

Plant Cuttings – March 2024

State-owned logging company VicForests will cease to exist from June 30 this year – ABC News, 13 March 2024

State-owned logging business VicForests, which has previously been found to have breached threatened species laws, will cease to exist from June 30 this year. Legal representatives for the entity made the revelation in the Supreme Court of Victoria in Melbourne this morning, during a hearing for community group Wombat Forestcare's case alleging VicForests breached requirements to survey for threatened species in western Victorian forests.

It is the first time a decision on VicForests' future has been revealed, after the Victorian government deregistered it as a state business corporation in September last year, removing the requirement for it to be commercially focused.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-13/state-owned-logging-company-vicforests-wind-up-date-revealed/103580736>

Sunshine Coast bushcare volunteer invents weapon for war against asparagus fern – ABC News, 24 March 2024

Ron Gooch's battle with the invasive asparagus fern began when he moved to Peregrin Beach, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, in 1996.

"There's a lot of bush between us and the beach and it was full of weeds," Mr Gooch said.

Mr Gooch and his fellow bushcare volunteers were using tools such as mattocks and saws to dig the weed out, but the process was slow and laborious. Then Mr Gooch came up with an idea for a purpose-built power tool and the Asparagus Assassin was born.

With the help of the Noosa Men's Shed, Mr Gooch created a prototype out of a modified hole saw and section of sewer pipe. He said he saw immediate results — the tool removed the weeds up to four times faster than was previously possible.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-25/asparagus-assassin-tool-invented-fight-invasive-weed/103561264>

Giant kelp forests on Tasman Peninsula survive marine heatwave, brings 'hope' amid climate change - ABC News, 27 March 2024

Tucked away in a picturesque bay on the south-eastern tip of Tasmania is a precious underwater field of dreams. Here, giant kelp has been painstakingly grown by hand, and there are now high hopes that one day, as a result of this effort, Tasmania's kelp forests will once again flourish.

The bay is the site of a restoration project that aims to regrow the unique seaweed species that once grew so densely here, that it was difficult for fishers to navigate through.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-26/back-roads-tasman-peninsula-giant-kelp-forest-restoration/103560140>

Mud now covers 98 per cent of Moreton Bay's floor, choking out plants and animals, UQ researcher finds – ABC News, 25 March 2024

When a strong easterly wind blows in Moreton Bay, its crystal waters can turn quickly the colour of mud. University of Queensland Associate Professor Alistair Grinham said it was a very bad sign. His paper, published today in the Science of the Total Environment, found 98 per cent of the floor of Moreton Bay had become covered in a thick layer of mud, smothering the underwater plants and animals that used to live there.

Fifty years ago there was 442 square kilometres of clean sand remaining in Moreton Bay, but the paper found there was now only 30 square kilometres left. The civil engineer said this was largely due to human activity causing severe erosion all along South East Queensland's catchments and creek banks. Dr Grinham said these eroded channels, combined with heavier rainfall due to climate change, caused enormous volumes of fine sediment to be washed into the bay.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-25/researcher-alarmed-at-moreton-bay-mud-university-of-queensland/103600324>

VIDEO: Extreme weather in 2023 sees record number of additions to threatened species list – ABC News, 19 March 2024

A record number of plants and animals have been added to the threatened species list following a 'climate rollercoaster' which saw extreme heat and flooding in Australia.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-19/extreme-weather-in-2023-sees-record-number-of/103603566>

Climate change is forcing massive changes to how Australia protects endangered animals and plants from extinction – ABC News 13 March 2024

The devastating Black Summer bushfires completely changed Sally Sherwen's thoughts on how to protect the country's most vulnerable wildlife. She was about eight months into her role as Zoos Victoria's wildlife conservation and science director when the fires struck Australia's east coast in late 2019. The organisation had just put together its five-year plan for preserving threatened species. But the fires revealed holes in the approach they were taking.

"[The plan] basically went up in flames with the fires as well," Dr Sherwen says.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2024-03-13/climate-change-bushfires-species-extinction-black-summer/103494254>

Even far from the ocean, Australia's drylands are riddled with salty groundwater. What can land managers do? - The Conversation, 20 March 2024

In the 1890s, railway engineers noticed river water used by steam locomotives started to become salty when surrounding land was cleared for agriculture. Over the next decades, the problem worsened. In 1917, a Royal Commission in Western Australia dismissed the threat from salt and instead promoted more clearing of land.

Ignoring the problem didn't solve it. Salt water began rising from below in many new agricultural regions. Crops could not use this salty water. In March 1924 – a century ago this month – the railway engineer W.E. Wood published the first scientific paper on the causes of salinity in Australia.

Wood concluded land clearing was causing groundwater levels to rise, bringing salt stored underground to the surface. He correctly proposed the salt in this region had come from the oceans, after evaporated seawater with residual salt fell as rain.

<https://theconversation.com/even-far-from-the-ocean-australias-drylands-are-riddled-with-salty-groundwater-what-can-land-managers-do-225277>

Planning Minister uses controversial call-in powers to approve housing estate plans despite conservation concerns – ABC News, 28 February 2024

The ACT planning minister is under fire from Greens members within his government after using controversial call-in powers to approve development plans for stage two of Denman Prospect.

The significant development will see a new housing estate, known as Stromlo Reach, developed on Canberra's western edge in the Molonglo Valley.

