



Ginninderry
Conservation Trust

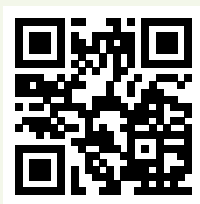
Strathnairn to Shepherds

App Audio Transcripts

Strathnairn to Shepherds

60 minutes one way.

**Get the app to
learn more**



ginninderry.org/app

The Link, 1 McClymont Way,
Strathnairn, ACT, 2615

What to Expect

Be inspired by the beauty of our Conservation Corridor as you wander amongst native grasslands, native pine (*Callitris*) forests and the grassy box woodlands.

As you walk along the track, pause at each marker you see to read the stories about the cultural and natural values in the Conservation Corridor.

Getting There

To walk the track starting at the Link heading to Shepherds Lookout, follow the signs from the Link building carpark along the Bicentennial National Trail for 420 metres to the beginning of the track.

To walk the track starting at Shepherds Lookout and heading back to the Link, look for the sign on the stile halfway down the Shepherds Lookout track.

Steps on the Tour

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Map and Introduction | 2 |
| Brindabella Lookout | 4 |
| Double Dam | 5 |
| River View | 8 |
| Callitris Forest | 11 |
| Scribbly Gum | 12 |
| Gruner's Vista | 14 |
| Wallaroo Spur | 17 |
| Mini Split Rock | 19 |
| Heritage Fence Posts | 22 |
| Shepherds Lookout | 23 |

Contact

If you would like more information or would like to reach out, please visit our website or our social media channels. Please contact us if you see something that needs fixing, replacing, or tidying up.

 admin.contact@ginninderry.org

 www.ginninderry.org

 [@GinninderryTrust](https://www.facebook.com/GinninderryTrust)

 [@GinninderryTrust](https://www.instagram.com/GinninderryTrust)



Introduction

Welcome to the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor, traditional lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. Through this Audio App you will hear more about the wide variety of cultural and natural values of this area, from people who care deeply about the place.

You will meet the Conservation Trust team, and other experts and passionate people keen to share their insights into the landscape with a hope that more people will care deeply for the environment like they do.

The Corridor is a place for the protection and rejuvenation of natural and cultural values – we therefore ask that you don't bring your domestic pets into the Corridor – pets of any variety. Pet dogs and cats are not only not welcome here, but we also use poison baits from time-to-time to control foxes and feral cats and it would be really sad if someone's pet animal took one of those toxic baits from the Corridor.

There are also many other places outside of the Corridor in adjacent suburbs where dogs are allowed. Of course the whole Ginninderry Community area is a cat containment area, so you need to keep your cats inside, in an enclosed cat run, or on a leash if walking them outside. In addition to the outstanding natural beauty of the landscape, you will discover the Corridor protects habitat and homes for endangered species,

has tributaries that lead to the massive Murrumbidgee River, and is a place for the community to enjoy and connect with nature in a variety of ways.

You will have the chance to look back on history and see the landscape like the famous artist Elioth Gruner did in the 1930's and reflect on what has changed, and what hasn't. First Nations people share insights into the important traditional pathways in and through the Corridor. Geologists will stretch the grey matter even further and take us back into deep-time... While you are enjoying the Corridor, please stay on the formed paths, not only to protect and preserve the rich cultural and natural values, but also for your own safety, there are some steep sections near to the path, and the Corridor is of course home to the ubiquitous Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*).

This trail, the trail to Shepherds Lookout is a Category 3 trail, meaning there are steps and some steep sections, making it not suitable for bikes or prams. You will need about 2 hours to safely visit and return from Shepherds Lookout. We have created a safe walking trail, but it's also your responsibility to behave safely and with common sense when walking in the landscape.

Along the way you will find a variety of points of interest where our team and colleagues share information about the landscape in which you are immersed.

Remember, tread lightly and take only photographs. If you would like to volunteer, become a member or stay in touch with all the activities in the Corridor, visit our website.



Brindabella Lookout

People and wildlife have migrated through the landscape for thousands of years.

Did you know, there are eels in the Murray Darling Basin system that migrate to the tropics each year to lay their eggs? In the Murrumbidgee

River in front of you, golden perch have been found to migrate up to a thousand kilometres for the purpose of breeding. The Murrumbidgee corridor is a known migratory pathway for a raft of honeyeater species. Large flocks of honeyeaters can be seen migrating north along the Murrumbidgee River corridor in autumn, and then coming back in the warmer months during spring.

