Read our
Resort Round-up

A newsletter for the resorts community of Kosciuszko National Park
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NOTICE: COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The unprecedented summer has only become worse with the unprecedented COVID-19 virus. In this ever changing situation please make sure all stakeholders are obtaining up-to-date information from: NSW Health Australian Government Department of Health World Health Organisation NSW national parks closure alerts and updates.

If you have any leasing or licencing concerns please contact the NPWS Property and Commercial Branch via npws.property@environment.nsw.gov.au.

For all other general public health matters (not COVID-19 related) please contact Peter McCarthy, NPWS Environmental Health Officer via email peter.mcCarthy@environment.nsw.gov.au or (02) 6450 5546.

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Cover: Wattle re-growth adjoining Snowy Mountains Highway, Kosciuszko National Park (Photo: A Scanlon)

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Announcement

Selwyn focused on rebuild, but not open for Winter 2020

The Blyton Group, owner of Selwyn Snow Resort, announced that due to the extent of the damage sustained in the bushfires earlier this year, Selwyn Snow Resort will not be open for the 2020 snow season.

An initial assessment of critical resort infrastructure has identified extensive damage to buildings, power, water, sewerage and snowmaking. Selwyn Snow Resort has been advised that restoration of power alone will take several months, due to the damage of several kilometres of power poles leading to the resort.

Preparations for the clean-up of the site are underway with demolition of all buildings required, as well as the removal of destroyed resort machinery such as groomers, skidoos and snow clearers. Detailed assessment of lifting and snowmaking infrastructure will continue to be undertaken, requiring portable generators to be brought on-site.

Kevin James Blyton, Chairman of the Blyton Group said, ‘We are incredibly saddened by the impact this fire has had, not only on our resort but on the wider local community as well. We have considered a range of options to try and resume operations for this coming winter, however the damage to critical infrastructure is simply too extensive to make this possible.

We recognise the impact these fires have had on local operators, not only for this summer period, but for the peak winter season ahead. We are actively discussing this situation with government at all levels to try and ensure that support is made available for these communities.

But have no doubt, my team and I are totally focused on the rebuild of Selwyn Snow Resort and we look forward to welcoming guests back to an even better Selwyn.’

Discussions are ongoing with the New South Wales Government regarding the rebuild process, including engagement with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Selwyn Snow Resort 2020 Season Pass holders will be offered the ability to transfer their Season Pass to the Blyton Group’s other snow resort Charlotte Pass Snow Resort at no additional cost, or alternatively receive a full refund of any payments made to date.

Seasonal Employees who had been offered the opportunity to return to Selwyn Snow Resort for the upcoming season, will be offered the opportunity to instead work at Charlotte Pass Snow Resort for Winter 2020.

Regular updates on the rebuild process will be made available on the Selwyn Snow Resort website.
Selwyn Snowfields

Selwyn Snowfields snowgun destroyed by fire (Photo: R Owen/ DPIE)
Many unique animals live in Australia’s alpine and subalpine ecosystems, yet we often know little about them. Understanding their natural history, habitat requirements and potential threats helps us conserve these species into the future. Researchers are currently working to fill key knowledge gaps on one of the region’s most unknown species, the alpine she-oak skink (*Cyclodomorphus praealtus*).

The alpine she-oak skink is listed as Endangered nationally and in NSW, and Critically Endangered in Victoria. NSW also categorises the species as ‘Data Deficient’ as there is insufficient information about the species to inform decisions on the best management actions. Alpine she-oak skinks are slender medium-sized lizards up to 35cm long. They appear to rely on low vegetation with high structural complexity. Their habitat is under snow in the winter, limiting time for growth and reproduction in the summer.

Reptiles link to many ecosystem components through services such as vegetation and invertebrate consumption, seed dispersal and soil movement. Researchers in Victoria and NSW, led by Nick Clemann at the Arthur Rylah Institute and Renée Hartley at the Australian National University (ANU), are collecting scat samples to determine the species diet, which is currently thought to consist of invertebrates such as millipedes, beetles and caterpillars. Samples are also being collected to better understand the species genetic diversity and population connectivity.

