



Ginninderry
Conservation Trust

Annual Report FY21/22

Implementation of Conservation
Programs in the Ginninderry
Conservation Corridor



Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this 3rd Annual Report of the Ginninderry Conservation Trust. I thank the staff working with the CEO Jason Cummings, for the excellent work they have contributed over the year. I also thank the members of the Board for the donation of their time to ensure this important project moves forward. The Aboriginal community in the area are represented on the Board and have made an invaluable contribution, especially in view of the very significant Aboriginal history of the area, from which much can be learned and which must be fully respected.

I consider this project to be a leading example of what can be done to preserve the history and environment in such areas. The developer of Ginninderry (Riverview Projects) is contributing in a number of ways to establishing the Conservation Corridor, including significant financial input. In addition, the ACT government is making a major contribution and Yass Valley Council is on the Board and will be fully involved as the project extends over the current ACT/NSW border.

The report sets out detailed information on what has been accomplished in 2021/22. That includes the establishment of the first of the Tracks and Trails, running from the Link Building to Shepherds Lookout. I can vouch for the fact that this track is already being very well used by a wide range of people. I look forward to the opening of several additional trails set out in the Plan, hopefully in the coming year. Planning is well underway for the Visitor Centre (Riverside Park) and it is hoped that can be completed in the not too distant future. It will be an exciting facility and is bound to be well appreciated as part of the Conservation Corridor. Significant environmental and research work is going on and this is summarised in the report. The Trust is also developing opportunities for the residents and others to become involved in the Conservation Corridor as volunteers.

It is exciting to see this project coming to reality and already making a significant contribution to the blending of housing development and the environmental landscape in the ACT and NSW.

David Coutts



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1. Introduction

The Ginninderry Conservation Trust (GCT) has been developed as a strategic initiative of the Ginninderry Joint Venture (the JV – a partnership between Riverview Group and the ACT Government), as a vehicle to manage the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor (the Corridor), deliver Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) commitments within the Corridor, harness community support for landscape management, and present a contemporary leading practice conservation space.

The Trust legal entity has been established with a guiding constitution under the Australian Corporations Act (2001) and has registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and has a tax-deductible gift recipient fund. The Trust's on-ground operations are guided by a Plan of Management (POM) for the Corridor (dated 2018-2023) which has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act approval for the Ginninderry Project and endorsed by the ACT Conservator and Minister for the Environment.

The purpose of this report is to document the progress over the period of FY21/22 against 7 key program areas funded by the ACT Government:

- Weed, kangaroo, grazing and habitat management and restoration.
- Bushfire mitigation to protect ecological values.
- Establishing recreational facilities and access trails for the community.
- Protection of Indigenous heritage through annual maintenance and reporting of heritage sites.
- Develop and provide information and communication on matters such as cat containment promotion.
- Develop a volunteer engagement program for areas such as monitoring Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard
- Undertake research related to EPBC Act commitments such as box gum woodland restoration.

2. Conservation Programs Progress and Outcomes

The ACT Government has issued a Section 303 license covering 242 ha of the Conservation Corridor for the purposes of implementing the Corridor Plan of Management. GCT accepted the licence in March 2020 and is responsible for approximately 1.5 km of Murrumbidgee River frontage and the adjacent land up-slope to the developing urban edge. The Corridor is anticipated to grow through time per the staging outlined in Figure 1 and the Program Report.

There is a significant volume of planning and development work to be undertaken in the Corridor prior to public access. Currently public access to the Corridor has been limited to the new track from Strathnairn to Shepherds Lookout.

