



Sugarloaf Link Project

Nillumbik Shire Council received a multi-year Biodiversity Response Plan grant from the State Government to protect natural biodiversity values. It is referred to as the Sugarloaf Link Project.

The project enabled community and government agencies to reduce the impact of weeds, fox and deer on private and public land in some key areas of our Shire between January 2019 and October 2021.

Aim of the project

The Sugarloaf Link project helped protect natural habitats, native plant populations, agriculture and waterways from degradation caused by deer and weeds. Small ground-dwelling native animals were also helped by reducing fox numbers.

Who was involved?

Nillumbik Shire Council partnered with DELWP (Dept. of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Wurundjeri Council, Bend of Islands Conservation Association (BICA), Christmas Hills Landcare Group and local landholders.

Where did it happen?

The project began around the Sugarloaf Reservoir - Bend of Islands, Watsons Creek and Christmas Hills. This area forms a vital link in the major habitat corridor connecting Kinglake National Park to the Yarra River.

Due to overwhelming success of deer control works, we expanded the deer project area to include selected properties in Kangaroo Ground, Panton Hill, Smiths Gully and St Andrews, focusing on sites in close proximity to high value conservation reserves.

Information about red foxes

Foxes predate on vulnerable native animals.

The Sugarloaf Link Project engaged professional contractors to use soft-jaw trapping to control foxes on public and private properties.

Timing of works was aligned with the dispersal of young Phascogales from their nests and the nesting of White Throated Nightjars and Lyrebirds to reduce fox numbers present during these critical periods.

23 foxes were removed in 2020 and 36 foxes in 2021.

Information about weeds

Wurundjeri's Narrap team and a local contractor were engaged to undertake non-grassy weed control within the project area.

Priority weeds for control included Pittosporum, Pines, Boneseed, weedy Acacias, Thistles, Blackberry, Bridal Creeper, Agapanthus, Briar Rose, Inkweed, Tutsan and St John's Wort.

Works prioritised the protection of areas with the greatest biodiversity or agricultural values that are at the highest risk of damage - through prevention, eradication, asset protection and containment.

A combination of hand weeding, cut and paste, and drill and fill methods were used, treating around 450 hectares.

Information about deer

This project was Nillumbik's first collaborative program to control and reduce the impact of deer.

With numbers on the rise, deer are becoming a serious pest in Nillumbik. Impacts of deer include:

- Destroying native vegetation and reducing biodiversity through browsing and wallowing
- Reducing farm productivity through crop damage
- Posing a serious hazard on roads

The project sought to reduce deer numbers and interrupt their southward spread by reducing the number of deer that reach, cross and travel along the Yarra River - to reduce their geographic range and impacts.

Control of deer was via a strategic ground-based shooting program undertaken by highly professional, accredited pest controllers. Works complemented other programs being undertaken by government in Sugarloaf Reservoir, Kinglake National Park and Manningham, along with culling being undertaken by private landholders.

330 Sambar and 27 Red Deer were culled between November 2019 and September 2021 across 49 private properties and one Parks Victoria reserve. An additional 62 Sambar Deer were removed from private properties in the separate but adjoining Kangaroo Ground Deer Control Project area.

Most deer were harvested for pet food.



The deer control was most successful on larger properties with good access and patchworks of bushland and grass, particularly where there were multiple adjoining properties participating.

The project learnings have helped inform potential future deer control programs across the Shire.

Council's project team is keen for all deer sightings to be recorded through the new Deer Scan app. Visit feralscan.org.au/deerscan and download the app for iPhone or Android devices.

Collaboration increases successes

The Sugarloaf Link project complemented various agency and grant funded programs and projects in the region; along with the work of private landholders.

Collaborative efforts have improved biodiversity outcomes.



Ongoing land management

It is hoped that landholders will continue management works to help prevent deer, foxes and/or weeds from re-invading.



We encourage neighbors to work together to tackle invasive species impacts. Council may be able to provide support to you through advice and grants in some instances. Your local Landcare group may also be able to assist with connecting you with others.

Further information on control of deer, foxes and weeds on your property can be found on Council's website: www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Environment.

Contact Us

If you are experiencing issues with weeds, deer or foxes, please contact our Land Management Officer on environment@nillumbik.vic.gov.au.

The Sugarloaf Link project was funded by the Victorian Government's Biodiversity Response Planning program



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Land, Water
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Nillumbik Shire Council's Sugarloaf Link project would like to thank the Project Team, contractors and local residents for their ongoing support and involvement in this project.