Previously thought to only occur above 1500m, recent surveys have found the alpine she-oak skink at considerably lower elevations at the southern and northern extents of its range; as low as 1320m. A number of new populations have been found in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) as part of this project, expanding its NSW distribution to the north, east and south. However, perhaps due to its scarcity in the landscape, the species is not easily detected and a considerable survey effort was required to find these new populations.

In researching the impact of ski runs on reptiles in KNP, ANU’s Dr Chloe Sato found that without vegetation structural complexity, alpine she-oak skinks were subject to significantly higher rates of predation and were likely to experience temperatures that could be fatal. The result being a reduced opportunity to search for mates, food and shelter without overheating.

As grazing mammals have been shown to reduce vegetation structural complexity in the subalpine zone, they are likely to be a key threatening process that could affect this species over the coming years. Deer and horse populations are expanding and native species are facing increasing habitat alteration with fire, climate change and development. It is therefore important that we quantify these impacts urgently. This research will quantify impacts of both native and non-native grazing mammals across the alpine she-oak skink’s range. With more than 100 study sites across KNP, this project will provide a landscape-scale assessment of the impact of grazing mammals on alpine she-oak skink habitat and populations.
What’s new with Underground Petroleum Storage Systems

New fuel storage regulations


The aim of Underground Petroleum Storage Systems (UPSS) Regulation is to minimise the risk to human health and the environment by requiring best practice design, installation, maintenance and monitoring. From 1 September 2019 NPWS will become the Approved Regulatory Authority (ARA) for the majority of UPSS operating in Kosciuszko National Park.

The Environment Protection Authority will remain the regulatory authority for UPSS sites that are:

• operated by public authorities
• businesses with an environment protection licence
• subject to a notice issued by the EPA before 1 September 2019.

The following situations will be exempt from the legislation until 31 August 2021 when the regulation will be re-assessed:

• underground storage systems of the type used solely for a back-up generator in a commercial and residential premise
• a storage system used solely for heating oil in a residential premise
• a storage system used solely for waste oil.

What does the amended regulation mean for businesses operating with a UPSS in KNP?

Businesses will need to ensure:

• the installation and/or modification of a new UPSS must be designed, installed and tested by a duly qualified person
• the UPSS is required to have a leak detection system
• the UPSS must have a Fuel System Operation Plan for the site (previously known as an Environmental Protection Plan)
• the UPSS must have a loss monitoring system designed by a duly qualified person
• they report to NPWS with a 30 day notice of intention to remove a UPSS and provide a validation report after 60 days from the date the tank is removed or replaced.

NPWS will shortly contact those businesses in KNP known to be affected by this change in the regulation to outline future monitoring and compliance actions.

Should you wish to clarify business responsibilities in relation to UPSS then in the first instance contact: Peter McCarthy on (02) 6450 5546 or email Peter.K.McCarthy@environment.nsw.gov.au
The 2019-20 bushfire season is the most widespread and extreme that NSW has ever experienced. More than 5.4 million hectares burnt across NSW, including 2.7 million hectares of national park estate (up until 3 February 2020). In some regions, over 50% of the national park estate has been impacted.

Within Kosciuszko National Park, just over 231,000 ha, or 33.5% of the national park has burnt. The Adaminaby complex (which originated out of the Green Valley fire) and Pilot Lookout fires were finally declared extinguished on 16 February 2020.

Heavy losses to assets occurred during the fires including the destruction of most buildings within the Selwyn snow resort, and loss of buildings at historic Kiandra including the Kiandra Courthouse. The courthouse was originally built as a police station in 1890. It was one of the last reminders of the Kiandra village which housed up to 10,000 people in the 1860s gold rush.

The town of Cabramurra was also badly impacted, with the loss of many buildings including the former school and the historic ski rope tow.

