



United for Nature

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2023-2024 Summary of Works

This summary includes all on-ground and prepared work undertaken in the 2023-2024 period for the landscape-species conservation project pertaining to *Aprasia parapulchella* in the Googong-Burra region including the Googong township.

Habitat Conditions and Surveys

Wildlife Ecologist and Herpetologist Damian Michael (Charles Sturt University) was engaged for the October 2023 presence and absence surveys. Surveys were conducted across 19 participating landholdings as well as 1 in the Googong township SE sanctuary block.

This year's surveys yielded more positive results. The October 2023 surveys detecting *Aprasia parapulchella* successfully identified the species at five of the twenty engaged sites in the region. A total of four individuals and four skin sloughs were found, which is comparatively less than the October 2022 surveys, however the abundance detection rate was higher. Fewer rocks were flipped to find these individuals, which could indicate an increased population and broader species distribution. The finding of a juvenile individual in Environa supports this. As these surveys are simply to detect an absence or presence of the species, as soon as one individual is found at a site, rock displacement ceases to protect the habitat and reduce negative disturbance impact.

The localities with presence detected were Googong, Angle and Environa. At these sites, the number of rocks flipped were as low as 4 and as high as 220, averaging only 19.8% of potential rocks that could be flipped. This abundance detection rate is a very positive result as the data suggests the species are thriving in their habitat and any augmentation has improved habitat quality.





Land for Wildlife Assessments

All participating landholdings had follow up Land for Wildlife assessments undertaken on site to evaluate the changes in habitat conditions since the commencement of the project. These assessments are all attached separately with findings specific to each site.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary property registration scheme for landowners who wish to manage areas of biodiversity for wildlife habitat. Each site has the potential to support populations of *Aprasia parapulchella* and habitat augmentation works occurred in 2021-2022 to improve site suitability for habitation. This process was beneficial to reengage landholders about ways to improve the habitat conditions of their site with renewed information, six years after their initial surveys and assessments.



Erosion Control Plan GGSE Block

It was noted in October 2023 that the quality of the spring-fed creek through the GGSE Block had rapidly deteriorated due to several factors including a combination of excess rainfall and prolonged overstocking on the site. The stock presence also posed threat to the hollow bearing trees with bark stripped and roots exposed through compacted soil. While the site had grazing allowances, additional stock accessed the site through a gate that was unlatched by a cow. All latches on site access points were quickly replaced so this couldn't happen again. The level of compaction and soil/vegetation loss was significant enough that we engaged Lori Gould with GrassRoots Environmental to undertake a site assessment and provide a management plan to correct the function of the creek.

The plan (attached externally) was developed in conjunction with site lessee who manages the stock. The priority for the plan was to reduce further negative impacts on the riparian area by restricting stock access and the installation of counteracting erosion control measures. A grazing management plan was refined and provided to the site lessee in reference to the CSIRO Grazing and Biodiversity schedule.



Erosion Control Efforts GGSE Block

Pertaining to the Erosion Management Plan created by Lori Gould, we engaged Michael Dawson from Natural Waterscapes to install rock flumes, bank stabilisers and defined 'waterholes.' Using rocks of various size/shape, Michael levelled slumping soil and reinforced points of vulnerability along the creek line.

When sediment fills these gaps in the rock, vegetation will have a stronger chance to grow and strengthen the banks. Increased vegetation will help slow and filter excess water in future heavy rain events and maintain the integrity of the creek in dry weather events, including drought. This will improve the immediate riparian area and subsequently improve the conditions of the surrounding grassland and habitat of *Aprasia parapulchella*.



Invasive Weed and Pest Control

Eragrostis curvula, African Lovegrass, was targeted twice in independent spot sprays inside and around the GGSE Block as isolated patches were noticed to be increasing and threatening the natural grassland species. To boost the native seedbank against exotic seed presence in the soil, we also spread *Themeda triandra*, Kangaroo Grass.

