

Plant Cuttings – August 2024

CSIRO introduces biocontrol fungus to reduce spread of African boxthorn plant – ABC News, 1 August 2024

Researchers are pinning their hopes on a new fungus to control an invasive pest blighting the Australian landscape.

The fast-growing African boxthorn was introduced to Australia more than a century ago. It was used by early settlers to create hedges as cheaper alternatives to fences.

The dense and thorny bush is difficult to destroy and has become a major weed regulated nationwide, except in Western Australia.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-01/african-boxthorn-csiro-weed-control-biocontrol-fungus/104148286>

Restoring logged forests doesn't mean locking them up as 'wilderness' – it means actively managing them – The Conversation, 1 August 2024

On January 1 this year, the commercial logging of native forests ended in Victoria and Western Australia. It was one of the most significant changes in the history of forest management in Australia.

After the chainsaws fell silent, the debate began over how to best care for our forests in future. There has been a stream of articles about the threats of thinning forests, the damage from fire management, and confusion over Indigenous-led forest management.

These practices are worth discussing. But conflating them with the destructive commercial logging practices of the past is unwarranted.

<https://theconversation.com/restoring-logged-forests-doesnt-mean-locking-them-up-as-wilderness-it-means-actively-managing-them-232140>

Indigenous Australians want a seat at the table when it comes to conservation. Here's how we might get there – The Conversation, 2 August 2024

Globally, many Indigenous people want to help protect their traditional lands and waters, drawing on knowledge stretching back millennia. Indigenous people have an obligation to look after species and habitats that are culturally important to them. But how can Indigenous voices be supported to make land management decisions? And how do we ensure the process is Indigenous-led and culturally safe? New research by myself and colleagues can help.

We engaged Indigenous people from Bundjalung Country on Australia's east coast. In a process they led, the Bundjalung people identified which culturally significant species they considered priorities for "collaborative management" – that is, management built on mutual respect for both Western science and Indigenous knowledge systems.

<https://theconversation.com/indigenous-australians-want-a-seat-at-the-table-when-it-comes-to-conservation-heres-how-we-might-get-there-235954>

Over a dozen animals and plants join Australia's growing list of threatened species, prompting calls for stronger environmental laws – ABC News, 7 August 2024

Over a dozen new animals and plants have been quietly added to Australia's growing list of threatened species in the last month, prompting new calls for stronger federal environmental laws.

Eight new animals have been added to the listing in various levels of endangerment including the pig-nosed turtle (listed as vulnerable), Pugh's sphagnum frog (endangered), three critically endangered freshwater fish and three lizards, including one that had only been classified a species since 2022.

The flora species include flowering shrubs, a rainforest tree, and a daisy and an orchid species.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-07/a-dozen-animals-and-plants-added-endangered-species-list/104193370>

Buffel grass prompts bushfire warning as weed infests unprotected states – ABC News, 8 August 2024

A highly flammable invasive grass that fuelled devastating fires in the Northern Territory and Hawaii is silently creeping into more Australian states along major trucking routes.

Despite being a declared weed in the Northern Territory and South Australia, buffel grass remains unregulated in all other states and territories, allowing it to spread freely.

In 2023, the weed fuelled major bushfires in the Northern Territory that engulfed more than 13 million hectares of land, and fuelled one of the largest bushfires in US history on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-08/invasive-weed-buffel-grass-maui-northern-territory-bushfires/104136376>

Liked to death? The social media race for nature photos can trash ecosystems – or trigger rapid extinction – The Conversation, 9 August 2024

Have you ever liked or shared a social media post about nature? It could have been a photo of a rare orchid or an unusual bird. Or you might share a stunning photo of an “undiscovered” natural place. It feels good to do so. You’re sharing something beautiful, an antidote to negativity. But not even this simple act is problem-free.

Social media have become a huge force. It’s come with many positives for nature, such as greater visibility and interest in citizen science and public knowledge about the species we share the planet with. Australia’s largest citizen science project, the Aussie Bird Count, collected reports of 3.6 million birds in backyards in one week.

There is, unfortunately, a dark side to this effortless sharing of information. Viral photos of undisturbed natural beauty can lead thousands of people to head there. As more people arrive, they begin destroying what they loved seeing on screen.