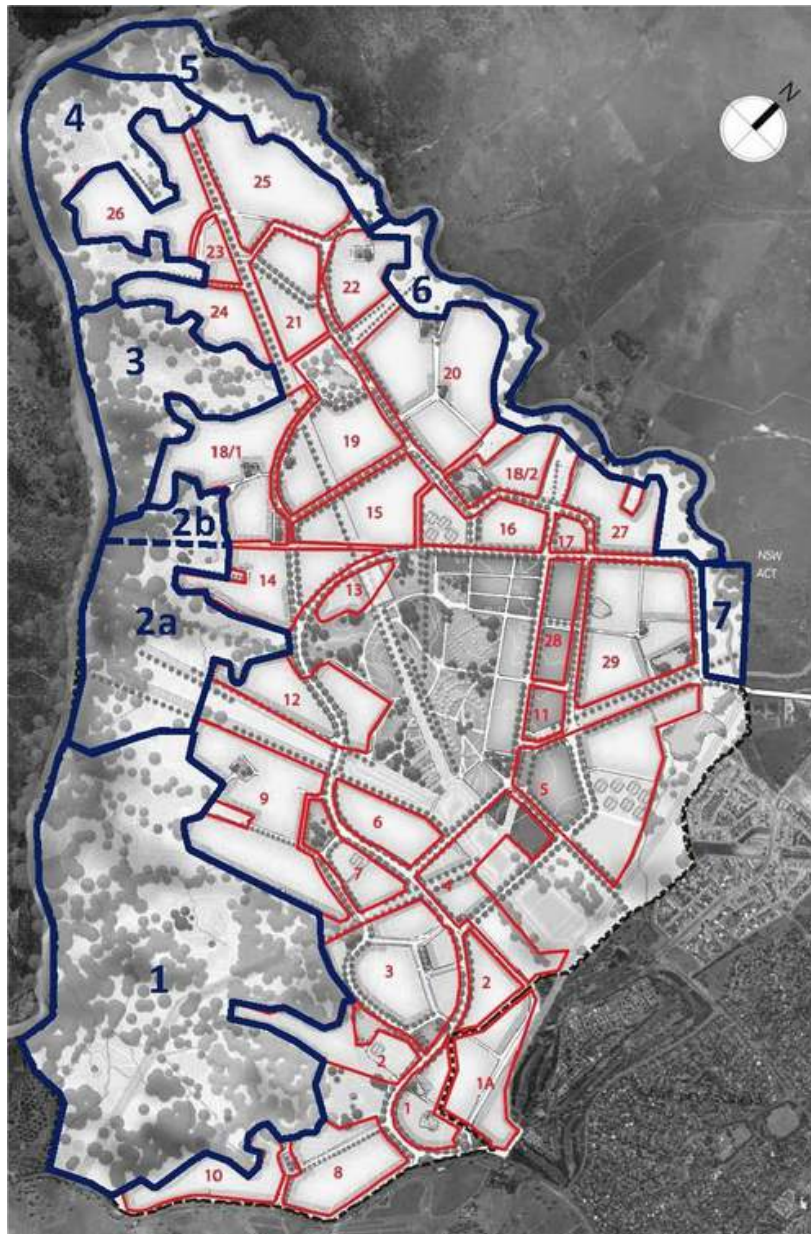


Figure 1: The Project area, blue line highlighting the Corridor boundary

3. Operations

3.1. Board and Governance

The Board of Directors, has had an active work program through the year, including the consideration and development of:

- Key infrastructure in the Corridor (e.g., tracks and trails, Riverside Park);
- Funding partnerships with the ACT Government and Ginninderry Joint Venture
- Establishment of ecological research partnership with ANU;
- Development and approval of business plans and budgets;
- Development of sub management plans, prepared under the Ginninderry Conservation Management Plan; and
- Establishing and maintaining the Workplace Health and Safety Committee

Regulatory reports to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and Register of Environmental Organisations were submitted on time.

Board of Directors

David Coutts

Chair and Community Representative

Senior officer of Commonwealth Public Service, Member of Governing Body of UN FAO, Director of Southern Fisheries, CEO of Australian Aluminium Council, President of Friends of Australian National Botanic Gardens, Board member of Tennis ACT and Tennis Seniors Australia.

Stephen Alegria

ACT Government

Executive Branch Manager of ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Stephen commenced with PCS in 2002 and has held a variety of operational and leadership roles, re-joining PCS in 2022. Stephen lead the TCCS City Presentation team delivering maintenance and management of urban public spaces.

Rod Griffiths

Treasurer and Community Representative

35 years of chartered accountancy, 37 years of governance experience in not for profit organisations, current Vice President of the Conservation Council ACT Region. Life member National Parks Association of the ACT.

Leesa Croke

ACT Government

Deputy Director-General, Policy & Cabinet Division within ACT Government's Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Division Head, International Policy and Engagement Division, Treasury ACT Government.

Alice Williams

Ginninderry Aboriginal Advisory Group

NAIDOC Elder of the Year 2018. Aboriginal Cultural Advisor.

Wally Bell

Ginninderry Aboriginal Advisory Group

Ngunnawal Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Holder and Aboriginal Cultural Advisor.

Alistair Henschman

Community Representative

25 years NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Government Senior Executive, tourism and protected area consultant.

Roz Chivers

Secretary and Community Representative

Master of Environmental Studies, Bachelor Resource and Environmental Management. Executive Director, Policy and Research Australian Local Government Association.

