

Science, Collaboration and Curation - the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary Journey

What started as a collective of conservation activists protecting an area of woodland in the north of Canberra has blossomed into a Sanctuary where collaboration and community engagement are central to restoring and re-connecting people and nature. It didn't happen overnight, but rather has grown slowly, building off a long-term ecological experiment, layers of species reintroductions, community outreach and innovative management have demonstrated the art of the possible. Collaboration has been fundamental to the Sanctuary's achievements - at every level - from researchers working with conservation managers to locals volunteering on fence patrols to tourists visiting for night tours.

Our original intention was to re-build a box gum grassy woodland per the 1750's model, an ecological restoration project. However our thinking and learning has evolved, we now accept that is impossible, and instead we are aiming to optimise biodiversity by curating the best possible woodland ecosystem of the future. Community engagement builds our social license to do more.

Our recently published Sanctuary Strategy lays out a 25-year vision, with a strong emphasis on strengthening partnerships, embedding Ngunnawal cultural practices in Sanctuary management, continuing to build a box gum woodland food web, following wildlife beyond the fence, and seeking to continue to inspire others to join our positive conservation agenda.

The Sanctuary's development has been expedited immensely by generous knowledge sharing from Zealandia in Wellington, and in a similar vein we look forward to sharing what we can to help others on their collaborative conservation journeys.

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