



Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

An integral part of the Canberra Nature Park network, the 780 ha Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve abuts NSW on the northern outskirts of the city. The original vegetation is believed to have been a mosaic of forest, woodland and perhaps some natural grassland; most of the treeless areas now present are secondary grassland, resulting from the removal of woodland trees by early farmers. All vegetation has been modified to a varying degree by over 150 years of grazing and clearing, together with weed invasion.

The ridges carry a dry open forest of several species of *Eucalyptus*, with a sparse to moderately dense understorey of grasses, herbs and shrubs. On the deeper soils of the lower slopes there is grassy woodland of Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum.

Mulligans Flat is the site of a woodland restoration research project, a joint partnership between the ACT Government, the Australian National University and the CSIRO. Within the Nature Reserve, a 485 ha area has been enclosed in a fox-, cat- and dog-proof fence in an experiment to examine both the feasibility of reintroducing locally extinct native vertebrate species into a predator-free environment, and, if the reintroductions are successful, their effects on the forest and woodland ecosystems. The enclosed area is called the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary. In a second experiment, 2000 tonnes of dead logs were carted in and distributed in a fashion imitating a natural distribution of fallen limbs and collapsed trunks. Populations of plants and animals (including invertebrates) adjacent to the logs are being sampled to examine the role of the 'coarse woody debris' as habitat.

Management and conservation at Mulligans Flat

Anthony Hart

ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Suburbs are now very close to the Mulligans Flat nature reserve, presenting challenges to the reserve's ecosystem from pets that are also potential feral animals. The Government's Cat Containment policy will be outlined, and the Mulligans Flat rabbit control program. This talk will also touch on ParkCare and general management of land managed by ACT Parks & Conservation Service.

Woodland birds in revegetation: more than throwing a few logs around

Nicki Taws

Greening Australia Capital Region

Surveys in revegetated habitat have demonstrated the value of the mid-storey for shrub and canopy-feeding woodland birds. Many of the woodland birds which have become regionally scarce are ground-foragers, hence the need for a focus on restoring elements of the ground layer. The session will look at providing groundcover and habitat for woodland birds. This is more than throwing a few logs around.

Nicki Taws has worked with Greening Australia for the last 14 years on a variety of revegetation, survey and monitoring projects, particularly on the value of habitat restoration for birds. More recently she has focused on projects involving restoration of woodland and grasslands.



The Mulligans Flat–Goorooyarroo Woodland Experiment

Sue McIntyre

Fenner School of Environment & Society, The Australian National University, CSIRO

Sue McIntyre will discuss the issues for vegetation management in the reserves generally and the effects of the experimental treatments on the ground layer vegetation.

(See also McIntyre, 'The double-edged sword: managing after the sheep are gone'; this proceedings.)

Dr Sue McIntyre is an ecologist who has researched grassland management in eucalypt woodlands for over 20 years. Her current activities involve the Goorooyarroo–Mulligans Flat restoration experiment and management of her own patch of grassy woodland near Gundaroo.

(Note. Associate Professor Adrian Manning also spoke at this site.)

Innovation and the 'normal no'

Jason Cummings

Lyrebird Communications

As the biodiversity crisis fails to abate, it is clear we need to reconsider historic approaches and try new ways of fixing tired problems. We don't need innovation for the sake of innovation, we need innovation to make gains with dwindling resources. We need to do more, more effectively, with less.

When I presented a talk to the Friends of Grasslands at their mid-winter session at Mugga in 2010, I outlined several barriers to grassland restoration in the region. These barriers fell into two groups — they were either related to 'capability' (we didn't know or didn't have the right tools) or to 'capacity' (we didn't have the volume of seed or enough land or people). In the four years since, Greening Australia has systematically broken down those barriers, and now has both capacity (including seed supply systems) and capability (field-experience and know-how) to start to reintroduce long-lost flora species to grassland sites.

On another front, and on a different scale, at the Mulligans Flat Woodlands Sanctuary we are returning long-lost fauna species. In that science-led program we are branching out to diversify the ecosystem inhabitants we are returning, and broadening the community engagement program we are undertaking to garner stronger support. In the community engagement program we are repeatedly confronted by barriers to undertaking initiatives that are normal practice elsewhere — either on private land or in different states. However, it is pleasing to note that there too, we are making headway and knocking down those barriers one by one.

Taken together, these two programs provide some useful insights into the challenges facing innovation in a sector struggling for traction and resources. Let me introduce the concept of the 'normal no'. Nobody naturally enjoys hearing the N-O. But, for those at the forefront of innovation and leadership, the N-O is as normal as the O-K. If you want to improve a situation, the normal first-response to



The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust has encountered, and will continue to encounter, many barriers along the path to reintroducing the Bush Stone-curlew, and with persistence and passion we will continue to overcome them.



'Grass half full or grass half empty? Valuing native grassy landscapes'

Friends of Grasslands' forum 30 October – 1 November 2014

Friends of Grasslands Inc. (www.fog.org.au) supporting native grassy landscapes

new ideas is 'no'. We need to recognise this 'no' is simply the normal first step on the path to improvement, just one of the barriers that needs to be side-stepped, tunnelled-under or jumped-over – of course always with a warm smile of gratitude.

Once you have swallowed and digested the 'normal no' you are on the path to innovation. In my experience there are five 'P's in the mix that have consistently led to the successful emergence of innovation: partnership, passion, persistence, pressure and people. Interestingly the Productivity Commission has recognised not-for-profit organisations as the hot-bed for innovation in the community sector (including environment). Mission-based organisations can provide the right balance of passionate people with drive and focus to solve problems, and, by their very nature and usually corporate structure, they are partnership based.

Dr Jason Cummings has broad experience in the environment and natural resource management areas — in policy, academic and leadership roles. After completing a PhD in ecology he has focused on practical application of science. From 2010 to 2014 he was the CEO of Greening Australia Capital Region, one of the nation's leading environmental operations. Increasingly his experience and contribution to our community is through leadership, particularly through innovation, communication, stakeholder engagement and resource management. Jason is now a principal of Lyrebird Communications, a company focused on providing leadership, communications and policy and program support for the environment, natural resources and community sectors.