Landholder Partner, enter the competition, or find out how you can help keep our koalas safe in the Port Stephens community, visit <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/environment/koalas>



2023 ANET Conference



EIANZ and ANET are thrilled to bring you ANET 2023 which will be held at the Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre on 27 - 29 November 2023.

ANET is the premier event for ecologists, transport planners, regulators, construction and operation professionals, and the local community to engage on the interactions between transportation and ecology. The conference will include two days of technical presentations, posters, panels, workshops and trade displays, and a one-day field trip to Kaikoura.

Both linear infrastructure and biodiversity are vulnerable to natural disasters and extreme weather events, which are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity in the years ahead. Impacts on natural ecosystems can be further exacerbated by emergency works after disasters, such as earthworks, drainage and vegetation clearing. Importantly, many of these impacts can be avoided or mitigated by enhancing landscape connectivity, reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions, and minimising artificial light at night, among other measures.

Healthy and resilient ecosystems also play a vital role in disaster risk reduction and natural (or 'green') infrastructure can help provide communities and nature with resilience to these hazards. Conversely, poorly located and designed transport infrastructure can exacerbate ecological consequences and cost billions to repair or rebuild following natural disasters. The transport infrastructure we plan, design and build today must both support and promote resilient and functioning ecosystems, and ensure that it can withstand and recover from future shocks.

Important questions to be discussed at ANET 2023 include:

- How do linear infrastructure and transport networks affect the resilience of natural ecosystems to future shocks and stressors?
- How can existing and future infrastructure support and enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation?
- How can transport planning, design, construction and operation assist in the recovery and restoration of endangered species, populations and ecosystems after natural disasters?
- What role does the community play in the planning and design of ecologically-sensitive linear infrastructure, as well as restoration and recovery after shocks and disasters?

More information and registration details here:

<https://www.eianz.org/events/event/ANET2023>

Covram (Condition of vegetation rapid assessment method) – A tool for better native vegetation management

Understanding the condition of native vegetation is vital to ensuring the important native habitats found on roadside reserves are effectively managed. However, up to now determining the condition of native vegetation has been difficult (and virtually impossible at scale) due to the lack of a standard approach and the variable experience of land managers.

We have developed the Covram Platform to offer a standardised, repeatable approach which can be applied with minimal training and does not require specialist botanical knowledge.

The Covram methodology:

- Has been successfully applied to hundreds of roadsides, TSRs and private land and is informed by over 30 years of experience in field assessment and land management advice.
- Applies a numeric score to characterise key vegetation values to determine condition rating (5 levels 2 x high, 2 x medium and low) making it consistent with the roadside assessment traffic light system.
- Includes a geo-referenced photo point for later visual comparison.
- Assists in making land management decisions e.g. grazing, weed control and revegetation potential etc.

COVRAM can:

- Empower local land management staff
- Record over 20 field specific characteristics
- Assist in making informed land management decisions
- Be used to complement other survey approaches

The Covram Platform has two parts:

1. Covram mobile app developed for field use by land managers and practitioners - Search 'Covram' on the Google Play/Apple App Store
2. Web app for data review and analysis - Available via covram.com.au

The COVRAM app is freely available at present, and we welcome people to try it out and provide feedback. For more information, email ian@covram.com.au or michael@covram.com.au

Yam daisies appear again on the Hay Plains

Yam daisy or Murnong (the traditional name in some areas) was an important food plant of the local Aboriginal people as the plant produces annually edible, fleshy tuber roots. Digging sticks were used to remove a portion of these tubers.

Historic stock movements combined with rabbit plagues and significant dry periods contributed to its rapid decline in western NSW. It is very palatable to stock and is readily grazed and easily trampled.

The yam daisy is a perennial forb. It has a flower stalk with a relatively large head of yellow florets similar to a dandelion. The head droops before becoming erect to attract pollinators such as hover flies. The seed heads ripen to a cluster of fluffy pappus-clad fruits that are dispersed by the wind. Growth from seed or established tuber/s starts in autumn or winter when the characteristic leaves appear.

After flowering, the forb dies back quickly to ground level in late spring. The yam daisy population on the Hay plains grows amongst the bladder saltbush communities with many plants growing up through the bladder saltbush (*Atriplex vesicaria*).