David Maxwell

Ginninderry Joint Venture

30+ years' experience in real estate and major property developments. Director of Riverview Group and other Corkhill companies. Managing Director of Riverview Projects (ACT) Pty Ltd – Ginninderry Development. National Development Manager (Property Development) – Woolworths Limited.

Jasmin Jones

Yass Valley Council

9 years as local government councillor in Yass Valley. Chaired a variety of committees including statutory. Broadcast Radio and Television journalist and presenter for 10 years in regional and metropolitan markets; current Editor of a local newspaper within Yass Valley.

Jennifer Finlay

ACT Government

25+ years' experience in town planning, land strategy and natural resource management in the ACT and Queensland. Senior Director Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government.



3.2. Staffing

In the interests of balancing efficiency and effectiveness, a combination of employed staff, partnerships, and sub-contracted/procured services has been engaged.



Jason Cummings

Chief Executive Officer

As this is initially a small not-for-profit organisation, a part-time CEO has been engaged to work with the board on Strategy, and be responsible for implementation, staff recruitment and management, stakeholder engagement, business establishment and operation.



Ange Calliess

Program Director – Conservation Corridor

This position is responsible for the implementation of the land management and conservation programs, input to the design of Riverside Park and the tracks and trails, coordination of the implementation of approval conditions.



Rachel Eland

Rehabilitation and Reporting Officer

This position is responsible for the quarterly and annual reporting requirements. The role is also responsible for the implementation of the conservation and land management programs.



Tyson Powell

Project Officer (Indigenous-identified position)

This position is responsible for the implementation of the conservation and land management programs – engaging sub-contractors, implementing changes to fencing arrangements, liaising with and supervising contractors installing infrastructure (tracks, trails, riverside park) and liaising with the GAAG.



Bridie Noble

Riparian Restoration and Education Officer

This position is responsible for the enhancement and monitoring of waterways in the Conservation Corridor. They are also charged with organising volunteers and education programs.



Alex Nguyen



Ariana Strmota



Violet Marriott



Kieran Webbie

Casual Rangers: This position is responsible for monitoring the walking track over peak periods including weekends and public holidays. They are charged with completing a track audit, sharing information with visitors, removing rubbish, and weed management. The casual rangers will be engaged to help during monitoring sessions and other duties as required.

3.3. Partnerships

ANU Fenner School

The Trust has established an ecological research Partnership with the Fenner School at Australian National University. Three key research projects are underway; including Eastern Brown snake research with Prof. Gavin Smith on relocations and community attitudes to snakes; fox monitoring and control with PhD candidate Tim Andrewartha; and DNA and e-DNA surveys of Pink-tail Worm-lizard populations. 1 PhD application has been successful for the eDNA project pending on the candidate getting an H1 for her honours. The second PhD project continues to be advertised. The Trust Board has established a Research Committee which meets once a month.



Figure 3: Fox - photo by Jason Stainthorpe

University of Canberra

The Trust is working with UC to undertake regular water testing of a stream system that was connected to a sediment catchment pond in stage one of the development. As the development progresses UC will adapt their water sampling regime to focus on the next section of waterways under stage two of the development.

ACT PCS

The Trust is progressing a services level agreement with ACT Parks and Conservation Service for several land management activities including feral animal management and prescribed burns and review and audit of our Bushfire Management Plan and implementation. Coordination efforts are ongoing. Monthly meetings are scheduled for GCT/PCS catch up.

The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust

The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust has successfully established ACT-leading community engagement, interpretation, and volunteer programs, and reading-across this experience will assist the quick and efficient deployment of these elements for the Ginninderry River Corridor. It is likely other partnership opportunities will arise by working closely with the WWT, including in the future, potential species reintroduction programs.

3.4. Financial Statements

Our annual financial statements are audited by a third-party accredited auditor – and are publicly available on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website.

3.5. Performance Management and Reporting

Financial reporting

Our 21-22 financial reports were audited during the year, and the audited statements for that year were published on the Australian Charities and Not-for Profits Commission website (publicly available). The next financial audit will be undertaken in September/October 2022. This year's audit report will also be provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

Environmental and Community Performance

The annual report has been prepared for the Board and stakeholders interested in the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor. Finer-scale reporting also occurs with regulatory authorities and as the program expands the volume of material available for review will also grow. A variety of other reports have been published on the Trust [website](#).

Workplace Health and Safety

The Workplace Health and Safety Committee met 4 times throughout the year, to supervise and support the establishment of systems, review incidents and help foster a positive safety culture. There were no significant incidents to report, and during the year we engaged a third-party to review the systems we have established.



4. Case Studies

Here we present some select case-studies to provide a bit more detail about the type of conservation work we are undertaking in the corridor.