Double Dam

Colloquially known by the Trust staff as the 'Double Dam', this dam is home to a wide range of frog and water bird species.

Frogs that you may be able to find here include the Common Eastern Froglet (*Crinia signifera*), the Pobblebonk Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii*), the Spotted Grass-frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*), Broad-palmed Tree Frog (*Litoria latopalmata*), Peron's Tree Frog (*Litoria peronii*), Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxii*) and Smooth Toadlet (*Uperoleia laevigata*).

The surrounding woodlands play a very important role in protecting our froggy friends with most frogs being heavily reliant on adjoining woodlands that provide shelter, congregation spaces and microhabitats which helps support the frogs thermo and moisture regulation. The Ginninderry Conservation Trust will restore and establish vegetation around the dams throughout the Corridor to provide habitat for foraging and hibernation and ensuring there is well connecting landscapes to support the dispersal of frogs between wetlands.

The Double Dam also features stunning aquatic plant species, including the Swamp Lily (*Ottelia*

ovalifolia). During November to March look out for the beautiful large three petalled flower with the maroon centre. You might even see a tiny Australasian Grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) using the aquatic vegetation to create its floating nest.

Another exciting critter that calls this dam home is the Eastern Long-necked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*). These turtles are found in slow-moving water bodies, with sandy areas and good sunbathing spots. They also bury themselves into muddy patches or damp soil near rivers. The Eastern Long-necked Turtle can live up to 50 years, with their shells reaching 25cm wide. Eastern Long-necked Turtles have glands on their rear legs, which they can use to squirt a foul-smelling liquid up to 3 feet, when threatened. The biggest threat to these turtles is roads, as they move across land to find suitable nests, and new wetlands, if you ever see one in a tricky spot pick it up and move it in the direction that it was going, otherwise it will come straight back the way it was heading.

Surrounding the double dam, you will see some big old eucalyptus Red Gums (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*) and Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*). Over time these trees have dropped branches, creating hollows and homes for wood ducks, rosellas, grass parrots, swallows and many other birds. You would normally think of ducks as a water-based bird, but curiously our native Wood Ducks (*Chenonetta jubata*) nest in the hollows of trees. They are also not that fond of swimming and you will usually see them on the banks rather than in the water.



River View

This vantage point offers expansive views out towards the Murrumbidgee River with the Brindabella mountain ranges in the distance.

Local tribes of the area would travel to this corridor and surrounds following a network of pathways leading to the Murrumbidgee River. This was a major pathway up to the high country for the annual Bogong Moth ceremony for marriage, trade, Lore and big corroboree.

When it was traditionally managed and cared for, this landscape provided an abundance of natural materials for food, medicine, shelter, tool and weapon making. Kangaroo Grass seed was collected and ground down to make flour for bread. Yam Daisy tubers (*Microseris sp*), which are similar to radish, were also harvested on mass as another source of food. Eastern Grey Kangaroos (*Macropus giganteus*) provided an important source of meat and warm clothing from their processed skins.

This landscape was managed for thousands of years through an inclusive fire regime involving numerous tribes from the surrounding

area. The result of these frequent low intensity burns allowed the burning of dead grasses and shrubs while maintaining thick canopies and open woodlands in which the local flora and fauna thrived.

Since colonisation, the flora and fauna of this landscape has changed dramatically. First Nations people were forced off the land, resulting in the end of traditional land management practices and replacing them with European farming practices which weren't suited to the landscape. This resulted in the introduction of exotic species and massive loss of biodiversity.

Caring for country is and has been a major cultural responsibility for all First Nations people throughout Australia. This spiritual connection to the land has endured through time immemorial. We hope that all Australians can take on this responsibility to value and care for our land, sea and waterways.





Callitris Forest

This is the Callitris forest, commonly known as Black Cypress Pines (*Callitris endlicheri*).

First Nations people have many uses for these beautiful trees. The resin or sap can be used as a glue or for medicinal purposes. Due to the resinous nature of the wood, branches were sometimes used as torches for fishing at night in some areas of Australia.

The trunks of young Callitris were also a good material to make spears out of. Europeans used Callitris for timber. The wood is termite resistant and therefore makes good weatherboards, floorboards, joinery and fence posts.

Interestingly, Callitris has a very distinctive smell when crushed which is often used in essential oils. These trees can grow up to 30 metres tall in the right conditions. They are found mostly in discrete regions throughout NSW and inland Queensland, which makes the patch of Callitris in the corridor quite special. They grow in semi-arid areas, in localised pockets that are somewhat protected from bushfires, such as upland rocky areas.