<https://theconversation.com/liked-to-death-the-social-media-race-for-nature-photos-can-trash-ecosystems-or-trigger-rapid-extinction-235951>

Wildflower Society determined to reduce native vegetation clearing amid lack of monitoring in WA – ABC News, 11 August 2024

Brett Loney has long been disturbed by Western Australia's appetite for native vegetation clearing. For the better part of a decade, the Wildflower Society of Western Australia president has devoted countless hours to lodging hundreds of appeals — about 40 a year — against land clearing permits.

But a letter from the environment minister in November 2020 confirmed something he found especially concerning — not even the government knew exactly how much bushland was being knocked down.

"When I ask for the statistics of how much has been cleared, nobody can give them to me," he said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-11/native-vegetation-clearing-not-being-monitored-wa/104189928>

Macquarie Islands biodiversity revival: Plant species recovered from extinction risk – Pulse Tasmania, 12 August 2024

Multiple plant species have been brought back from the risk of extinction and could be delisted from the Threatened Species Protection Act thanks to the eradication of rabbits on Macquarie Island.

The Threatened Species Scientific Advisory Committee has recommended delisting the cooks tussock grass, the prickly shieldfern and the shade plantain, as well as the humpback whale.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Senior Ecologist Micah Visoiu said the recovery comes as a “huge achievement” following the removal of rabbits from the island about 1,500 km south-east of Tasmania in 2011.

<https://pulsetasmania.com.au/news/macquarie-islands-biodiversity-revival-plant-species-recovered-from-extinction-risk/>

Industry push to earn carbon credits from Australia's native forests would be a blow for nature and the climate – The Conversation, 12 August 2024

Australia's forestry industry raised eyebrows this month when it released plans to remove trees from native forests, potentially including national parks, and claim carbon credits in the process.

Forestry Australia, the industry body behind the plan, claims it would make ecosystems more resilient and help tackle climate change. But decades of research findings clearly suggest the proposal, if accepted, will have the opposite effect.

Scientific evidence shows some proposed practices make forests more fire-prone and undermine forest health. And the carbon released when cutting down and processing trees would undercut any climate benefits of the plan.

<https://theconversation.com/industry-push-to-earn-carbon-credits-from-australias-native-forests-would-be-a-blow-for-nature-and-the-climate-236245>

Century-old red gum trees cut down illegally for firewood in SA's South East – ABC News, 13 August 2024

Forestry plantation owners in South Australia's South East have reported red gum trees that are more than 100 years old being cut down illegally amid a crackdown on firewood theft. The state's National Parks and Wildlife Service has been working with police, local councils and the Victorian Conservation Regulator to target the illegal taking of firewood from parks and reserves.

National Parks and Wildlife Service Limestone Coast senior ranger Kieran Gosden said the impacts of firewood theft, particularly the felling of red gums, were significant on threatened and endangered species.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-13/century-old-red-gum-trees-illegally-cut-down-for-firewood/104213794>

Conservation detection dog Oakley patrols the banks of Canberra's lake identifying noxious alligator weed – ABC News, 16 August 2024

Oakley has a nose for weeds, and when he finds one, he drops to the ground to wait for his reward. For the last three years the six-year-old border collie and his colleague and conservation dog handler, Tracy Lyten, have been sniffing about the habitat on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin for the National Capital Authority (NCA).

Ms Lyten and the conservation detection dog for hire are contracted to find, map and monitor invasive alligator weed.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-16/act-oakley-alligator-weed-sniffing-dog-map-lake-burley-griffin/104229042>

Crackles, clicks and pops – now we can monitor the ‘heartbeat’ of soil – The Conversation, 16 August 2024

Healthy soil is teeming with life. An astonishing 59% of Earth's species live in soil. They play crucial roles in maintaining soil health and, by extension, the health of our planet.

But this vital resource is under threat. Currently, 75% of the world's soils are damaged. This figure could rise to 90% by 2050 due to deforestation, overgrazing, urbanisation and other destructive practices.

Such degradation poses significant risks, not only to biodiversity but also to the ecosystem services humans rely on, such as food production. But traditional methods of detecting and

measuring soil life are often costly, time-consuming and intrusive. Enter “ecoacoustics”, an innovative and non-destructive approach that could transform soil health monitoring.

