

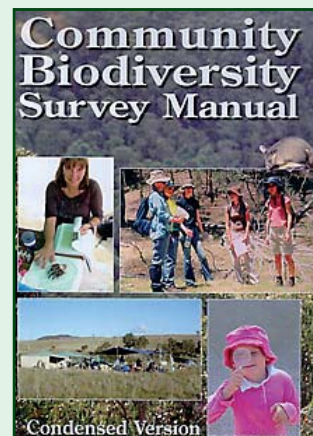
COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY SURVEY PROJECT

overview of the project

The *Community Biodiversity Survey Project* trained people in the community to conduct biodiversity surveys in terrestrial and marine environments using methods and techniques established and tested by the National Parks Association of NSW (NPA). The NPA had identified that there was a shortage of people in the community that could undertake biodiversity surveys and there was an interest in developing these skills in the community. As part of this project, ten biodiversity survey methodology workshops were carried out along with four community biodiversity surveys. A total of 515 participants were trained in conducting biodiversity surveys by this project.

The project improved community understanding and involvement in biodiversity surveying and aimed to improve the quality and extent of biodiversity information within NSW. The surveys reveal the plants, animals and ecological communities that are present in each region, the state of health they are in, and the factors influencing the area's biological diversity. Biodiversity surveys allow conservation managers to determine priorities for protection, the types of land that should be acquired for new conservation reserves, and to identify key areas outside of reserves that require protection. They also help to identify complex environmental problems that may need cooperative action between conservation organisations, local land managers and property owners.

The benefits of more biodiversity surveys include the capacity to identify areas of high conservation value, increased awareness within the community of the environmental value of their area and potentially greater protection of these areas.



The biodiversity training manual

how the project was carried out

The potential community leaders for biodiversity surveys were identified and invited to attend the biodiversity survey workshops. These included Landcare and Bushcare groups, various state and local government agencies, Catchment Management Authorities, universities, landholders and conservation groups. The workshops introduced participants to the content of the *Community Biodiversity Survey Manual* as a tool for carrying out biodiversity surveys. The workshops were interactive and hands on with participants conducting flora and fauna identification in a local setting with experts to assist them. Ten workshops were held in both regional areas and cities.

Through this project the NPA has successfully coordinated four community biodiversity surveys at Armidale, Orange, Mudgee and Parkes. Each survey has studied the range of flora and fauna in the area using the methodology introduced at the workshops. These surveys involved large groups of community members from a variety of backgrounds, with the assistance of field experts. They provided participants with practical skills in measuring biodiversity, as well as encouraging information sharing and relationship building between participants.

outcomes now and in the future

This project has provided the participants with best practice skills in biodiversity survey methods, which they can use to conduct surveys in their own area. This will help groups to be able to assess if their own regeneration work is successful in assisting

local biodiversity. NPA hope additional information generated as a result of these surveys will increase the quality and extent of biodiversity information within NSW. The workshops and surveys have also increased awareness of biodiversity conservation to the wider community. At least ten new biodiversity surveys are currently underway.

This project has received further funding under the newly launched NatureKeepers program, which will continue engaging communities in biodiversity surveys and environmental management into the future.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This has been a successful education project that has had positive benefits for both individual residents and various community-based conservation groups. It has provided training and empowerment for groups to conduct biodiversity surveys and has given them the skills to establish what impacts their projects are having.

This project has confirmed that comprehensive biodiversity surveys are beyond the capacity of many community groups to undertake. However simplified techniques can still deliver useful and meaningful results if they are undertaken properly. The next step for the NPA is to make these survey methods more accessible to a broader range of less experienced community members and groups. Less daunting and time consuming techniques are being explored to allow community groups to assess the environmental health of an area and to monitor sites before, during and after restoration projects.