Callitris Woodlands are characterised by their sparse understorey comprised of shrubs, grasses and herbs. The healthiest Callitris forests

have regular exposure to fire. Fire helps to maintain the balance between juvenile and mature trees. In the absence of fire, adult trees don't receive the trigger they need to release large quantities of seed.

Also present at this stop, you can find *Cassinia longifolia* or Cauliflower Bush, which often grows after logging of Callitris forests or when a fire has passed through. *Cassinia* is a ceremonial bush, used by First Nations people in smoking ceremonies to cleanse areas of spirits during ceremony.

Present here is also the native Cypress-pine Mistletoe (*Muelleria bidwillii*). Mistletoes are parasitic plants, meaning they habitually rely on other plants to survive. The Cypress-pine Mistletoe exclusively grows on species of Cypress-pines. Try and find it growing in masses hanging from branches of the trees.

This mistletoe is only found in NSW, ACT and Queensland. It has small yellow flowers and pinky-red fruit. There are only a few Cypress-pine Mistletoes that have been found within the ACT. Further along the trail, you'll find the forest transitions into tea trees.

Scribbly Gum

Take in the views under the shade of this Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*) it towers over the surrounding Callitris forest with an estimated age of 200 years.

Its size is impressive considering the harsh conditions it has grown in. Conditions such as these can result in plants adapting and changing in order to survive and even thrive, which is what is thought to have happened with this huge Scribbly Gum.

A Needle-point Rustyhood Orchid (*Oligochaetochilus aciculiformis*) has been recently found in this area as well, these orchids only flower for about a month in early spring. Forests like this create a unique ecosystem in which a diverse range of species including many rare orchids can be found. Areas of thick Callitris forest in the surrounding area is also quite uncommon.

Callitris or Cypress Pines are heavily affected by hot bushfires, which can wipe out a whole forest. Traditionally these Callitris or buggumbul forests were managed by First Nations people using a cool burning fire regime. The trunks of the young pines were used



as spears and the resin was used as a medicine and for glue. Branches were also used as torches at night because of the trees high resin content.

If you listen closely you might hear the bounding of red necked and swap wallabies that live throughout this thick, steep and rocky area.

Gruner's Vista

In 1937 the artist Elioth Gruner overlooked this vista – which was then a pastoral landscape – as he painted a work he called *Weetangera, Canberra*.

Gruner was most active and acclaimed between the two World Wars. We caught up with Associate Professor Mary Hutchison to learn more about the artist.

Quote from Professor Mary Hutchison:

“His family was really poor and he had to go to work when he was 14, to support the family. His father had died. So he spent a lot of time working as a draper’s assistant. Many years working really long hours. But doing art classes at the same time. It wasn’t until he was 30, really, that he was able to go: “OK, I can earn my living as an artist.”

Gruner ventured out from his Sydney home, seeking scenes to paint. He visited this area numerous times from the 1920s. At first he travelled by train, on the Southern Line between Sydney and Canberra. On arrival, he explored by foot or horse and cart.

By 1937 Gruner knew this area well. He made many paintings between Yass and Tharwa. He also explored

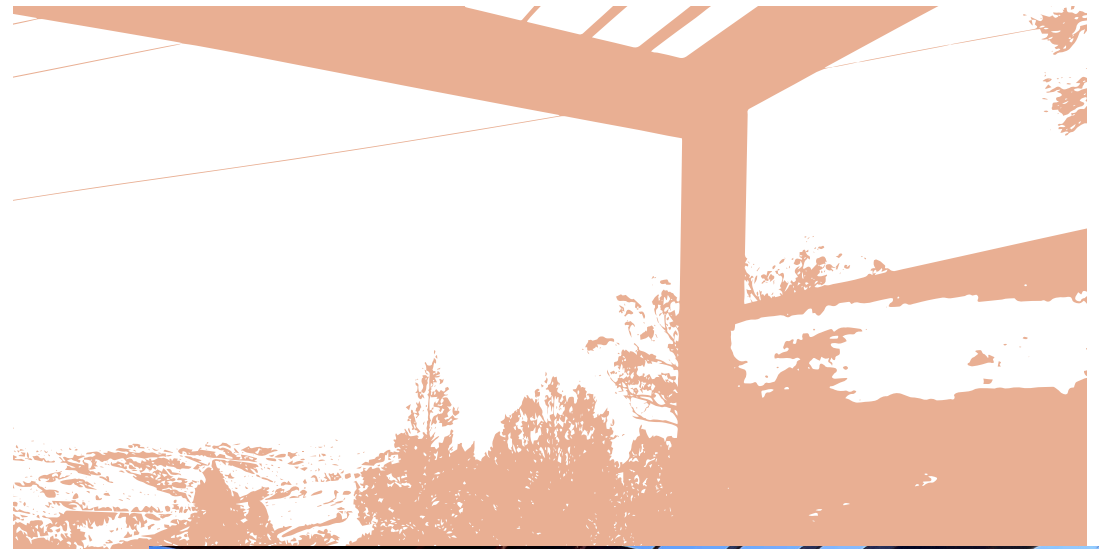
Braidwood, visited the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee, and went up into the Brindabellas.