<https://theconversation.com/crackles-clicks-and-pops-now-we-can-monitor-the-heartbeat-of-soil-235865>

VIDEO: Conservationists call for deer to be deemed a pest across Victoria – ABC News, 16 August 2024

Conservationists say their status as protected wildlife is stymieing efforts to reduce their numbers, but hunters say the environmental impact caused by deer is being overstated.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-16/conservationists-call-for-deer-to-be-deemed-a-pest/104231796>

Australia’s nature is in deep crisis. These 3 easy steps would give our new environment laws teeth – The Conversation, 19 August 2024

The Albanese government’s environmental reforms are likely to feature prominently on federal parliament’s agenda this week. A Senate inquiry into the long-awaited reforms is due to deliver its findings on Monday. Meanwhile, the Coalition is reportedly preparing to oppose the changes, potentially forcing Labor into negotiations with the Greens.

The so-called “nature positive” bills would establish two new agencies, Environment Protection Australia (EPA), an environmental regulator and watchdog, and Environment Information Australia (EIA), an environmental bureau of statistics.

Establishing the new agencies would deliver an election promise, but falls far short of the comprehensive and desperately needed package of reforms outlined in the Albanese government’s Nature Positive Plan, launched in 2022.

<https://theconversation.com/australias-nature-is-in-deep-crisis-these-3-easy-steps-would-give-our-new-environment-laws-teeth-236517>

Humans can work with nature to solve big environmental problems – but there’s no quick fix – The Conversation, 20 August 2024

“Nature-based solutions” are gaining momentum in environmental policy, including in Australia. They involve working with nature to protect, restore or manage ecosystems in a way that benefits both people and the environment.

This might include restoring coastal mangroves to protect a community from coastal erosion, or replanting forests to store carbon, provide cleaner air, and create habitat for wildlife.

But such solutions must go the distance, if their full potential is to be realised. In particular, they must be able to withstand short-term disturbances such as fire or drought, as well as longer-term change such as global warming.

<https://theconversation.com/humans-can-work-with-nature-to-solve-big-environmental-problems-but-theres-no-quick-fix-235864>

2024 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes finalists – Australian Museum, 21 August 2024

The Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are the nation's premier science awards, celebrating the very best of Australian scientific discovery, invention, communication, innovation and leadership.

The finalists of the **Eureka Prize for Excellence in Botanical Science from the Australian Institute of Botanical Science** have been announced. A full list of finalists is published on the Australian Museum website.

Finalists:

Professor David Keith, UNSW

Professor David Keith has developed the world's first method to catalogue and describe all ecosystems on Earth. Adopted by the United Nations and already applied in Australia, the framework has been instrumental in formulating effective conservation strategies and is helping to maintain plant diversity in the face of increasing environmental change.

Restore & Renew Knowledge Infrastructure Team – Botanic Gardens of Sydney

The Restore & Renew Knowledge Infrastructure Team's project is the first tool globally to make genomic data available for restoration practitioners, community groups and others who are conserving native plants. With more than 89,000 samples added in five years, the growing database is already supporting the restoration and conservation of more than 130 Australian plant species.

<https://australian.museum/get-involved/eureka-prizes/2024-eureka-prizes-finalists/>

Poor compliance and broad exemptions mean land clearing continues apace in northern Australia – despite our laws and pledges – The Conversation, 21 August 2024

In 2021, Australia was one of 141 nations pledging to end deforestation by 2030 – just over five years from now.

On paper, Australia should be well placed. It is wealthy, politically stable and has modern environmental laws. But the trees keep falling. Australia is the only deforestation hotspot among developed nations. Forests are still being cleared for farming, mining and expansion of urban areas. More and more species are becoming threatened, and populations of threatened species keep declining.

So what's going wrong? We investigated land clearing across northern Australia, including longtime hotspot Queensland and the Northern Territory, where land clearing is accelerating at worrying rates.

<https://theconversation.com/poor-compliance-and-broad-exemptions-mean-land-clearing-continues-apace-in-northern-australia-despite-our-laws-and-pledges-237030>

Aerial culling of feral horses to continue in Kosciuszko NP as injunction fails – ABC News, 21 August 2024

The aerial shooting of feral horses in the New South Wales Snowy Mountains will continue after an attempt to halt the practice failed in the state's Supreme Court. Brumby advocacy group, Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group INC, filed an application to stop the aerial shooting of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park in May.

It claimed the state's Environment Minister Penny Sharpe made an error in her decision to adopt aerial shooting in 2023 after receiving inaccurate information.