"It will deliver around 1,000 new homes, including 20 per cent affordable housing, which will provide a significant benefit to the community at a time when we desperately need more housing delivered," Planning Minister Chris Steel said. But the decision has "blindsided" the ACT Greens who have accused ACT Labor, their senior partner in government, of taking a cue from a developer.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-28/minister-call-in-powers-approving-new-canberra-housing-estate/103522186>

Almost a third of Australia's plant species may have to migrate south if we hit 3 degrees of warming – The Conversation, 22 March 2024

For ecologists, one of the most pressing questions is to understand how ecosystems will change or adapt as the climate changes rapidly. We are already seeing many species of plant and animal moving uphill and towards the poles in response to higher temperatures. It's very likely most species will move to track their preferred temperature niche.

But what's strange is that many species can survive in much broader temperature ranges than their current distribution suggests. We don't yet fully understand why temperature affects ecosystems so strongly.

To shed light on this puzzle, our new research used the current range of Australian plants and calculated each species' minimum and maximum temperature preferences. These data told us how many and what percentage of species are lost or gained when transitioning from, say, a 15°C to a 16°C average annual temperature.

<https://theconversation.com/almost-a-third-of-australias-plant-species-may-have-to-migrate-south-if-we-hit-3-degrees-of-warming-226009>

Advisory committee to consider declaring buffel grass a weed in Northern Territory – ABC News, 26 March 2024

The Northern Territory government will establish a Weed Advisory Committee to develop a buffel grass management plan, which could result in the grass species being declared a weed.

Buffel grass is highly valued by some NT pastoralists because it provides fast-growing cattle fodder and can help reduce dust and soil erosion. But environmental and Indigenous groups have raised concerns about the grass increasing fire risks, reducing biodiversity and impacting traditional Aboriginal cultural practices.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-26/committee-to-consider-declaring-buffel-grass-a-weed-in-nt/103632462>

‘Zero tolerance’: Plibersek to consider extending brumby cull – SMH, 1 March 2024

Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek may seek to eradicate 3000 brumbies that the NSW government agreed to leave in Kosciuszko National Park as part of a deal with the National Party.

In its response to a Senate inquiry into the impact of feral horses in the Australian Alps, the federal government has voiced support for the NSW plan to reduce the total population from more than 20,000 brumbies to 3000, which would be preserved on so-called cultural grounds.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/zero-tolerance-plibersek-to-consider-extending-brumby-cull-20240301-p5f92m.html>

On a climate rollercoaster: how Australia’s environment fared in the world’s hottest year – The Conversation, 19 March 2024

Global climate records were shattered in 2023, from air and sea temperatures to sea-level rise and sea-ice extent. Scores of countries recorded their hottest year and numerous weather disasters occurred as climate change reared its head.

How did Australia’s environment fare against this onslaught? In short, 2023 was a year of opposites. For the past nine years, we have trawled through huge volumes of data collected by satellites, measurement stations and surveys by individuals and agencies. We include data on global change, oceans, people, weather, water, soils, vegetation, fire and biodiversity.

<https://theconversation.com/on-a-climate-rollercoaster-how-australias-environment-fared-in-the-worlds-hottest-year-225268>

Events and Opportunities

The Florilegium: Rainforest Species at Risk, 5 April – 5 May 2024

The Garden Gallery, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

The Florilegium Society is excited to present the inaugural exhibition at The Garden Gallery in the newly refurbished Robert Brown Building at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. This exhibition will focus on the impact of climate change and plant pathogens on rainforest species and increased human activity leading to habitat loss and fragmentation of rainforests.

As well as the new paintings of rainforest species and relevant works from the existing collection the content will include an introduction to The Florilegium Society and its previous projects and a focus on botanical illustration at the National Herbarium of New South Wales including some of the exquisite early twentieth century works by Margaret Flockton and more recent illustrations by Lesley Elkan and Catherine Wardrop.

<https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/our-science/our-collections/botanical-illustration/the-florilegium-society>

Invitation to comment, King Island scrub complex listing

Each year on behalf of the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water invites public nominations for items that merit listing as threatened under national environment law. The “King Island scrub complex” was nominated for listing as a threatened ecological community and prioritised for assessment from October 2022.

You are invited to provide your views on the assessment and draft conservation advice for the King Island scrub complex.

The committee’s assessment and advice to the minister is due by **30 April 2024**.

Proposed Conservation Status: Endangered

Distribution: King Island, Tasmania

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/nominations/comment/king-island-scrub-complex>

Kwodjet Goorliny Symposium: Moving forward together to care for Country – Albury WA 14-16 May 2024

This symposium is showcasing the culmination of the Walking Together Project, exploring the latest developments in cross-cultural conservation, and involves opportunities to be immersed in Country with Merningar/Menang/Goreng Elders, and yarn up the next steps for cross-cultural collaboration. With growing need and demand for genuine cross-cultural approaches to care for Country, this symposium offers an amazing opportunity to come together to learn from one another and celebrate the good work that we all do in this space.

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1169043>

Rainforest Connections 2024: Conservation, Innovation, Restoration - Ballina NSW, 4-7 June 2024

Rainforest Connections 2024 is the first conference in over two decades that is dedicated to the restoration, rehabilitation, and management of Australia's unique rainforest habitats. This event will connect more than 200 delegates from a wide range of backgrounds including scientists, program managers, on-ground practitioners, community members and specialists implementing projects in the field.

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

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/>

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/>