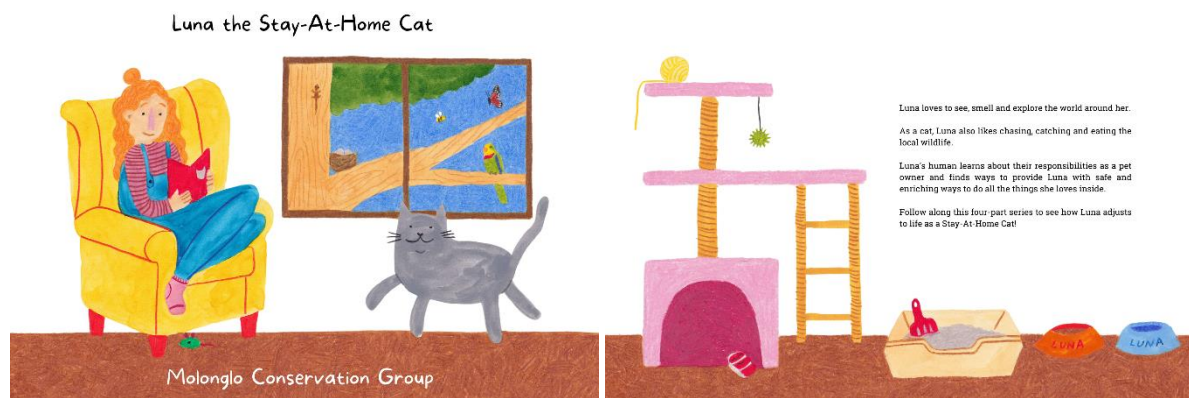
Ongoing camera monitoring for foxes on the GGSE site as well as physical trapping and treatment has seen a decreased presence. The site lessee has continued these monitoring and management strategies and will continue to implement them post project conclusion.



Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat Publication

In January 2024, the entire *Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat* collection was published as a compiled work. The collection includes Part One: Gift Giving, Part Two: Enrichment, Part Three: Catio and Part Four: Walks. A small batch of physical copies were printed and provided to the Googong township for distribution to new residents and property buyers to instil the impacts of cat containment and support council policies.

The 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. *Luna* 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.



Luna loves to see, smell and explore the world around her.
 As a cat, Luna also likes chasing, catching and eating the local wildlife.
 Luna's human learns about their responsibilities as a pet owner and finds ways to provide Luna with safe and enriching ways to do all the things she loves inside.
 Follow along this four-part series to see how Luna adjusts to life as a Stay-At-Home Cat!

Community Engagement-

School Visits

To support the roll out of *Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat* and broader *Aprasia parapulchella* education in the community, we engaged with schools and education programs to speak about the importance of habitat conservation and species biodiversity.

With younger students we used tactile and sensory learning, including handling shed sloughs, making beaded keyrings and playing 'pin the pink tail on the pink-tailed worm-lizard.' With older students we engaged Gavin Smith with ACT Snake Removals to display live reptiles including snakes and lizards. Both methods generated dialogue around reptile habitat, how we interact with reptiles and why biodiversity conservation is important. It was challenging to excite a younger demographic about an animal species they'd never heard of or couldn't physically see, but through these strategies and many photos and videos of *Aprasia parapulchella* we successfully conveyed their significance and relevance to the Googong-Burra community.

