

# Hunting Hawkweed

‘Hunting Hawkweed’ is a volunteer program supporting eradication of a high-risk weed from Kosciuszko National Park.



## Join the hawkweed team

Since 2009, over 400 volunteers have assisted in the search for orange hawkweed. Volunteers are instrumental in protecting sensitive environments, like alpine bogs, from hawkweed invasion. Work alongside National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff and other conservation guardians to find every last hawkweed plant.

## What to expect

Orange hawkweed likes good views, which means surveys are conducted in some of the most scenic areas of Kosciuszko National Park.

Volunteers will be accommodated in Khancoban, New South Wales (shared house, tent or camping, at no or minimal cost to volunteers).

Accommodation is available from Sunday evening through to Saturday morning of each week’s program. Information will be provided on booking.

Volunteers will need to bring enough food for a week and prepare their own meals. The nearest large town is in Victoria. Due to COVID border restrictions, it will not be possible to visit for grocery supplies.

Each Monday, at the start of the Hunting Hawkweed week, volunteers meet at the NPWS Depot in Khancoban for an induction and safety briefing. Volunteers are then taken into the park to practice orange hawkweed identification and participate in surveillance.

Transport to and from Khancoban to the survey areas will be provided daily by NPWS, volunteers with 4WDs are encouraged to participate as part of a tag along.

## Volunteer fitness

In this eradication program, ‘every last plant’ must be found and treated, which requires walking through dense vegetation, over rough and uneven terrain in the peak of summer. A moderate to high level of physical fitness is needed as surveys require a lot of walking. Volunteers should be able to walk approximately 4 km a day and negotiate natural terrain (no paths) and moderate slopes on uneven surfaces.

## 2021-21 program

Volunteers are invited to assist on the following weeks:

**Week 1** – 16 November 2020

**Week 2** – 23 November 2020

**Week 3** – 30 November 2020

**Week 4** – 7 December 2020\*\*

**Week 5** - 14 December 2020

**Week 6** – 11 January 2021\*\*

**Week 7** – 25 January 2021

\*\*Includes an activity that requires previous experience on the program.

Minimum participation time is one week (Monday 10am to Friday inclusive). Four to six volunteers welcome per week.

### Bookings are essential.

Go to <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/hunting-hawkeed> click on 'Join up!'

## What to bring

Volunteers must supply all bed linen and towels in shared accommodation. If camping/vanning, volunteers must bring all necessary equipment. In addition to toiletries and casual clothing, please bring the following to ensure your stay is safe and comfortable:

- personal medication (e.g. EPI pen, hay fever prevention)
- three cotton face masks (minimum two ply and firm-fitting)
- all food and a lunch box
- good walking boots (waterproof)
- thick socks
- long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- hat (broad brimmed to shade face and neck)
- warm clothing and wet weather gear (weather changes rapidly, even in summer months)
- gaiters to knee height (to protect legs)
- 1-2 litre water bottle (for drinking water); recommend 2L+ hydration bladder with flexible sipping straw
- day pack/backpack with waist strap
- insect repellent and sunscreen
- camera (for capturing the views).





## Getting there

Khancoban is a small NSW township associated with the development of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. Suggested routes to Khancoban are:

- Alpine Way – via Cooma, Jindabyne and Thredbo
- Snowy Valley tourist drive – via Tumbarumba and Tooma Valley on the Tooma Road.

## Orange hawkweed

Orange hawkweed (*Heiracium aurantiacum*) is a species of daisy that originates from northern and central Europe. It has invaded many countries, including the USA, Canada, Japan and New Zealand, where it threatens biodiversity and agricultural lands.

This species was first discovered in Kosciuszko National Park in December 2003 and has been a part of a control and eradication program since that time. It poses a serious threat to the Australian Alps and surrounding environments, including productive farmland. Orange hawkweed is known to outcompete native and pastoral plants and can create monocultures.

## Detection innovations

Two innovative survey techniques have been developed and incorporated into the program to increase detection of hawkweed in remote locations:

Highly trained Weed Eradication Detector Dogs (WEDD) are improving detection rates by finding hawkweed hidden within tussocks or plants too small for humans to find. The dogs are motivated to work hard for the reward of a tennis ball.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft (Drones) fitted with a high-resolution camera are used to survey large areas for hawkweed. Images of target areas are processed with an advanced algorithm that detects the bright orange hawkweed flowers. Humans then confirm and control any positive detections.

## Special activities

### Remote helicopter assisted surveys

This activity uses a helicopter to deploy ground teams, of up to five people per team, to remote areas to survey for hawkweed. These remote survey areas are critical in delimiting the extent of hawkweed within the Jagungal Wilderness Area.

Teams are supervised by NPWS accredited officers, and comprised of only experienced team members, to provide the best chances of detecting hawkweed.

This activity is only open to volunteers who have previously participated in a week of ground surveillance in either the orange hawkweed or mouse-ear hawkweed projects.

For bookings or inquiries, please call the Hawkweed Volunteer and Partnerships Coordinator during business hours on 0488 588 739.

**Cover photo:** Orange hawkweed flower heads (Jo Caldwell/DPIE); **Page 2:** Volunteers and NPWS marking hawkweed plants (Jo Caldwell/DPIE); **Page 3 (left to right):** Drones hunt for hawkweed from the air (Mark Hamilton/DPIE); Volunteers and staff survey for orange hawkweed, new site Farm Ridge (Mark Hamilton/DPIE); Weed Eradication Detector Dog, Sally, always enthusiastic and ready to hunt for hawkweed (Jo Caldwell/DPIE).

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EES 2020/0318 September 2020.