The local people were keen to host Gruner and show him potential painting sites. The Broinowskis were one family he stayed with. Robert Broinowski was the clerk of the senate. Broinowski’s daughter, Ruth Schmedding, remembers the excitement when Gruner and his companion Brian Cannell came to visit – the celebrated artist was feted with social occasions.

By the time he painted *Weetangera, Canberra* in 1937 Gruner owned a car. He would have driven here by Old Weetangera Road.

Quote from Professor Mary Hutchison:

“When we were looking for where he actually must’ve set up his easel, we realised there were some remnants of that old parish road – which actually was the main road between the northwestern part of the ACT and Canberra. Weetangera Road ties in



with Ruth's memory that Elioth used to clean his brushes on an old fence along the Weetangera Road."

Gruner was interested in light – and skilled at depicting its diverse qualities. This area has excellent light clarity because of the dry air.

He was also fascinated in the form of the landscape, describing his Murrumbidgee River paintings as depicting 'the anatomy of the earth'.

Quote from Professor Mary Hutchison:

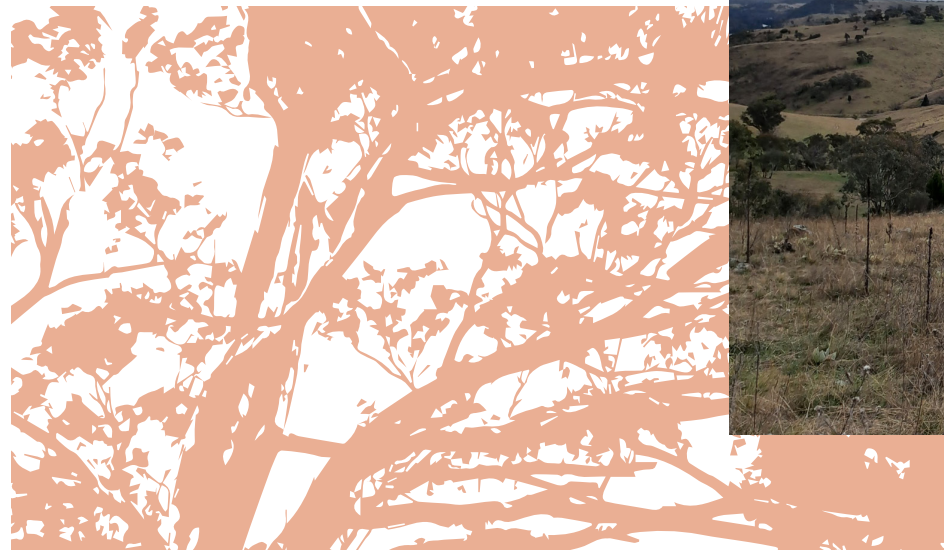
"That's another really amazing thing about that painting. Geologists actually have used it for teaching their students, because you get such a good sense of the formation of that landscape. And you get a good sense of the way those steep hills along the river were just sort of thrust up from beneath the surface of the earth."

In the middle-ground of the painting a plume of smoke rises from a wooded area. Smoke is a motif that appears in several Gruner paintings. It was his way of hinting at a human presence

in the tranquil landscape scenes. The cause of the fire is unclear: it may have been a campfire lit by First Nations people, or a farmer doing a burn-off.

Gruner died in 1939 – not long after completing Weetangera, Canberra – aged 56. Over the following decades his work became less known. In 2014 the Canberra Museum and Gallery mounted a major exhibition of 70 of his paintings called Elioth Gruner: The Texture of Light, restoring his well-deserved place in Australian art history.

