

Plant Cuttings – May 2024

Audit of Environmental Offsets under the EPBC Act – Final Report released (May 2024)

The Commonwealth Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has released the report of an audit on EPBC environmental offsets. The audit was conducted June 2023 to March 2024.

The audit report is at:

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/environmental-offsets-audit-report.pdf>

A summary of the findings can be found at:

<https://www.herbertsmithfreehills.com/notes/environmentaustralia/2024-posts/env-offsets-audit-finds-non-comp-with-offset-cond-for-1-in-7-EPBC-approv>

New Chief Executive to guide Botanic Gardens of Sydney's future – NSW Government, 1 May 2024

The future of the Botanic Gardens of Sydney will be expertly guided by a new Chief Executive following a competitive global search.

Simon Duffy AM will join the Gardens from Taronga Zoo where he spent the last 27 years leading education, tourism, science, conservation, place-making, and fundraising initiatives. Mr Duffy also successfully led Taronga's transformation from a traditional zoo to a zoo-based conservation organisation.

The appointment is aligned with, and reinforces, the Botanic Gardens of Sydney's position as a global leader in biodiversity, sustainability, scientific research and conservation, as well as its significance as a cherished destination for families, nature-lovers, scientists and tourists alike.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/new-chief-executive-to-guide-botanic-gardens-of-sydneys-future>

Queensland government tests Great Sandy Strait for herbicide damage to seagrass – ABC Rural, 21 May 2024

Commercial fishermen's fears that herbicide run-off is killing seagrass and their livelihood in the Great Sandy Strait are being investigated for the first time by the Queensland government.

Seagrass in the UNESCO-recognised marine habitat — a 70-kilometre stretch separating the mainland from K'gari (Fraser Island) — has dramatically declined since it was first mapped by James Cook University (JCU) in 1998.

But preliminary results show herbicides do not appear to be the cause.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2024-05-21/great-sandy-strait-seagrass-herbicide-tested-by-qld-government/103859842>

Macquarie Island remains pest free 10 years after eradication program, but new threats loom – ABC News, 30 May 2024

It's been 10 years since a massive pest eradication program removed all rabbits and rodents from Macquarie Island.

Scientists say the World Heritage-listed area is returning to its former glory, with a resurgence in vegetation allowing nesting seabirds to flourish.

While the island remains pest-free, new threats are on the horizon, including climate change and avian influenza.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-30/macquarie-island-pest-free-following-eradication-program/103908056>

Australian icons set to 'pay a heavy price' after Federal Budget 2024 'failure' – Yahoo Finance, 15 May 2024

Australia's 2024 Federal Budget has been described as "inadequate" and the "worst in recent years". Conservationists have claimed the Albanese Government has "failed" to allocate new money to stem the nation's booming list of plants and animals, like populations of koalas and iconic bird species, facing extinction.

For the 2000 "battling" animals, plant and ecological communities on the Commonwealth's threatened species list, experts warn the future looks grim. They are concerned there has been very little new money invested in nature conservation, even though Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek has committed her government to stopping new extinctions.

<https://au.finance.yahoo.com/news/australian-icons-set-to-pay-a-heavy-price-after-federal-budget-2024-failure-033523740.html>

Lawns, real or fake, are on their way out — and it's a good thing – ABC Grand Designs, 17 May 2024

The typical Australian lawn is under threat. Just take a look at the latest in residential design and you'll likely notice a few interesting changes to our private green spaces.

The first is the revived appreciation for native Australian flora and water-sensitive gardens — our bush gardens are creeping closer to our houses and minimising the lawn area. And, as our landscape infiltrates how we design our houses things like internal courtyards or copious indoor plants — where the green is anything BUT grass — are becoming a popular feature.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-17/why-we-should-get-rid-of-our-lawns-grass-favour-native-gardens/103850712>

Scientists hope fungi-sniffing dog can save species on brink of extinction – ABC News, 17 May 2024

Daisy, an Italian water-dog, has been trained to detect a critically endangered fungi. When she finally finds her target, she'll wag her tail to get the attention of her handler, Nick Rutter.

The tea tree finger fungus is only known to exist in six Victorian locations. While some might struggle to see the value of the tiny, gnarled finger fungus, its critical importance is obvious to conservation scientist Michael Amor.

It's a species only known to be in six locations in Victoria and Dr Amor has observed fewer than 100 specimens in his years of research.

