

Mount Breckin Project

Newsletter # 3

HUNTER LOCAL LAND SERVICES

June 2021

Hunter Local Land Services (HLLS) are working with landholders in the Mount Breckin area to reduce pests and weeds, address minor erosion issues and to generally improve and learn more about the biodiversity values that Mount Breckin holds.

The Mount Breckin Project is supported by funding provided through the NSW Environmental Trust and Hunter Local Land Services.

This is the third newsletter for this Project. These newsletters aim to keep local landholders and community members, with an interest in Mount Breckin, informed of project activities as they progress.

Project Background and Progress

The Mount Breckin Project was initially developed as a 3 year first stage pilot project and is now entering into its last 12 months. The possibility of the Project being extended beyond the pilot period will depend on how well the pilot achieves its objectives and landholder commitment to continue. The main objectives are;

- To have 20 landholders participating in the Project
- To undertake 240ha of initial and follow-up weed control targeting African Olive and Lantana
- To achieve up to 40 'hits' or kills of pest animal species present in the area
- To stabilise up to 3ha of soil erosion areas
- To hold training and workshop events for landholders and to include local school students in learning about the values and issues of the Mt Breckin area.

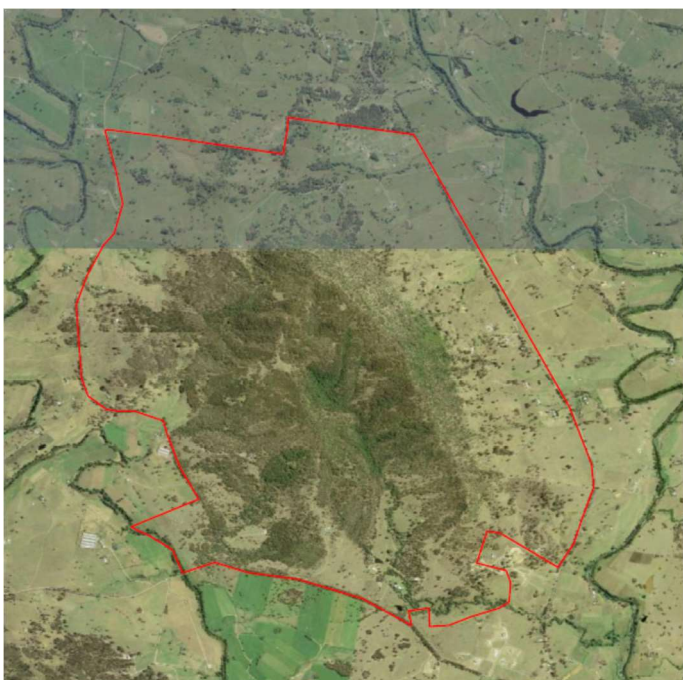


Figure 1: *The Mt Breckin Project Area*

An extension for the Mt Breckin Project pilot period has been approved by the NSW Environmental Trust meaning the pilot will now end in June 2022.

There are 15 landholders participating in the Project in some shape or form.

174ha of assisted weed control has been undertaken.

We have had 8 confirmed 'hits' on the pest animal front.

Soil erosion areas are yet to be assisted.

There has been an initial landholder workshop, a certified pest animal control training session, a second workshop with landholders to review progress and two Eco-walks conducted.

Weed Control Work

Weed control work has continued over the last 12 months with a focus on the western side and southern end of the mountain where Lantana is the dominant weed. Eleven properties have now received assisted weed control work. Landholders are also continuing their own weed control work to maintain and reduce African Olive and Lantana infestations.

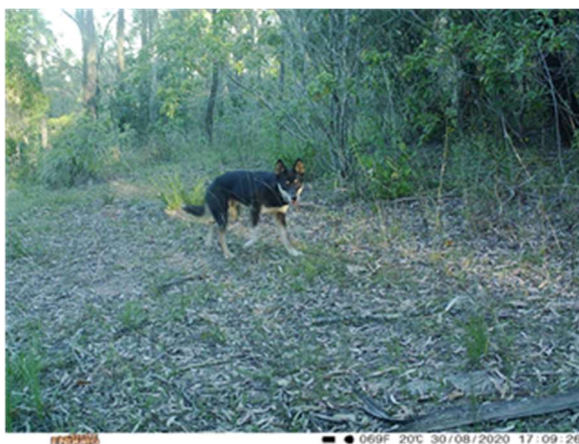


Lantana before (left) and after treatment (right) at a property on the southern end of Mt Breckin

Further weed control work will continue as an on-going activity over the next 12 months depending on weather and moisture conditions. Blocks of work allocated during the cooler months will focus on African Olive.