4.1. Eastern Brown Snake Tracking Project with Prof. Gavin Smith



Figure 2: Eastern Brown Snake, by Gavin Smith

The Trust has been working with professional snake catcher and Associate Professor Gavin Smith at the ANU on ground-breaking research to understand Eastern Brown Snakes better. Every year, large numbers of native snakes are removed from around people's properties and then relocated to new environments. But little is known about the welfare or ecological impacts of these translocation practices, particularly survivability rates of individual snakes after release, but also how different snakes respond to the experience of being displaced.

To get a better understanding of these urban adapted snakes the Trust provided start-up funding so that these snakes could be fitted with transmitters and tracked over time. From here the Canberra snake tracking project has grown with over 20 snakes having been tracked or currently being tracked to date. Two of the projects' snakes, Burrai and Severus are currently being tracked in the Corridor by the Trust staff. Burrai is female and Severus is male, both reaching roughly 1.4m.

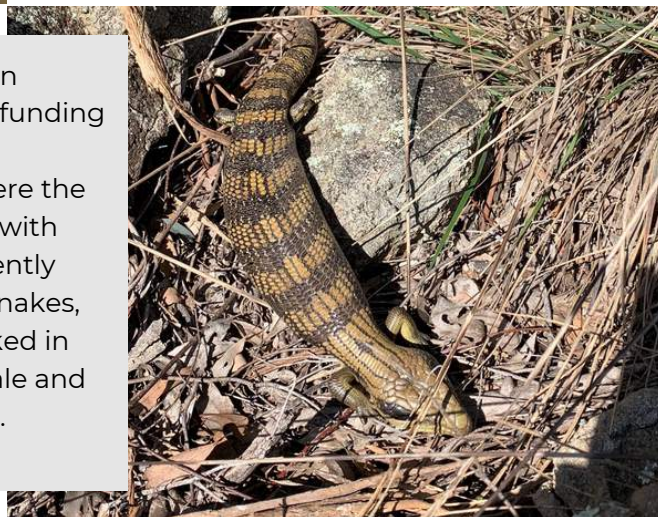


Figure 3: Cohabiting Blue Tongue Lizard



Figure 4: Burrai thermoregulating outside her burrow.

The snakes were released in high quality habitat at different locations. Interestingly, Severus' movements were quite erratic for a few weeks, while Burrai tended to find a burrow, stay for a while and move on. But the most exciting data these two snakes have provided is that despite the copious amount of habitat in the Corridor, these two snakes ended up overwintering in the same burrow network. Other critters have also used the same burrow including a Blue-tongue Lizard, Skinks, and non-native mice. These weird and wonderful creatures are vital agents in the ecosystem but are often deeply misunderstood - and highly persecuted.

4.2. Pink-tailed Worm-lizard Translocation Research with ANU



In October 2021, ten Pink-tailed Worm-Lizards (*Aprasia parapulchella* / PTWL) were taken from a paddock planned for development within the Ginninderry Development area and translocated safely to Crace Grasslands Nature Reserve. Measurements and samples were taken to identify individuals and monitor survival going forward. This translocation was conducted as a partnership between the Ginninderry Conservation Trust (GCT), the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust (WWT), ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) and The Australian National University (ANU).

PTWL Size:

The vent to snout length in the caught PTWL ranged from 88mm to 125mm. Based on previous research conducted by University of Canberra, this indicates all individuals found were in their third year. This suggests there has been no, or little breeding or new recruitment within this area. This could possibly be due to poor habitat connectivity as there are large gaps between suitable rock clusters, and low-quality grasslands in-between.

PTWL number	Weight (g)	Vent to Snout Length (mm)	Vent to Tail Length	Tail clip (TC)	Body Swab (BoS)	Estimated rock size (cm)	Vegetation cover (%)	Vegetation Type	Average Vegetation Height (cm)
PT01	1.3	88	NA	Y	Y	< 20cm	100	Pasture grasses	20
PT02	1	100	67	Y	Y	20cm_40cm	95	Clover	10
PT03	0.85	92	65	Y	Y	< 20cm	80	Pasture grass	20
PT04	1	100	NA	Y	Y	20cm_40cm	95	Pasture grass	15
PT05	1.2	105	NA	Y	Y	< 20cm	100	Pasture grass	30
PT06	1.4	94.5	NA	Y	Y	< 20cm	50	Exotic grass	15
PT07	1.1	105	26	Y	Y				
PT08	1.4	109	NA	Y	Y	20cm_40cm	1	Tussock	20
PT09	1.45	125	NA	Y	Y	20cm_40cm	20	Wild oats	20
PT10	1	100	45	Y	Y	40cm_60cm	5	Pasture	40

Figure 6: Measurements from the 10 collected PTWLs found in the search at Ginninderry in October 2021

Results:

During the whole survey period, A total of 10 PTWLs were translocated. Eight other animals were found including five Olive Legless Lizards (*Delma inornata*), a Boulenger's Skink (*Morethia boulengeri*), a Copper-tail Skink (*Ctenotus taeniolatus*), a Three-toed skink (*Heriergis decresiensis*) and a Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxii*).