Scientists hope Daisy's nose will save the fungus. Daisy is thought to be the only dog being used to sniff out fungi for conservation purposes worldwide.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-17/fungi-sniffing-dog-save-species-from-extinction/103858084>

Demand for steak fuelling deforestation and extinction in NSW – The Sydney Morning Herald, May 8 2024

Soaring demand for red meat is contributing to habitat loss across NSW that has put the state on course to lose nearly a quarter of all known plant and animal species in the next century.

As the Minns government releases the NSW biodiversity outlook report on Wednesday, environmental groups are growing impatient that the government is yet to reverse controversial 2016 land-clearing laws championed by former deputy premier John Barilaro.

Nature Conservation Council spokesperson Clancy Barnard said the biodiversity decline since the last report in 2020 was "shocking and deeply frustrating". He said Labor came to power promising to act on land clearing, but had failed to deliver so far.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/is-demand-for-steak-fuelling-deforestation-in-nsw-20240507-p5fpk3.html>

Teen's bid to protect biodiversity of NSW forest provides 'critical refuge' to endangered species – ABC News, 13 May 2024

Two years ago, the then 14-year-old Ned McNaughton stumbled on a small forest while exploring the bush around his hometown in South East New South Wales. It marked the start of a journey that eventually saw the parcel of land named after him.

Now 16, Ned has always been "super keen" on protecting nature. But he said his passion was intensified after witnessing nearly 80 per cent of the south coast's Eurobodalla council area burn during the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019–20.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-13/teen-protects-biodiversity-nsw-forest-gives-refuge-endangered/103825984>

Dieback hits Tasmanian forests after dry summer as researchers investigate impact on trees' future – ABC News, 9 May 2024

Huge patches of forest in Tasmania have rapidly turned brown over recent months, with many trees dying after a dry summer. But what this signals for forests in the future as the climate continues to warm is unclear.

From February to the end of April, parts of the state received the lowest rainfall since records began. Hobart just endured the third-driest summer on record.

"This is putting amazing stress on our trees," The Tree Projects lead researcher Jen Sanger told ABC Radio Hobart's Kylie Baxter.

The extensive sudden tree death in Tasmania is the result of a phenomenon called dieback.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-09/dieback-in-tasmania-killing-forests-research-future-impact/103809158>

Feral horses in Australia's high country are damaging peatlands, decreasing carbon stores – The Conversation, 10 May 2024

Peatlands store more carbon per square metre than any other ecosystem on Earth. These waterlogged, mossy bogs beat even dense rainforests for their ability to act as carbon reservoirs.

Under the right conditions, peat soils accumulate from carbon-rich, semi-decomposed plants. But if things go wrong, the carbon balance can be tipped in the other direction, releasing carbon into the atmosphere.

We wanted to know if feral horse grazing and trampling is reducing the amount of carbon Australia's alpine peatlands can store.

In our new research, we sampled peat soils from areas with and without feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park, NSW. We found peatlands untouched by feral horses store almost 50% more carbon. In degraded peatlands, where horses had trampled all of the plants leaving bare soils at the surface, carbon storage was even lower.

<https://theconversation.com/feral-horses-in-australias-high-country-are-damaging-peatlands-decreasing-carbon-stores-228990>

Making merry: how we brought Melbourne's Merri Creek back from pollution, neglect and weeds – The Conversation, 7 May 2024

I met with a friend for a walk beside Merri Creek, in inner Melbourne. She had lived in the area for a few years, and as we walked beside the creek, past trees, native grasses, a small wetland echoing with frog calls, I talked about how it had looked before we started the site's restoration around 25 years ago. She stopped in her tracks, astonished. "But I thought it had always been like this!" she said.

<https://theconversation.com/making-merry-how-we-brought-melbournes-merri-creek-back-from-pollution-neglect-and-weeds-226231>

Events and Opportunities

NZES and ESA Trans-Tasman Forum “Hope Matters: Climate Change and Ecology” – Online, 23-24 July 2024

We invite you to participate in the 2024 Trans-Tasman Forum, hosted by the New Zealand Ecological Society and the Ecological Society of Australia.

Across the globe, climate change is challenging the structure and function of ecosystems and the services they provide to societies. The consequential effects include species changes that are occurring more rapidly than expected, with evidence of further acceleration to come.

This 2-day online forum will focus on the following four themes: Eco-sanctuaries, Fire ecology, Open session - invasive species, coastal and freshwater ecosystems, biodiversity conservation, Traditional ecological knowledge.