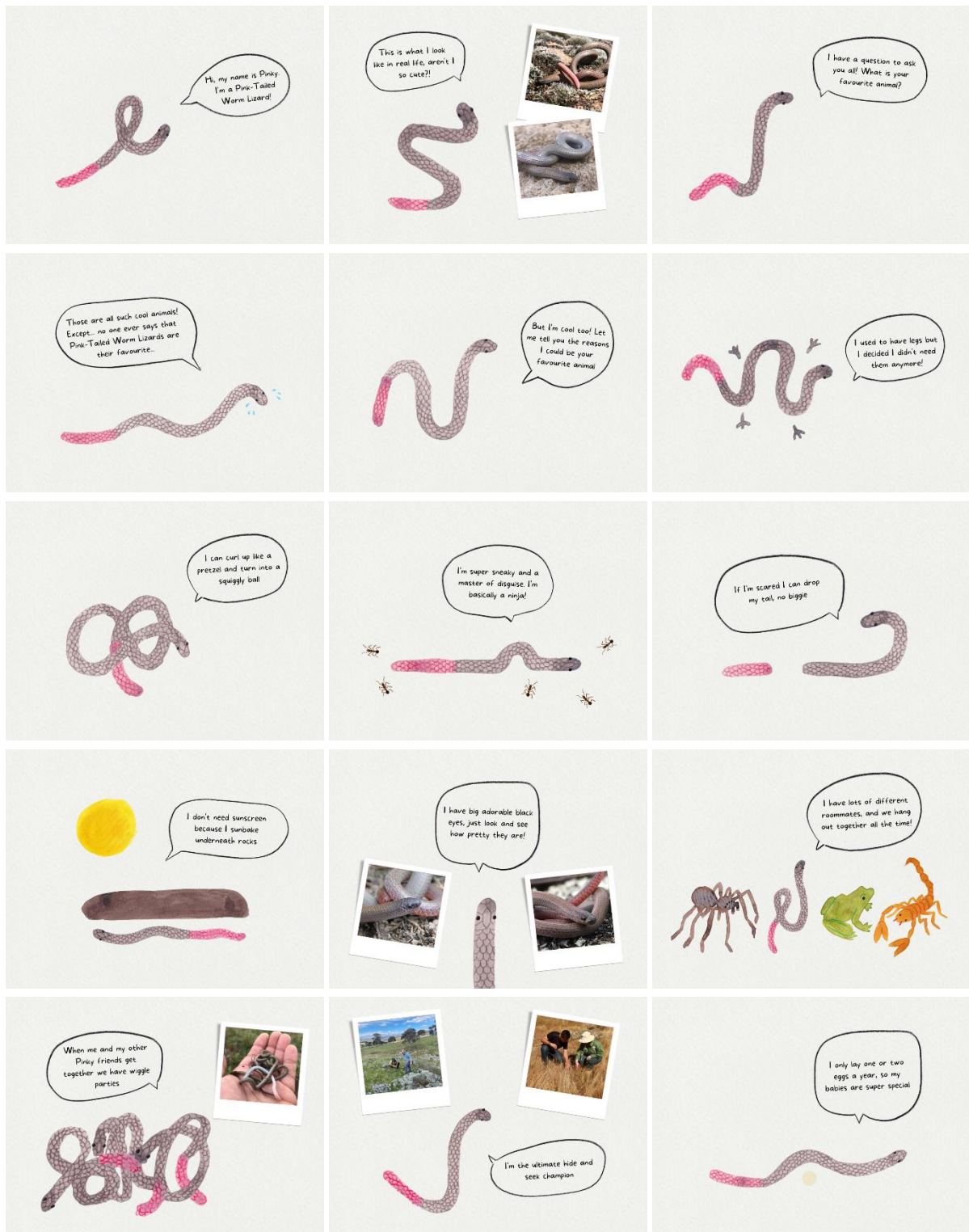
Engaged educators were provided copies of *Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat* as well as our *Aprasia parapulchella* curriculum aligned resource for ongoing learning. We participated in six site visits and were thrilled with the positive responses and receptivity of the students.





Pinky Presentation

In conjunction with the curriculum aligned resources we provided to schools, we also developed this short presentation for younger demographics to introduce the species. This file was also uploaded to our social media for World Lizard Day and our website.

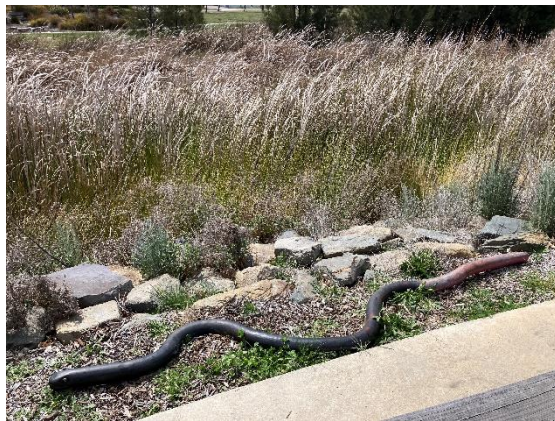


Species in the Suburbs Event, Googong

Through an ICON Water sponsorship, we were able to host a community event in the Googong township about species important to the area, particularly *Aprasia parapulchella*. Waterwatch had a waterbug presentation and spoke about O-Ring waste where it impacts Platypus and Rakali, Gavin Smith from ACT Snake Removals had a presentation about venomous snakes that may be found in and around the suburb and we also had a presentation about our conservation efforts with *Aprasia parapulchella*.