On Wednesday, Justice David Davies dismissed the case in the Supreme Court. Snowy Mountains Bush Users' solicitor, Sam Tierney, said its members would take time to consider their legal options.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-21/aerial-culling-feral-horses-continue-kosciuszko-injunction-fail/103941428>

Movement of green waste outside Perth quarantine zone likely behind shot-hole borer spread, scientist says – ABC News, 22 August 2024

A tree-killing beetle on the move across Perth has likely been unwittingly spread beyond quarantine boundaries by people unaware of its existence, one scientist has warned.

The polyphagous shot-hole borer was previously believed to be contained to the Perth metropolitan area, having destroyed 3,000 trees since it was first detected in Western Australia in 2021.

However the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) this week revealed the pest has been found in box elder maple and coral trees outside the quarantine area in Gosnells, Armadale, Kalamunda and Ellenbrook.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-22/wa-shot-hole-borer-spreading-through-mulch-green-waste/104253328>

How a fungi fascination led this Royal Botanic Gardens scientist on a decades-long quest – ABC News, 22 August 2024

As Melburnians jog, walk or picnic outside the city's National Herbarium of Victoria, few might guess at the mysteries being explored within.

But it's in this inner sanctum of biology, beside the city's famous 'Tan' track, that Tom May does his best work.

As the institution's principal research scientist in mycology — the branch of biology concerned with the study of fungi — Dr May is immersed in a world of intricate and highly specialised science.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-22/fungi-national-herbarium-of-victoria-royal-botanic-gardens/104223092>

WA government officials helped destroy 800yo 'Bob Brown' peppermint tree – ABC News, 22 August 2024

Western Australia's Environment Minister says the removal of an 800-year-old tree by a government contractor is "not good enough". The remains of the peppermint tree — which had stood in the Ferguson Valley, two hours south of Perth — were discovered by locals last week.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) later confirmed a contractor engaged to trim the tree had been responsible for its destruction. Environment Minister Reece Whitby said he was saddened by the news.

"While I understand the department had given the arborist specific instructions to prune, rather than cut down the tree, this simply isn't good enough," Mr Whitby said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-22/an-ancient-bob-brown-tree-cut-down-ferguson-valley-wa/104256600>

Conservationist helps farmers protect 'paddock trees' and restore degraded land – ABC News, 23 August 2024

The single native tree, standing by itself in a paddock, is an iconic image of the Australian landscape. These lonely trees are a reminder of what once existed before vast swathes of the country were deforested. They provide shelter, habitat for insects, and act as stepping stones for wildlife as they move across the landscape, tree grower and conservationist Steve Murphy says.

"In a distant time, we're going to lose them all because they're not actually naturally regenerating," Mr Murphy says, citing research conducted in the early 2000s by ecologists at the Australian National University. For Mr Murphy, protecting the space around these "paddock trees" so they can regenerate is part of a bigger picture.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-23/revegetating-land-by-protecting-paddock-trees/104135760>

Bespoke bloom brings out orange army's green thumbs – WA Cricket, 26 August 2024

In an Australian-first, the Perth Scorchers have teamed up with Kings Park and Botanic Garden and Benara Nurseries on the bright-orange bloom, aptly named 'Scorchers Flame'.

'Scorchers Flame' (*Anigozanthos rufus*) has been bred by the Kings Park Plant Development program for its eye-catching display and resilience. The hybrid thrives in full sun, making it a perfect addition to gardens and landscapes for the spring – and summer of cricket.

<https://www.wacricicket.com.au/news/4097157/bespoke-bloom-brings-out-orange-armys-green-thumbs>

Part of Bluetts Block set to become a nature reserve but Friends say more land needed – Riotact (Canberra), 29 August 2024

Sections of environmentally rich bushland in the Molonglo Valley known as Bluetts Block looks set to be saved from the developer's bulldozer.

Planning Minister Chris Steel, who in February called in the development of the next stage of Denman Prospect that threatened the site, said the first planning steps had been taken to create a nature reserve at Block 403 in Stromlo, and the undeveloped areas of Block 12 Denman Prospect.

The decision is a win for community members and the Friends of Bluetts Block, who have been campaigning to preserve the bushland. However, there were still fears about impacts from surrounding suburban development.

<https://the-riotact.com/part-of-bluetts-block-set-to-become-a-nature-reserve-but-friends-say-more-land-needed/801621>

Can you spot a tree under stress? Two experts share signs to look out for – ABC News, 29 August 2024

If recent wild weather has you worried about the state of your trees, you might be wondering if there is any way to know how safe they are.