Nine historic huts were destroyed and several others significantly damaged. Huts destroyed were Bradley’s, Brooks, Delaneys, Four Mile, Happy’s, Pattersons, Round Mountain, Wolgals and Sawyers Huts.

Incredibly, Yarrongobilly Caves House was saved during the fires due to work by just 6 NPWS staff undertaking dramatic back burning operations and setting up sprinkler systems around the buildings as the fire storm approached, before they retreated to the safety of the caves as the fire storm passed through. Currango homesteads were also saved during the fires.

The fires have had a severe impact on wildlife including threatened species. Animals that survived the fires are at increased risk from feral predators such as cats and foxes. Many important habitats will take years to recover or may never recover to their pre-fire state.

The NSW Government is now implementing an emergency recovery plan to protect and restore wildlife populations. A rapid assessment was undertaken to identify the proportion of habitat that has been lost for key threatened species, and to identify the critical remaining habitat areas. Interventions to protect threatened species habitat are being undertaken on the ground.

Some initiatives implemented include targeted food drops for some species and establishment of watering points.

NPWS is still looking to continue with its hazard reduction burn program and is looking at remaining unburnt areas and assessing them for their strategic value in fire protection.
Kiandra Courthouse – *lost during the recent fires*

Beautifully restored Kiandra Courthouse 2011 (Photo L Morrell/DPIE)

The remains of the Kiandra Courthouse after the 2019–20 fires (Photo: H Smith/DPIE)
Matthews Cottage, Kiandra – lost during the recent fires

Matthews Cottage, Kiandra 2009 (Photo: S Cohen/DPIE)

Matthews Cottage remains after the 2019-20 fires (Photo: H Smith/DPIE)
The Rest House, Sawyers Hill – *lost during the recent fires*

The Rest House remains after the 2019-20 fires (Photo: H Smith/DPIE)

The Rest House rebuilt at Sawyers Hill - the original was damaged in the 2003 bushfires and rebuilt in 2009 (Photo S Cohen/DPIE)
The view from Black Perry Lookout

Looking north from Black Perry Lookout, Snowy Mountains Highway, Kosciuszko National Park (Photo: A Scanlon)
Ration packs

Healthy Mountain Pygmy-possums have been spotted on remote cameras, feeding on Bogong biscuits and drinking at water stations in Kosciuszko National Park.

Environment Minister Matt Kean said the images confirm the news we’ve been waiting to hear – that many of these endangered animals survived the Dunn’s Road fire.

‘This also demonstrates the effectiveness of our carefully targeted emergency actions in helping to sustain wildlife in bushfire hit areas,’ Mr Kean said.

‘The images show just how hungry and thirsty the possums are, since the fire destroyed or reduced its natural food sources, so these Bogong biscuits have literally been a lifesaver.’

‘So far 62 custom-built food and drink stations have been installed across six burnt boulder field sites. Over 20kg of Bogong biscuits have been baked, and over 50kg of macadamia nuts have been used; donated by Woolworths which has been providing fresh produce to the Saving our Species (SoS) program to help feed wildlife affected by fires.’

Developed by biologists at Zoos Victoria, the biscuits are a veterinary-verified powder that replicate the nutrition of the Bogong moth, a main food source for the possum.

‘Other native wildlife has also been spotted using the food and water stations, including the common native bush rat, dusky antechinus, mountain brush-tailed possums and black rock skinks,’ Mr Kean said.

Dr Linda Broome, an SoS threatened species expert has studied the possums for over 30 years, and said that food and water will continue to be delivered to the possums well into autumn before they start to hibernate under the winter snow cover.

Woolworths and Zoos Victoria have also committed to continuing the short-term supply of Bogong biscuits powder and macadamia nuts.
Update on alpine snow gum dieback

With very hot dry weather right up until late January, alpine snow gums were again under increased moisture stress and hence were even more susceptible to attack from longicorn beetles (Phoracantha species).

Over the summer there has been a lot of research and investigation work being conducted on the dieback, and hopefully you can help.