The La Nina events of 2021 and 2022 triggered the growth of isolated populations of yam daisies on the travelling stock reserve between Booligal and Hay. This resulted in the forb being observed, discussed, photographed, seed collected, and seed and a specimen sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Victoria to be formally identified.

Work to date on the Hay plains yam daisy has determined that this species has longer than-typical tubers and an unusually high number of “plumes” (these help with wind dispersal of the seed). Further work may yet show this yam daisy to warrant naming beyond *Microseris walteri* (pers.com N Walsh)

More details from Riverina Local Land Services <https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/riverina>



First trial of virtual fencing to reduce wildlife roadkill on NSW South Coast deemed a major success

The first trial of a 'virtual fence' by a council in New South Wales has been a major success in improving driver safety and preventing wallabies, wombats and other wildlife from becoming roadkill.

One kilometre of 'virtual fencing' was installed along Cullendulla Drive north of Batemans Bay in October last year – a section of road notorious for its high number of wildlife fatalities and injuries. The road was selected after being identified through roadkill records as one of the area's most significant hotspots.

One year on and the fence has been a lifesaver for animals, with the number of wildlife strikes attended by WIRES volunteers and council staff after the fence was installed dropping from up to five kangaroos and wallabies every week during the peak holiday season to just five animals in eight months.

The project was spearheaded by local community group, The Coastwatchers Association, in partnership with Eurobodalla Shire Council and WIRES volunteers, with funding support from Great Eastern Ranges (GER) and the World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia (WWF-Australia).

The system, supplied by Wildlife Safety Solutions, consists of a series of poles set at 25-metre intervals along the road in a zigzag pattern. When a vehicle approaches, the headlights activate a sensor at the top of each pole which triggers it to make a sound and flash blue and yellow flashing lights creating a 'virtual fence' that alerts animals.

More details at <https://ger.org.au/first-trial-of-virtual-fencing-to-reduce-wildlife-roadkill-on-nsw-south-coast-deemed-a-major-success/>



From "massive squishings" to the insect apocalypse, roads are terrorizing nature

Take a mental picture of the Earth.

Now shatter that image into 600,000 fragments.

These fragments are carved out by road networks, which stretch across about 40 million miles of the Earth's surface. And environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb says there are new roads being built all the time.

"There are something like 15 million miles of roads scheduled for construction by the middle of this century," Goldfarb says. "So roads are ubiquitous and everywhere, and we're only getting more of them."

From "massive squishings" of amphibians to mass starvations and even the shape of some birds' wings, roads alter the wildlife around us.

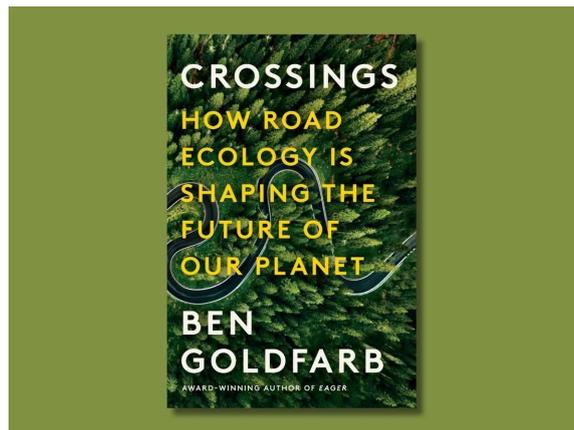
For a long time, biologists did not see mass animal deaths caused by cars as a problem. People hypothesized that wild animals—especially ones with high reproductive rates like amphibians—would compensate for this road mortality.

Until, Ben says, one scientist named Lenore Fahrig questioned that assumption.

When Fahrig started digging into the data, she was surprised to find that the busiest roads in her neighborhood had the fewest numbers of dead frogs. So, streets with fewer cars had somehow caused more frog deaths. After more research, she realized that cars and busy roads had already reduced the frog population so much, there were no more frogs to kill.

This is just one of many examples of the danger roads pose to wildlife included in Goldfarb's new book *Crossings: How Road Ecology Is Shaping the Future of Our Planet*.

More details at <https://www.norton.com/books/crossings>



CHECK OUT THE REC's WEBPAGE

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/operations/roads-and-waterways/committees-communities-and-groups/committees-and-groups/roadside>