The painting shown here at Gruner's Lookout is a copy of the original which is housed in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. We encourage you to utilise this space to take photos of the beautiful vistas, or to do your own painting and contemplate how the view has changed over the years.



Wallaroo Spur

Wallaroo Spur lookout may be a slight divergence from the main track - but it is worth that little bit extra walk to enjoy and take in this stunning and intimate view of the river and its beautiful surrounding landscapes.

First Nations people were skilled at catching a variety of food from the river, including fish, freshwater shellfish, crayfish, turtles, platypus and aquatic birds. If you observe the vegetation along the river, you can see that it varies in sections. This is due to water flow and soil type. Notice the rocky woodland nearby and the denser, greener area near the creek. She-oaks (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) are also present along the river. Upstream, the soil is lighter, making a better environment for the Callitris growing there.

Over time, the vegetation of the river has changed, Europeans found the terrain of this environment too wild to farm on, resulting in clearing of areas and drastically changing the landscape. If you look at the Brindabella range in front of you and compare that to the corridor, you will notice a clear difference in the



vegetation density as a result of land management undertaken by European settlers.

There are lots of interesting flora and fauna to note at this stop. You may notice Wattle trees, and many wild flowers, which flower at different times of year. Bulbine Lilies (*Bulbine bulbosa*) flower here in summer time, they have yellow flowers and fleshy green leaves, often growing in clumps. This lily's tuberous roots were roasted and eaten by the Ngunnawal people. The roots are rich in calcium and iron and were often harvested by women in a manner that prepared the soil for germination of the next crop.

You might notice wallaroos (*Macropus robustus*) around. This is a popular spot for them. They often move between the ridge and the bushland, which is how the lookout got the name 'Wallaroo Spur'. The common Wallaroo is in the Macropodidae family, which is the same family as wallabies, kangaroos and quokkas. They are distinguishable by looking like a short, stocky kangaroo, with males significantly larger than females. Wallaroos have long, shaggy fur which ranges in colour from black, grey, brown or even red. Females are usually lighter in colour. Wallaroos usually rest amongst shady vegetation and rocky areas during the day. They feed overnight, venturing out in the late afternoon or evening.

There are many visible wombat holes and swamp wallabies live in the wetlands below. Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*) habitat is to your left, they live under the loose surface rocks that dominate the area, preferably with plenty of ant activity as a food source.



Mini Split Rock

The story of the Split Rock begins more than 400 million years ago during the Silurian period.

Imagine Canberra as a shallow sea environment that was home to a unique marine life. During this time volcanic lava began erupting from several explosive volcanic centres around Canberra. These volcanoes spewed out volcanic ash and lava forming a pyroclastic flow which flowed into the shallow sea forming

the granites we see today. These granites typically comprise of quartz feldspar porphyry, adamellite and granodiorite.

The Split Rock has been through millions of years of history including the development of complex plant life, dinosaurs, mega fauna and the beginning of human life. During these years the Split Rock has undergone the natural process of weathering and erosion and has been exposed to extreme temperatures, causing the rock to split. Who would have thought that a rock could be witness to so much history.

Throughout this area you can see extensive rocky outcropping across the landscape, creating the perfect habitat for the vulnerable Pink-tailed Worm-lizards (*Aprasia parapulchella*) and many more reptiles. Pinkies are elusive little critters and you are unlikely to spot one unless you go looking. These legless lizards are quite selective about their habitat and they choose to live under loose or partially embedded rocks in sloping rocky open grasslands with predominantly native grasses. Pink-tailed Worm-lizards rely on their environment to regulate their body temperature – in summer they remain in burrows, while in winter they may bask under rocks or move to the upper edges of their burrows to absorb more heat. A Pinkie will feed on the larvae and eggs of ants with which it shares its burrow.

The biggest threats to these critters is the removal of rocks, loss of vegetation, intense fires, introduced species and soil pollution. As part of the Trust management activities, rocks and bricks have been placed in between known habitat areas, in order to create habitat connectivity and improve habitat patches to ensure distribution and dispersal.

Looking out from the track, you have a spectacular view of the Murrumbidgee River and the rolling open grassy landscape, colloquially known as the 'Punchbowl rocky Amphitheatre'. If you look closely, you may be able to see a few of our resident wallaroos hopping across the rocky knolls. This area is also home to a wide range of native flora and in Spring you may be able to smell the sweet scent of chocolate and vanilla lilies.