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Australian Alps National Parks Co-operative Management Committee are working closely with researchers from Australian National University (ANU), Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), and others to gain more information in the following areas:

- Dieback cause – confirmation of the main beetle species responsible for the current outbreak. One of the techniques being used was establishment of ‘emergence traps’ to trap all woodborers that come out of the trees between December and March. ‘Funnell traps’ were placed in areas varying in attack severity with the aim of investigating links between insect abundance and attack severity.

- Extent and species affected – confirmation of the Eucalypt species affected by the beetle and the current extent of the outbreaks. Plots and transects have been established to investigate the dieback in detail and look at any patterns between individual stands and at the landscape-level. Tree cores are being used to estimate the timing of dieback.

- Moisture stress - investigating the severity of water stress within snow gum forests and its association with beetle attacks. Plot, transect and tree core data will be used to look for correlations between insect attack and changes in variables such as rainfall and climate.

- Public risk in ski resorts is being assessed using the following methods:
  - Flights to obtain new highly accurate imagery of each resort
  - Mapping of severity of dieback within each resort
  - Mapping of high use areas and areas with heightened public safety risk due to unstable trees
  - Risk management plans and works to address safety issues.

Your help is required to map the location and scale of current outbreaks. This can be done by simply taking a photograph and filling out a basic form at each location on the Atlas of Living Australia Snowgum dieback webpage.
The future

Merritts gondola on the way… up

Unloading one of the Merritts gondolas, September 2019 (Photo: Thredbo Resort)

Unloading one of the Merritts gondolas, September 2019 (Photo: Thredbo Resort)

Construction of Australia's first alpine Gondola in Thredbo is well underway and on target for completion in May 2020, ahead of the opening of the 2020 winter snow season. This exciting project will see the Merritts double chairlift replaced with a high speed, eight-person Gondola that will quadruple the capacity of the previous lift and further enhance the award-winning Thredbo experience.

Construction on the immense project is being carried out by the company Doppelmayr and will run until May 2020. The state-of-the-art Gondola cabins, which were made by CWA Constructions in Olten, Switzerland have already been delivered, and other specialised equipment has been in production since March last year in Wolfurt, Austria.

The scale of the project has seen over 45 containers of equipment, 20 truckloads of reinforcing and steel, and 150 truckloads of concrete delivered to Thredbo. Over 170 people have been directly and indirectly involved in the construction process with approximately 25-30 people working on-site on the project.

Sample gondola located near the Thredbo Ticket Office (Photo: T Scanlon/DPIE)
Did you know...?

**Pandas re-discovered in Kosci!**

Well ok… panda snails. The rare Kershaw’s Panda-snail has been re-discovered in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) after 100 years.

We often forget about the invertebrates that make up over 95% of the animal kingdom. If you look hard, camouflaged in the undergrowth in KNP you may find the rare Kershaw’s Panda-snail. This native land snail with a shell size of about 35-60mm is active at night and grazes on fungi and decaying plant material. Snails are an important part of the food web, recycling forest nutrients, and their shells provide an important source of calcium for other animals.

This rare species is restricted to the Snowy mountains and has very few records from NSW. The snail has recently been re-found at two locations in KNP; extending its known northern extent. Native land snails are rare and already eight species are listed as Threatened in NSW. This species is under threat from climate change as they are restricted in their distribution and have poor dispersal ability.

![Panda snail](Photo: M Schroder/DPIE)

**Perisher tackle weeds**

The invasive weed St. Johns Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) has been identified in Blue Cow Resort Area over recent summers. Weed contractors targeted the plant in summer 2019, however it had already dropped seed so it was clear the weed would be back again this year in full force.

This summer, a combination of methods has been used to remove the weed and prevent its spread. Weed spraying began in December followed by Perisher Mountain Operations staff assisting in two sessions of hand-pulling the weed from the ski runs, removing over 20 large bags of the plants. This was topped off with another pass at weed spraying in late February. Perisher is taking this invasive weed seriously, and with continued efforts hopes to reduce its presence, or eliminate it altogether!

