



ACT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2011

SUSTAINABILITY STORIES

Mulligans Flat woodland sanctuary



A Bettong (Photo courtesy of Adrian Manning)



Mulligans Flat (Photo courtesy of ACT Government)

Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve is just a short drive from the centre of Canberra and close to the growing suburb of Gungahlin in the north. It now protects the largest remaining area of Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland anywhere in Australia. This particular grouping of eucalypts has largely disappeared from the Australian landscape.

Since European settlement over five million hectares, or 92% of its original range, have been cleared for grazing, cropping or urban development. Eastern Bettongs, small rabbit sized kangaroos, were once so widespread in the Canberra region that in the 1800s a bounty was paid for every skin.

To protect the Reserve's flora and fauna, the ACT Government constructed a two metre high predator proof fence enclosing 470 hectares of Mulligans Flat, creating a secure Sanctuary. The fence protects the woodland, keeps out rabbits, cats, foxes and other feral pests, and allows for the re-introduction of animals that had long disappeared from the area.

Since the construction of the fence in 2009, the environment in the Sanctuary is rapidly being restored. Foxes and cats have been excluded and rabbit numbers have been reduced by over 90%. Work to re-introduce Eastern Bettongs is well-advanced while the Brown Treecreeper, an endangered woodland bird, can now be found in the Sanctuary.

The Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve was originally declared by the ACT Government in 1995. More recently a number of partnering arrangements have been established, initially with the Australian National University (ANU) and now other partners, including the CSIRO. A long term scientific study to investigate the best way to look after these woodland areas is underway. The study will develop better knowledge of the role of fire in woodlands, the importance of fallen timber in providing natural habitat, and the impact of grazing on woodland regeneration.

Mulligans Flat is a public reserve with unrestricted pedestrian access to the Sanctuary. A 'Friends Of Mulligans Flat' community group invites community participation in the care and management of the Reserve. A Board of Management now advises the Government on all facets of the Sanctuary's operation.

In January 2011 the ACT Parks and Conservation Service entered into a two-year partnership with Forde Developments, who developed the nearby suburbs of Bonner and Forde. The agreement provides for the employment of an Aboriginal Ranger and two Aboriginal Trainee Rangers to work on land management, heritage and interpretation programs across the ACT, with a particular focus on Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve.

For more information see the ACT Government Territory and Municipal Services website, <http://www.tams.act.gov.au/play>