And while it's hard to prevent or predict trees falling in extreme weather, there are clues that can help identify trees under stress, and actions you can take to help prevent those trees falling in normal circumstances.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-29/identifying-trees-under-stress/104260996>

Events and Opportunities

Rally to Save our Threatened Species – Brisbane QLD, 10 September 2024

Over 1000 Qld species are threatened with extinction. We need to ensure our incredible wildlife, plants, and their habitat can recover and thrive. This year's Threatened Species Day is particularly important to give a voice to our incredible unique animals, plants and places we love so much across Queensland. With a state election just around the corner it is important to make those voices heard, join us outside parliament house on the last sitting week before the state election.

We are bringing the bush back to the city! Join us for a fun and creative action, using the power of theatre and creativity we are celebrating and our incredible wildlife and highlighting what we risk of losing forever.

https://www.queenslandconservation.org.au/threatened_species_day_rally

Reforming Australia's illegal logging laws – Have Your Say – Closing 13 September 2024

DAFF are seeking feedback on the draft Illegal Logging Prohibition Rules 2024.

These are intended to replace the current Illegal Logging Prohibition Regulation 2012 (the Regulation). It also implements changes to the due diligence requirements identified through the Sunsetting Review.

<https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/illegal-logging-laws>

National Established Weed Priorities (NEWP) – EOIs close 20 September 2024

NEWP is a vital mechanism for implementing the Australian Weeds Strategy 2017-2027 and achieving action under the National Framework for the Management of Established Pests and Diseases of National Significance.

Government and non-government organisations are invited to nominate a nationally significant weed under the NEWP initiative.

The EOI is the first step in the process and nominations must meet eligibility criteria. EOIs must be submitted by using the [EOI form](#).

<https://weeds.org.au/national-established-weed-priorities-newp/>

Nature Festival – South Australia, 28 September – 13 October 2024

Returning for our 5th year, over 400 nature-inspired events are blooming all across South Australia this Spring School Holidays. We have art, adventure, music, food, wine, wellbeing, and Aboriginal culture, and plenty of free and family-friendly events.

Year 5 theme: Awe

This year the festival explores the theme of Awe, with an emphasis on moments small and large that captivate us, pulling us out of the rush of daily life and away from our screens into a wider relationship with nature and the world all around.

<https://www.naturefestival.org.au/>

ANPSA Biennial Conference: Gardens for Life – Melbourne VIC, 30 September – 4 October 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/>

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network (NZPCN) 2024 Conference - Whangārei NZ, 6-9 October 2024

Early bird registration discount extended to 31 July!

The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network is excited to announce its next conference for 6–9 October 2024, at Forum North, 7 Rust Avenue, Whangārei 0110. We will be reflecting on the past, present and future of plant conservation in Aotearoa New Zealand with our theme “*Ka mua, ka muri – walking backwards into the future*”. With this we will be able to celebrate 21 years of NZPCN, and hundreds of years of plant conservation in Aotearoa, and reflect on how all that has happened informs the future.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/nzpcn/events/conference-2024/>

Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) Private Land Conservation Conference 2024 – Sydney NSW, 10-11 October 2024

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance’s annual Private Land Conservation conference (PLC24) is the country’s premier land conservation event. The Conference is a critical forum for discussions and insights into scaling nature investment, reversing environmental decline, and meeting global and national biodiversity commitments. The Conference will run adjacently to the Global Nature Positive Summit being hosted by Australia.

<https://www.alcaconference.org.au/>

Territory Natural Resource Management Conference – Darwin NT, 19-21 November 2024

The Territory Natural Resource Management Conference is the NT's leading conference on natural resource management expertise, on-ground activities and community engagement.

The three-day conference provides critical professional development and engagement opportunities through tailored and inclusive workshop sessions, a diverse range of informative and thought-provoking presentations, engaging poster presentations and interactive exhibitions.

<https://www.tnrmconference.org.au/>

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/>

2025 National Landcare Conference – Gold Coast QLD, 24 September 2025

The program dates for 2025 are:

Sunday 21 September – First Nations Gathering and NextGen Summit

Monday 22 September – Conference and Welcome Reception

Tuesday 23 September – Conference and 2025 National Landcare Awards Gala Dinner

Wednesday 24 September – Field Trip Program.

We welcome Landcare champion and ABC TV presenter, Costa Georgiadis, as the master of ceremonies for both the National Landcare Conference and National Landcare Awards events.

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