![Perisher Ski Resort staff undertaking hand-removal of St. Johns Wort from the ski slopes](Photo: A Gault/Perisher Ski Resort)

**Reminder about tank water after bushfires**

Bushfires generate significant amounts of ash and debris that can contaminate your tank water. Following a bushfire if you have not already done so it is advisable to disconnect the downpipes from your tank; if it rains before cleaning a roof catchment then this rainfall should not be collected in your tank.

If water in the tank is contaminated, then this should be drained, and the tank cleaned before refilling. Additional areas that should be cleaned includes equipment that can be affected by debris, such as filters and guttering.

Once drinking water has been captured or delivered, the taps on the property should be flushed to bring through the clean water from the tank.

If you require further information please contact: Peter McCarthy on (02) 6450 5546 or email Peter.K.McCarthy@environment.nsw.gov.au
In an exciting Australian snow industry first, all of Thredbo’s major resort operations are powered by renewable energy. Ahead of the winter 2019 season, Thredbo signed an agreement with Red Energy to obtain the resort operations’ electricity supply from renewable sources, reinforcing Thredbo’s core commitment to the environment.

In a three-year deal with Red Energy, Thredbo purchased 9 gigawatt hours of energy per year, the equivalent to the electricity consumed by 1,500 average homes. Thredbo’s unique location in the Kosciuszko National Park means that electricity consumption peaks in the winter months with the addition of snowmaking, heating and guest amenities, so this agreement goes a long way to preserving the amazing Snowy Mountains for future generations.

‘Becoming powered by renewable energy has been our goal for some time now and by achieving this we’ve set the environmental benchmark for Australian resorts. We are extremely proud to be at the forefront of reducing our carbon footprint into the future,’ said Stuart Diver, General Manager of Thredbo.

Red Energy is 100% owned by Snowy Hydro, making this a valuable partnership with two local environmentally conscious businesses.
Resort weeds on the radar

There are many weed species in and around alpine resorts that can be a major threat to biodiversity and park values. But where to start?! Below is a summary of a few that are higher priorities for control due to their impacts on the surrounding environment.

**Soft rush (Juncus effuses)**

A tussock forming rush that prefers wet places. It has tubular round leaves filled with white pith that is dense and uniform.

It looks very similar to native Juncus rushes, however the stem of soft rush is very easy to compress between the fingers and white stem pith is continuous. In native Juncus the pith is often interrupted by air spaces.

Its fine seeds are spread by wind and water, as well as on boots and machinery.

**Goatsbeard (Tragopogan dubius)**

Erect biennial herb to 1.2m tall, distinguished by milky latex. Leaves with parallel veins to 50cm long. Heads with small yellow flowers 2-3.4cm long and spindle shaped seeds 2.5-3.5 topped by 2 rows of feather like bristles 2-3cm long.

Becoming common along roadsides and walking tracks in Kosciuszko NP. It has wind dispersed seed.

**Sulphur cinquefoil (Potentilla recta)**

Perennial herb 10-70cm high with leaves arising from both the base and top of stems. Upper leaves palm-shaped, 5-12cm long, with 5-7 leaflets mostly 5-15mm wide with toothed margins.

Flowering stems 10-70cm high covered in short downy hair. Flowers with 6-12mm long petals.

**Sedum/goldmoss stonecrop (Sedum acre)**

Creeping mat-forming herb with smooth yellow-green stems 5-25cm long. Overlapping triangular leaves to 5cm long.

Flower heads 1-5cm long with yellow flowers to 1cm diameter. It is often found in grassland and rocky areas.
**Stocky galaxias rescued**

Experts from NPWS, University of Canberra and NSW Department of Primary Industry – Fisheries Officers stepped in to save the extremely rare Stocky galaxias, a tiny fish only found in Kosciuszko National Park.

NPWS Southern Ranges Director, Mick Pettitt, said NPWS firefighters escorted researchers to the short section of Tantangara Creek as fires approached to catch and save up to 140 of the fish to ensure a captive insurance population.