Pest Animal Control

Photo footage is continuing to be captured via motion detection cameras and is due to be reviewed soon after which further control work will be advised. Landholders have been vigilant in reporting sightings of wild dogs and there have been some dog attacks in the area.



Photos above: This dog was dodging traps and landholders for quite some time being very fast and wily. Finally shot by landholder Matt Reynolds.

Landholder Review Workshop

A landholder workshop was held in February at the Local Land Services office at Tocal attended by 9 landholders. The workshop provided an update on project progress and invited landholders to provide feedback and discuss future activities and opportunities for the Mt Breckin area.

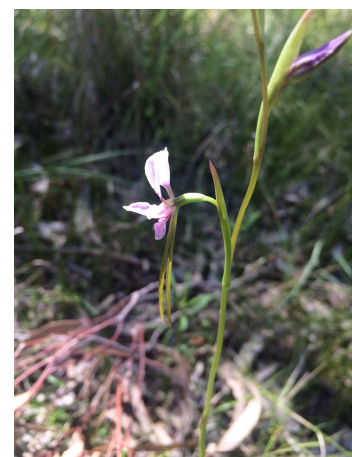
Some of the main points raised included the level and rate of re-emergence of Lantana due to good rain; control of African Olive has been very effective enabling regeneration of grasses and better access to areas; further interest in accessing more native grass seed to assist with re-establishing groundcover; provision of information on the koala population at Mt Breckin and koala food tree species; promotion of project through local events.

Future funding opportunities for Mt Breckin were also discussed where funding applications would have a greater chance of success if landholders considered formalising an incorporated group.

Eco-Walks

Two Eco-walks were held in October 2020 and in May 2021. These walks provide small groups of Mt Breckin landholders an opportunity to learn more about the native plants and animals occupying Mt Breckin.

The walks were led by local ecologist Bill Dowling and Lorna Adlem and both were conducted across the top of Mt Breckin along fire trails. The October walk highlighted a number of wildflowers, particularly orchids and possible signs of koala scratch marks on Grey Gums. The May walk focused on shrubs, grasses, sedges and other groundcovers common to the vegetation community and sightings of small caves along the eastern face. The group also had the opportunity to have a close look at some koala scats provided by Bill.



Left: Rest stop – taking in the view from the top.

*Centre: Fringed Chocolate Lily (purple) with flowering head of Many-Flowered Mat Rush (*Lomandra multiflora*)*

*Right: Purple Donkey Orchid (*Diuris* sp.)*

Further walks will be planned for the following spring and autumn seasons. Anyone interested in their property being a location for one of these walks can contact Hunter LLS Officer Lorna Adlem on 0437 967 311.

What Else Is To Come.....

Weed Control and Management Workshops

Half day workshops will be provided for Mt Breckin landholders on a nearby host property. These workshops will provide landholders with information and demonstrations on control methods used for mature African Olive and Lantana. They will also cover how and when to monitor and control weed regrowth and/or re-emergence.

Local School Event

Local schools are being approached with an invitation to participate in an event to learn about what's happening at Mt Breckin and why. The event will include information on pest animals and weeds, native wildlife and plants and cultural heritage.

Traditional Cool Burn Demonstration

A demonstration of a traditional cool burn will be arranged for next winter season. Several Local Aboriginal Land Councils in the Hunter region are currently engaging in a Cultural Burn training program supported by Hunter LLS.

A qualified fire practitioner will be engaged to lead and carry out a cool burn demonstration on a host property for Mt Breckin landholders to see how this traditional management method is done.



Grass Trees – Xanthorrhoea sp. – along the east face of Mt Breckin. This species is very slow growing and extremely long-lived.

They are monocots with trunks formed by layers of old, stacked leaf bases stuck together with resin which links to its scientific name as 'xanthos' means 'to flow' in reference to the resin that flows from its stem.

A significant plant to Aboriginal people as traditionally the resin was used like a glue and the flower spikes (which can grow up to 4m long) made spear shafts and firesticks.

Grass Trees can take several years to flower and some are stimulated to do so by fire.

More information

Contact Lorna Adlem, Hunter Local Land Services

Ph: 4938 4925 Mob: 0437 967 311 Email: Lorna.Adlem@lls.nsw.gov.au

Acknowledgments:

The Mount Breckin Project is supported by the NSW Environmental Trust and Hunter Local Land Services.

