

Wildlife Corridor Rehabilitation in Gungahlin – a successful community and ACT Government partnership

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In 2012 the ACT Government, Ginninderra Catchment Group and local community commenced rehabilitating a patch of land in Gungahlin. Located between Gundaroo Drive and the newly constructed wetlands on The Valley Avenue, the windbreak which doubled as a wildlife corridor was overrun with Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*). This wattle comes from a small area of land between Cootamundra and Temora, NSW.

Outside its natural range, this small tree (grows 3 to 4 metres tall) successfully out-competes local native plants. Each spring after it bursts into yellow blooms its seeds start to germinate. This plant had already formed dense thickets under planted Eucalypts and conifers and was starting to spread into an area of native grassland adjacent to the wetlands.

Natural temperate grassland is a threatened community in the ACT and action was required before the wattle began to shade the native grasses and forbs (non-woody flowering plants).

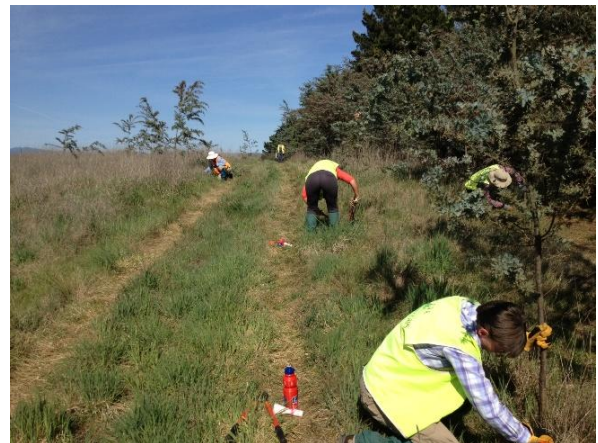
The ACT Government and Ginninderra Catchment Group consulted with Canberra Ornithologists (COG) and Friends of Grasslands (FOG) on a way forward. It was decided to remove all the wattle from the grassland and attack the wattle in stages from the windbreak. Although Cootamundra Wattle is considered a weed in the ACT it provides protection from small birds in the vegetation corridor. Once the wattle was

removed from the corridor locally occurring plants from ridges would be planted.

Work begins

In October 2012 a Conservation Volunteers Australia crew arrived on site armed with loppers and herbicide.

Working in pairs volunteers cut the young wattles at their base then applied an herbicide to prevent plants from regrowing. By the close of Day One the wattles growing amongst the grassland were removed and work had commenced within the dense windbreak. Felled wattles were stockpiled for removal to green waste.



*Volunteers worked in pairs in the grassland using loppers to cut the *Acacia baileyana* trunk at the base followed by an application of herbicide to the cut surface to prevent plant regrowth. Image: E. Robinson*

Together with Greening Australia, the ACT Government worked to develop a list of hardy locally occurring plants that would survive amongst the windbreak and provide habitat for small birds. Eleven hundred shrubs, grasses and forbs were planted in holes filled with water crystal and fertiliser.

SPECIES LIST

Shrubs (200 in total)

Acacia genistifolia
Acacia lanigera
Acacia paradoxa
Daviesia mimosoides
Daviesia genistifolia
Cassinia quinquefaria
Olearia mycophylla



Wahlenbergia or native bluebells were included in the replanting.

Image: M.Jekabsons

Grasses (200 of each)

Joycea pallida
Poa labillardieri
Poa sieberiana

Forbs (50 of each)

Ammobium craspedioides
Bulbine bulbosa
Craspedia variabilis
Eryngium ovinum
Wahlenbergia

Lilies (50)

Bulbine bulbosa

Each plant was enclosed by a waxed cardboard guard. The guards are biodegradable and help the plants survive extreme weather and predation from kangaroos, rabbits and destructive cockatoos. The plants were watered with a water cart supplied by the civil contractor, Cut and Fill.

A month later, 80 willing Year 10 students from Burgmann Anglican School assisted in extending the planting. Working with Greening Australia and the ACT Government they planted another 400 plants supplied by Seeds and Plants Australia. Together they planted:

Grasses (50)

Themeda australis

Rushes (200)

Lomandra

Lilies (150)

Dianella longifolia

In 2012, the Green Team at Gungahlin College started propagating plants for the project. Teachers sourced native seed from Seeds and Plants Australia and students began propagating the plants in a warm sunny spot by one of the school windows. As the plants matured, they were moved to a greenhouse in the school grounds. Over the summer holidays, the plants were transferred to Seeds and Plants nursery for safe-keeping.

By March 2013, 180 *Danthonia*, *Lomandra* and *Poa* were mature enough to be planted.



*Students from Burgmann watering the plants.
Image: E.Robinson.*

Assisted by Warren Saunders from Seeds and Plants Australia and Edwina Robinson, the Urban Waterways Coordinator, ACT Government 25 students and their teachers arrived to complete the planting.

The plants were inspected in August 2013 and there appears to be around an 80% success rate. Many of the shrubs were thriving as were *Lomandra* and *Poa*.

It is recommended that the native grassland and corridor are inspected for the presence of *Acacia baileyana* seedlings every three to six months. When these plants are young they can be easily hand pulled preventing them from becoming small trees that out-compete smaller local plants. The project could be extended over a few years so all the Cootamundra Wattle is removed and the corridor attracts small native birds.



Acacia baileyana growing in native grassland near The Valley Ponds, Gungahlin. This small tree flowers in August with and has a silvery leaf. They are commonly found in local bushland and gardens.

Image: E.Robinson



*A thriving Lomandra
Image: E.Robinson*

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