Mini Split Rock
Take a trip through time as you learn about the formation of this split rock dating back to more than 400 million years ago.

© 2012
2012
2012
2012

Get the app
on your phone
www.environment.nsw.gov.au

Heritage Fence Posts

Did you know, farmers were encouraged to, or required to by government, clear a large percentage of their land, and cut the trees down to enable them to secure ownership of the property? A hundred years ago this was called development of rural property.

Farmers used to carve the tops of these fence posts into points, like a pencil point, to allow water to run off and not pool on the top, to promote their longevity. These fence posts were typically cut from the hardest timbers available: red gum, red box, yellow box, and ironbark. These species now make up some of the most endangered ecosystems in the landscape. This fence post in front of you is from a tree that would have germinated hundreds of years ago in the landscape. It would have been cut down by a farmer a hundred or so years ago.



Shepherds Lookout

Quite the view of the Murrumbidgee River bend! Here we have a spectacular birds-eye view of the river.

The Murrumbidgee River is the second longest river in Australia, at 1485km long. The Murrumbidgee flows through New South Wales and the ACT, it begins in the Snowy Mountains and ends at the Victorian border north of Swan Hill where it flows into the Murray River. The word Murrumbidgee is derived from the Ngunnawal word meaning pathway of bosses. Shepherds Lookout is the northern most viewing point of the Murrumbidgee River in the ACT.

The Murrumbidgee has flooded frequently since it was first recorded in the 19th century. The river flows through various climatic conditions ranging from alpine to semi-arid. All rivers and creeks in the ACT drain into it. There are four main groups of riparian vegetation situated along the ACT's section of the Murrumbidgee River, these are: Tableland Aquatic and Fringing Vegetation Complex, River Bottlebrush (Burgan Tableland Riparian Shrubland), Ribbon Gum Tableland Riparian Woodland and She-oak Tableland Riparian Woodland.

The extent of some of these riparian vegetation communities has significantly declined due to landscape modifications, including land-clearing, pastoral practises, severe bushfires and changing climatic conditions. The land surrounding the river forms the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, which supports a diverse range of fauna, including native mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians and macro-invertebrates. The river is full of life!

To the right of the river you can see the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor managed by the Ginninderry Conservation Trust. Conservation corridors provide critical nature strips that support connectivity for flora and fauna, which facilitates the movement of species between habitat patches. This connectivity is particularly vital for supporting plant and animal species who are: vulnerable to extinction, threatened by a shift in climatic and environmental conditions or impacted by events such as bushfires and floods. In turn,

the corridor facilitates long-term biodiversity in the regions.

Archaeological digs through the Corridor have discovered hundreds of traditional stone tools scattered along the river, these sites represent the strong connection that First Nations people have to the river and its surrounds and also depicts a rich history of occupation across these lands for tens of thousands of years.

You can see many Black Cypress Pines *Callitris endlicheri* directly at the lookout and in clusters to the left and right of the river. As you can see, they can grow on the steep cliff faces with minimal soil. Their seeds are winged and protected in tough woody cores - a favourite food for the Gang Gang Cockatoo and the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo.

The deep river pool below provides important habitat for platypus and native fish including the Macquarie Perch and Murray Cod.

Near where we are now, just above the confluence of the Murrumbidgee and Molonglo rivers, was a Junction ford, a shallow section of the river that could be crossed easily. That is where early European settlers and farmers crossed the river, which was known for its dangerous currents.

The Junction Ford was washed away and then replaced just below the confluence of the rivers in the 1880's. The first Europeans to the area came in search of the river in 1820. On the opposite bank, there was a sand mine that operated until the early 1980's.

It can't be confirmed where the name Shepherds Lookout originates from. It is thought that it would have been a great place for a shepherd to find lost sheep or get a great view of how the landscape looks from a pastoral perspective, before the use of fences.

To your left, you can see the water quality control centre covered in solar panels. The centre was built in the 1970's and is the main wastewater treatment facility for Canberra.

Trees along the Shepherds Lookout loop were planted in the 1970's to rehabilitate a road and temporary work shed sites associated with the construction of the water quality centre.

If you take a moment, you might see a cockatoo, little eagle or another of the many spectacular birds found here. This area is buzzing with life when you take a moment to look and listen to your surrounds.





**Ginninderry
Conservation Trust**

**Get the app
to learn
more**



admin.contact@ginninderry.org



www.ginninderry.org



@GinninderryTrust



@GinninderryTrust