Figure 5: Translocated Whistling Tree Frog

80% of PTWL found were discovered under rocks less than 40cm in diameter (one was found under a larger rock – 40-60cm in size. This is consistent with the data showing habitat preference of rocks between 10-30cm (Osbourne & Wong 2013).

4.3. Installation of Interpretive Signage throughout the Corridor



The first track from the Link Building to Shepherds Lookout has been completed. The track enjoys views of the Murrumbidgee River and the Brindabella mountain range. The track features the differing ecosystems of the Corridor including native grasslands, Callitris forest and Box-gum Grassy Woodlands.

The Trust installed track counters at the beginning and end of the Strathnairn to Shepherds Lookout track. Since the counters were installed, the track has received over 14,000 visits.

The interpretation framework includes a combination of messaging about accessibility and safety on the trail, wayfinding and interpretive signage (cultural and natural values). The Trust has also developed an audio-App for visitors who want to dive deeper into any elements of the content. The App highlights important cultural and ecological values along the track.



Figure 7: The track passing the Double Dams



Figure 7: Track passing through the Callitris forest - Ana Livanes

4.4. Community Engagement

The Trust has established a volunteer database through the platform 'Better Impact'. Volunteering opportunities are advertised on the site and through a quarterly newsletter. The volunteer program will focus on engaging local residents of Strathnairn and Macnamara firstly and the broader local community more generally. The aim for the future is to develop a core group of volunteers to undertake both on-ground and monitoring works within the Corridor. The Trust has ran several volunteering activities throughout the year.

CIT/ Spark Program:

The Trust partnered with Ginninderry's SPARK program to provide field work opportunities within the Conservation Corridor. The students engaged in plant identification, monitoring (via field cameras), planting, weed control, habitat restoration works, and water quality monitoring.

Bush on the Boundary (BOB) Forum:

The Bush on the Boundary forum includes representatives of the Ginninderra Catchment Group, the ACT Conservation Council, the Friends of Grasslands, Act for Bees and the Ginninderra Falls Association. Throughout the year we engaged with the forum sharing updates on our work program and accepting feedback. The Chair of the Trust also presented to the forum.

NAIDOC 2022 events:

The Trust ran events for NAIDOC week with Adam Shipp (Yurbay Consulting), Aaron Chatfield (Dreamtime Connections) and artist Bek Lane. The event included bush tucker cooking and tastings, native plant use workshops and a traditional art workshop.

Traditional Weaving Workshop:

The Trust ran a series of 5 traditional weaving workshops in partnership with Ronnie Jordan from Culture of the Move. Each session included different weaving techniques, collecting and preparing fibres and a tour of the Corridor.





Treecreative Workshops:

The Trust ran a conservation-themed meditation workshop in partnership with Tracey Benson from Treecreative. The 'Walkshops' focuses on experiencing the sights and sounds of the woodland environs and participants are encouraged to express this experience via artistic medium at stop off points along the way, Medium include drawing, writing and photography.



Other Community / Non-Government Group Engagement

Canberra Ornithologist Group – continues to conduct surveys at Ginninderra Falls; on the boundary between the development and the Conservation Corridor; and Superb Parrot habitat as part of their ACT wide Superb Parrot surveys.



Friends of Grasslands – Continues to assist with surveying of the grasslands / PTWL habitat expansion site in Spring each year. Volunteers from FOG and Trust staff completed Spring monitoring in October 2021. The Spring report is available on the GCT website and can be accessed [here](#).



Volunteering in the Corridor

Seed collecting – continues to be conducted with the help of volunteers. Seeds are being distributed in areas where weed control has been undertaken.

Deloitte corporate volunteering – Deloitte signed up for a day of weeding as part of their 'give back' program. 12 volunteers removed a significant amount of Fleabane along the track.



Weeding days - The Trust ran several weeding workshops throughout the year focusing on Fleabane, Tree of Heaven and Verbascum.

Contact Us



Ginninderry.org



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