‘University of Canberra researchers were concerned that ash from the fires would contaminate the creek and endanger the fish, which live in cold, clear and fast flowing water, often covered in snow during winter,’ he said.

Mr Pettitt said very little is known about the Stocky Galaxias, which appears to have a home range of just 100 metres.

There are also risks to the fish from erosion and disturbance by hooved animals to the bed and banks of the creek, suspending fine sediment into the water which smothers the Stocky Galaxias eggs, washes the fish’s eggs off rocks where they are usually protected. Loss of overhanging vegetation on the creek banks also reduces the number of insects the fish can feed on.

Fencing of the small catchment is planned to occur in 2020 now that the threat of fires has gone and crews are able to move in safely.

The Stocky Galaxias are protected by a waterfall along their tributary of the upper Murrumbidgee River which creates a natural barrier, stopping Trout moving into this section of the creek, which are a predator of the Stocky Galaxias.

**ADF fly corroboree frogs to rescue**

Environment Minister Matt Kean thanked the ADF for safely and promptly delivering threatened species experts to remote enclosures where early inspections revealed that three of the four known Southern Corroboree frog sites were burned by the recent fires, and the fourth site was still threatened by an active fire at the time.

‘The team of experts evaluated populations of the critically endangered Southern Corroboree frog affected by the fires and began efforts to ensure the surviving frogs had adequate refuge sites and food,’ Mr Kean said.

‘Unfortunately, there was damage to the habitat inside the enclosures and also to the irrigation equipment, but luckily the fences surrounding them remained secure.’

‘Sadly, a number of the frogs perished and so all our efforts were then focused on protecting the remaining frogs by reinforcing moist habitat refuges in the enclosures and checking there was enough food for the colourful but tiny amphibians.’

Mr Kean said that while this is a set-back for the conservation of Corroboree frogs in the wild, the species remains secure with captive populations continuing to do well at Taronga Zoo, Melbourne Zoo and Healesville Sanctuary.

The Corroboree frog recovery team is now working with NPWS to repair and provide more robust watering systems for all the field enclosures.

Brought back from the brink of extinction by the large-scale captive breeding program, wild populations have been re-established into disease-free fenced enclosures located throughout Kosciuszko National Park. Other amphibians which may be carrying the chytrid fungus are excluded.
Winners

Faces of Thredbo awards

Ludwig Rabina (Photo: Thredbo Historical Society)

Each year the Thredbo Historical Society recognises two or more individuals who have contributed to winter snow sports and/or Thredbo in its Faces of Thredbo Awards. Last year Ludwig Rabina was recognised for his service to the ski patrol, mountain management, race program and public relations.

The second award was presented to Wayne Kirkpatrick. As General Manager, he oversaw the development of the $40M Master Plan of the 1980s and the bid to secure and stage the 1989 Thredbo Ski World Cup. Nineteen awards have been presented since the program’s inception 6 years ago.

Wayne Kirkpatrick (Photo: Thredbo Historical Society)

New life from ‘tongs of death’

‘Tongs of death’ in action (Photo: T Scanlon/DPIE)

A weed control technique used widely in significant areas along the coast is now being used by some lodges in Kosciuszko National Park.

The ‘tongs of death’ are proving to be a great way of controlling introduced grasses growing amongst native species without causing off-target damage.

The technique uses highly specialised and technical BBQ tongs and wetlexes – at a cost of about $5 - to apply herbicide to the problem grasses. The method, known as wiping, is an approved technique on herbicide labels.

Warning: do not re-use the BBQ tongs and Wetlexes in the kitchen!

Thredbo historical news

A Museums and Galleries NSW Grant has been awarded to the Thredbo Historical Society by the Hon Don Harwin MLS, Special Minister of the State and Minister for the Arts. The grant will enable the Society to purchase a Touch Screen for displaying short films on Australian ski history and Thredbo’s development. This equipment will be an added attraction to visitors this summer and beyond.
Weeds in Kosciuszko National Park

New funding for hawkweed

The NSW Environmental Trust has provided $7.27M in funding over the next 8 years to the NSW Hawkweed Eradication Program.