<https://kaigi.eventsair.com/nzes-esa-trans-tasman-forum/>

11th Australian Stream Management Conference and Awards Gala – Victor Harbor SA, 11-14 August 2024

The 11th Australian Stream Management Conference and Awards Gala provides an exciting opportunity to share the knowledge and practice within waterway management in Australia and celebrate these incredible achievements. Held in the beautiful Victor Harbor in South Australia, the ASM Conference and Awards Gala will come together for the first time. The hope is that we can braid Australia’s numerous threads of waterway knowledge together to revive our river basins for a brighter future.

<https://www.11asm.org.au/>

Annual Dieback Information Group (DIG) Conference – Perth WA, 20-21 August 2024

This conference will bring together the latest in scientific knowledge, best land management practices and industry innovation in the Phytophthora science and management space.

This year’s theme “Seeing the Forest for the Trees” - has been selected to recognise the importance of holistic management for Australia's forest ecosystems, and the pivotal role that environmental biosecurity and disease hygiene play in the health of these landscapes.

The Conference Day 1 is available in person and online with optional field trips on Day 2.

<https://www.dwg.org.au/dig-2024/>

23rd Australasian Weeds Conference – Brisbane QLD, 25-29 August 2024

Invasive Species Queensland (formerly the Weed Society of Queensland) is excited to collaborate with the Council of Australasian Weed Societies (CAWS) in hosting the 23rd Australasian Weeds Conference (AWC). Join us from August 25 to 29, 2024 at the Brisbane

Convention and Exhibition Centre for this significant national event.

<https://icebergevents.eventsair.com/awc24/>

Island Arks Symposium VIII. Island Stewards: Caring for land and sea – Kangaroo Island SA, 26-29 August 2024

The Island Arks Symposium is an exciting opportunity to share the knowledge and practice of our Island stewards.

An invaluable forum for developing collaborations and partnerships for those involved in, or with an interest in Island management within the Pacific Region and elsewhere.

Previously held on Daydream Island, Tasmania, Norfolk Island, Fiji, Rottneest Island and Philip Island, this year the symposium will be held on Kangaroo Island.

Join practitioners, land managers, policy makers, scientists, community groups and traditional custodians as they explore the challenges, pathways and solutions to island sustainability.

<https://islandarks.com.au/>

3rd Australian Biosecurity Symposium – Gold Coast QLD, 27-29 August 2024

Building upon the groundbreaking ideas and enriching conversations that marked the success of the 1st and 2nd Australian Biosecurity Symposiums, #BioSym2024 is set to delve even deeper into the future landscape of Australian Biosecurity. This is your chance to be a part of shaping that future. Seize the opportunity to connect with key decision-makers, trailblazing innovators, influential voices, and dedicated researchers within the realm of Australian biosecurity. Mark your calendar, because this is an event you won't want to miss!

<https://www.biosym.com.au/>

8th International Orchid Conservation Congress – Perth WA, 3-6 September 2024 (post-congress fieldtrip 8-10 September)

Welcome to the 8th International Orchid Conservation Congress (IOCC).

A Minute to Midnight theme reflects the global rates of biodiversity decline. Never before in human history have so many wild species been faced with habitat loss and decline. Orchids have not been spared, and IOCC8 is dedicated to understanding the threats and the solutions that are needed to arrest the decline of orchids. Speakers will present a range of relevant topics with the field trip visiting the global biodiversity hotspot of Southwest Australia.

<https://iocc8.com/>

ANPSA Biennial Conference: Gardens for Life – Melbourne VIC, 30 Sep – 4 Oct 2024

Australian Plants Society Victoria (APS Vic) will host the biennial national conference of the Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) (ANPSA). The Conference is being held in excellent facilities at The Round in Nunawading, near Melbourne. Registrations are now open.

<https://www.anpsa2024conference.com/>

3 Day Wetland Plant Identification and Ecology Course, Wetland Revival Trust – Cohuna VIC, Various dates Oct, Dec 2024 and Mar 2025.

For anyone interested in wetland plant identification and ecology. Observe the changing seasons and water depths of the stunning Reedy Lagoon, Gunbower Island over a six month period. Each of the three days will focus on a different wetland habitat (wetting and drying) and associated plant community.

<https://wetlandrevivaltrust.org/courses/>

ESA 2024 – Melbourne VIC, 9-13 December 2024

The conference will showcase the science of ecology in Australia – across all its varied forms – and be an opportunity to explore the connection between science theory, science research, science policy and science on-ground outcomes.

The conference of the Ecological Society of Australia (ESA 2024) will be an in-person conference but a limited number of online options will be offered, including live-streamed plenaries, some live-streamed symposia and some of the presentations being made available online after the conference.

<https://esa2024.org.au/>