Over 50 residents attended the event, the group splitting afterwards with one group being shown the Googong Dam by ICON Water staff and the other being led by Robert Speirs from Capital Ecology. The secondary tour was impacted by accessibility, where stock had been moved into the intended reptile survey and discussion site. Robert intends to undertake this walk & talk again at a later date.

An interpretive sign and sculpture designed by Adam Fromholtz were unveiled in Aprasia Park along Aprasia Avenue, highlighting the significance of the species and its connection to Googong.



Queanbeyan Landcare Survey

We engaged with Queanbeyan Landcare to help with their biennial *Aprasia parapulchella* survey in Karabar, NSW, which have been occurring since 2002. We were able to offer insight into ongoing species protection at that site including limiting habitat displacement through

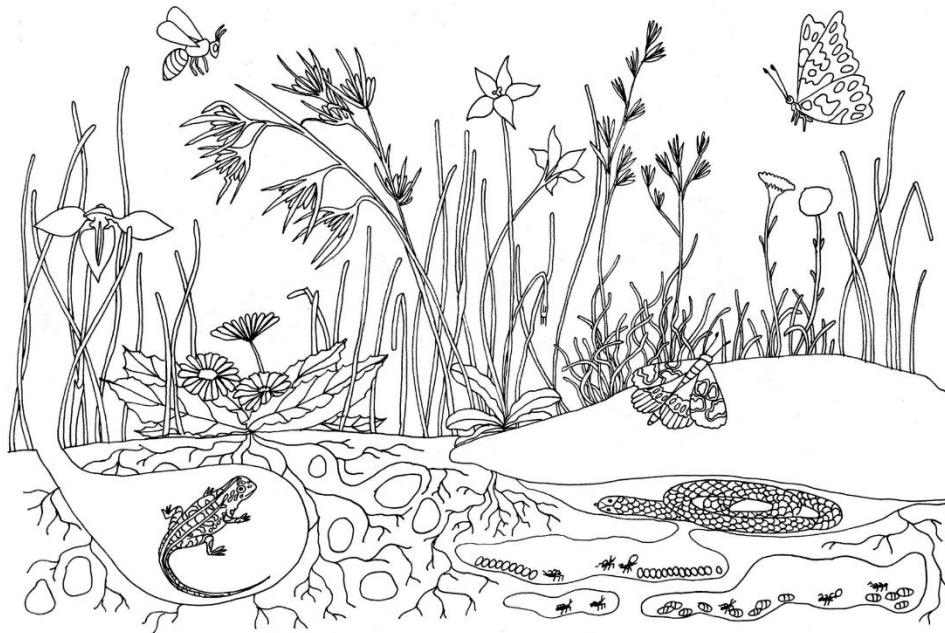
the survey process. We spoke to the Landcare group about the benefits of absence/presence-based surveys and monitoring abundance detection rates instead as they currently turn every potential habitat rock on the site to count individuals, which impacts the population. We also advised volunteers not to handle individuals without appropriate licence and ethics approvals as they can experience trauma through handling. On this occasion 5 individuals were identified, as well as 2 juvenile skin sloughs.



Species in the Suburbs Publication

As part of the ACT Government's Connecting Nature, Connecting People program, we published the colouring book *Species in the Suburbs: A colouring guide to habitat connectivity in the Australian Capital Territory* in December 2023. This resource is a call-to-action colouring in book that looks at the connection between species and people in urban and peri-urban spaces. It includes a variety of species and ecological communities that community members might encounter in their neighbourhoods, as well as promoting the benefits for native plants and animals through connective landscapes. The book is accessible for free as a printable resource online and through the National Library of Australia archive. 400 copies were also printed and distributed to various community groups and individuals.