Hawkweeds (Pilosella species) are low growing perennial herbs in the daisy family that have potential to be serious environmental and agricultural threats in the temperate areas of south east Australia, including the Australian Alps.

In Kosciuszko National Park, control programs are in place for both mouse-ear hawkweed (P. officinarum) and orange hawkweed (P. aurantiaca).

Hawkweeds are similar in appearance to dandelions or flatweeds, however their flowers have square-edged petals and their leaves and flowers are heavily covered in hairs. They grow close to the ground in a rosette pattern and have milky sap which is seen when their stems or leaves are broken.

The focus of the Environmental Trust funding is to implement the Accelerating Hawkweed Eradication project. This project will:

a. increase surveillance operations eight-fold
b. help prevent spread and improve early detection through education campaigns, and
c. develop innovative remote surveillance technologies.

Surveillance and control programs for the species use NPWS staff, drones, weed eradication dogs and volunteers to find infestations. If you would like to volunteer to help find and eradicate these species from Kosciuszko National Park, more information can be found on the NPWS Hunting Hawkweed webpage.

Hawkweed and the fires

Within Kosciuszko National Park, 471 of 532 (88%) orange hawkweed (OHW) sites have been impacted by the fires in some way, with varying degrees of severity. No mouse-ear hawkweed (MEH) sites were impacted by fire; although they came very close.

How did the program go with fires?

The Volunteer programs were cancelled for January. This meant key activities for OHW were not conducted and this has seriously impacted the survey and operating targets. The people couldn’t survey, the drones couldn’t fly and the dogs couldn’t work their sniffer noses to hunt the beast down. However, the MEH volunteer program commenced in the first week of February and should be able to meet most of the targets for that species.

MEH lost 4 weeks and OHW lost at least 6 weeks. That’s a big impact for seasonal programs.

Current situation

NPWS are currently doing post fire assessments to monitor OHW site impacts and responses.

While the fires were devastating, there is now a reduced canopy and shrub layer which means it will now be easier to see.

There has been some hard work put into this program and some successes, such as 34% of known MEH sites now classed as locally eradicated – that is, 3 years with no sign of the plant at a third of the sites that are monitored.
In 2016, in response to increasing extinction rates of native Australian flora and fauna, the NSW Government initiated the Saving our Species (SoS) program. The program has enabled NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) to increase staff and resources targeted at maximising the number of currently threatened species that will survive in the wild into the future.

NSW NPWS SoS staff are working collaboratively with other government agencies, environmental and corporate organisations, researchers and experts, landholders and community groups to implement specialised threatened species and landscape conservation actions across the state.

The NPWS Southern Ranges Branch, which includes Murrumbidgee, Riverina Highlands, Alpine Queanbeyan and Snowy River Areas, undertake field-based works including research, habitat rehabilitation and pest and weed management, through to office-based land-use planning and regulation to protect threatened species and their habitat.

Current programs include the well-known Southern Corroboree frog, Spotted-tailed quoll and Mountain Pygmy possum as well as species of lesser prominence which are equally crucial in keeping our precious alpine ecosystems in balance, such as Guthega skink, Feldmark grass and Pale Golden moths.

Such important flora and fauna are not only threatened by introduced animals which predate on native species or compete for food and habitat, but also the direct and indirect threats of climate change; as the snowline rises, species which rely on the snow to survive are approaching their elevational limits. The complex myriad of creatures within our alpine areas occur nowhere else on the planet!

There are always challenges to achieving a lasting positive ecological impact when working in an environment made fragile by the uniqueness of altitude and surrounding species and the uncertainty of extreme weather events and seasonal changes. Prioritising resources amongst diverse species programs is also complex; an undertaking made easier with increasing awareness and support from the community and local organisations; either on-farm, at volunteer events, through change in corporate practices or at home as conscientious global citizens, to genuinely turn the tide on species loss. Together we can secure a future for threatened species.

For further information see Saving our Species webpage.