We included a page with *Aprasia parapulchella* and commonly found plant species that thrive in their ideal environment.



Grasslands are landscapes dominated mostly by grasses. Grassland Earless Dragons, Pink-Tailed Worm Lizards and Golden Sun Moths are dependent on high quality grasslands.

Radio Promotion

We spoke on Radio Landcare 2XXfm 98.3 twice about the project, promoting healthy habitat treatment, grassland conservation and the negative impacts of rock removal. This was a good opportunity to remind people about not riding their bikes off track through grassland environments, maintaining exotic plant species in gardens that fringe nature reserves, leaving rocks and woody debris in situ and recording sightings of any individuals on Canberra Nature Map or similar databases to keep locality records up to date.



Communications

We have continued posting updates about the project on Facebook and Instagram to maintain engagement with the broader community. Our social impact reach for this financial year is 9,600 users for Facebook, and 619 users for Instagram, with increased interactions across both platforms relating to *Aprasia parapulchella* project content.

We have also sent two updates to the project steering committee and relevant stakeholders about ongoing works.



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Liked by shelbycastles and others

molongloconservation I Spy! Can you spot all of these features?

1. A Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard
2. Skin slough (shed)
3. Ant brood chamber

These are what we look for during our rock habitat surveys for the elusive Aprasia parapulchella. This is a photograph from yesterday in Googong!

View all 2 comments

landscape_wanderer What a fantastic find. A glimpse of a Pinkie's living room!



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Liked by shelbycastles

molongloconservation We are excited to be partnering with Icon Water, ACT Snake Removals and Capital Ecology for our Species in the Suburb Event on Saturday 23rd September in Googong! We will be taking a closer look at some of the critters that live in our waterways and backyards, including the elusive Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard! This free event is to build community education about living in proximity to some truly incredible creatures. Eventbrite link is in our bio!

11 September 2023



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Liked by shelbycastles

molongloconservation As part of broader community education and awareness, our Project Officer Elyssa Castles visited the @wildbark Education Centre at Mulligans Flat to talk about the Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard conservation efforts we are undertaking in the Googong-Burra region. The children learnt about 'Pinkies' during the presentation and then had the opportunity to make their own 'Pinky Pet' to take home after a round of Pin the pink tail on the Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard. Elyssa will be visiting the site again next week to engage with more children and connect with the wider community about conservation practices.



Queanbeyan Landcare



23 Oct 2023 · 🌐

Since 2002 Tom Baker has conducted biennial surveys looking for the Pink-tailed Legless Lizard (Aprasia parapulchella) at the Fairlane Flora and Fauna Reserve off River Drive. Last Saturday Tom and 9 Queanbeyan Landcare members counted 5 of these endangered lizards as well as numerous centipedes, scorpions, skinks and ants.

Thanks to all, particularly Elyssa Castles from Molonglo Conservation and Luke H for the photos.



15

2 shares

Ongoing Work Invoiced in 2023-2024

The following work has been invoiced but works are still either underway or incomplete, with outstanding deliverables due in the coming weeks depending on weather and opportunity.

Fence Repair

Pertaining to the Erosion Management Plan for the GGSE Block, the internal fence that crosses the creek and gully has been exacerbating the level of erosion due to its disrepair and stock tracking. The site lessee has been contracted to correct this damage and remove debris from the base of the fence where it impacts the path of the waterway, which will also support the proposed grazing regime for conservation purposes.

Biodiversity Assessment Method GGSE Block

An initial BAM assessment was undertaken on the GGSE site at the commencement of the project as a baseline. As such, a follow up BAM needs to be completed on the GGSE site to evaluate the difference of habitat conditions after the completion of the project, including plant species present.

Jed Pearson with Southern Inland Environmental has been contracted to facilitate this assessment, however required a later survey period due to licencing constraints.

Pinky Party

All steering committee members, stakeholders, participating landholders, project volunteers and contributors have been invited to celebrate the end of the project over a 'Pinky Party' which will be an opportunity to recognise the work done across the board for the betterment of *Aprasia parapulchella* conservation in the region. This event will take place on August 2nd, with a final summary to be sent out afterwards.