

# CASE STUDY - Thurgoona Bioblitz 2012

In May 2012, the Slopes2Summit (S2S) partnership and the Woolshed Thurgoona Landcare Group hosted the 'Thurgoona Bioblitz 2012'. The event was held over two days and nights at Thurgoona NSW, and engaged around 300 school students, Landcare members, and other local residents.

The bioblitz involved 36 wildlife surveys targeting birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and invertebrates. The surveys were led by ecologists from Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, Murray Catchment Management Authority, Latrobe University, National Environment Centre, and GHD consultants.

Over 100 fauna species were recorded, including Brown Falcon, Sloane's Froglet, and Squirrel Glider. The data collected has since been uploaded into the Atlas of Living Australia via a site developed by the Atlas in collaboration with the S2S partnership (<http://s2s.ala.org.au>).

The event was funded by the Federal Government's Caring for Our Country 'Community Action Grants' program, the NSW Government's Environmental Trust, Atlas of Living Australia, Albury Conservation Company, and CSU Green.

S2S is currently planning its second Bioblitz, to be held in early 2013 with financial support from the NSW Government's Environmental Trust Program, through its partnership with the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GER).

For more information contact Sam Niedra (S2S Facilitator) – ph (02) 6051 9924, mob 0448 806 256, [sam@nct.org.au](mailto:sam@nct.org.au)



### ABOUT 'THURGOONA BIOBLITZ 2012':

- A Bioblitz is '*an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area*'.
- The first Bioblitz was held in the US in 1996, and the first in Australia was in WA in 2002
- Thurgoona is just north of Albury, NSW.
- Aims of the Thurgoona Bioblitz 2012:
  1. Engage the community and have fun
  2. Collect species presence and absence data
- Funding was provided from the Federal Government through its Caring For Our Country 'Community Action Grants' program, the NSW Government's Environmental Trust, and the Albury Conservation Company.
- 36 surveys were led by ten volunteer survey leaders from Charles Sturt University (CSU), Australian National University, Nature Conservation Trust, Murray Catchment Management Authority, Latrobe University, National Environment Centre, and GHD.
- Survey techniques varied according to the animal groups being targeted. Elliott traps were set to catch small mammals, such as the Yellow footed Antechinus. Nest boxes were checked for arboreal mammals, such as the Squirrel Glider.



Sheets of corrugated iron were laid out at sites in the weeks prior for reptile surveys during the event. Harp traps were set for bats, and there were many 20 minute bird surveys, and listening for frog calls.

- The survey sites at Thurgoona were a mixture of public and privately owned, urban and rural.
- CSU's Albury/Wodonga campus at Thurgoona was used as the event base and central meeting point.
- Main biota targeted – birds, mammals (Squirrel Glider, bats), reptiles, frogs
- Planning - the Slopes2Summit (S2S) Facilitator was the main person responsible for event planning, with support from the survey leader group (survey design and resourcing) and volunteers.
- '20 most wanted' - the survey leader group agreed on a list of target species.
- An 'Animal Care Ethics Application' was obtained through CSU, and a Scientific Licence was obtained through the NSW Government's Office of Environment & Heritage.
- Public liability Insurance was covered by Nature Conservation Trust (Facilitator host organisation).
- NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES) volunteers attended the event to help supervise animal wellbeing, and St John's Ambulance attended event as a precaution for first aid.
- The survey leader group developed agreed survey methods and record sheets.
- Surveys transferred onto the S2S Atlas of Living Australia Project.
- Data fed in by staff from the Atlas of Living Australia and volunteers during the event.

### THURGOONA BIOBLITZ 2012 - ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Almost 300 individuals were involved over 2 days, and 20+ organisations and groups were involved
- 5 local schools participated – Charles Sturt University, National Environment Centre, Trinity Anglican College, Thurgoona Primary School, Table Top Primary School.
- The level of 'in-kind' contribution was high with many volunteers helping out and the survey leaders volunteering their services.
- Over 100 species were recorded, and around 400 individual records made.
- The use of the Charles Sturt University campus as the base - central, meeting point, sightings posted on whiteboard, partner displays, etc.
- Engagement of CSU and National Environment Centre students - photos, data entry, surveys, maps.
- Strong media exposure – TV news, radio, print, web – great support from CSU media
- Examples of media include:
  - <http://au.prime7.yahoo.com/v1/news/a/-/national/13723740/students-in-wildlife-search-video/>
  - <http://www.bordermail.com.au/story/11468/bioblitz-team-ready-to-descend-on-thurgoona/>
  - <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2012/05/18/3506152.htm>
- Footage and interviews for the film '[Snow Gums to River Reds](#)', about Eucalypts in the Slopes2Summit project area, was taken by Mosquito Productions during the Thurgoona Bioblitz 2012. The film was made with a \$15,000 gift from the Bjarne K Dahl Trust and was released in late 2012.



### LESSONS FOR THE 2013 BIOBLITZ:

- An organising committee is preferred over one key person to share the load and assign specific roles to committee members – e.g. communications, survey design, volunteer coordinator.
- More publicity prior to the event – e.g. media releases, school visits, public talks, etc.
- Broaden the geographic area - e.g. Woomargama National Park, conservation covenant properties, specific areas of interest.
- Target key species – e.g. Threatened species.
- Allow appropriate time duration for surveys (e.g. small mammal trapping).
- Consider using other monitoring techniques (e.g. motion sensing cameras).
- Enable people to survey where they are using on-line forms.
- Provide additional activities, particularly for children - e.g. scat id, interactive animal id, art/craft.
- OH&S – small mammal trapping involves peanut in bait - identify peanut allergies prior.
- Key messages that can be delivered by survey leaders at the start of each survey.
- Have more live animals on display.
- Conduct a photo competition to help obtain better visual record of event, locations, and species.

**TESTIMONIALS FROM THE THURGOONA BIOBLITZ 2012:**

*"Thank you very much for all your organising for the BioBlitz. I thought it was a huge success and the students absolutely loved the day."*

**Scott Melgaard, Teacher  
Trinity Anglican College, Thurgoona**

*"Congratulations on a great Bioblitz and well done to you for all your fantastic organising."*

**Sue Brunskill, Teacher  
National Environment Centre**

*"The WIRES members that went all thought it was great and a great learning experience for them. Thank you for inviting us and thank you for all the hard work you and your team did to make this a success."*

**Hazel Cook, WIRES volunteer (Albury branch)**



*"Thank you for organising this event. The students and staff from Thurgoona Public were impressed by the organisation and the total experience. We have a wealth of knowledge close in our neighbourhood."*

**Jo Ward, Teacher  
Thurgoona Public Primary School**

*"I really enjoyed the time with everyone, especially the Ecologists who taught me what to look for and how to record it properly. I'm ready to have a closer look on the farm as a result. Thanks for all your hard work and organising, well done Sam"*

**Ros Webb, Thurgoona landholder**

*"Thank you for organising this wonderful event"*

**Rowland Martin, Principal  
Table Top Public School**

*"It was my absolute pleasure taking the photos, not only did it give me an opportunity for learning more photography skills but it also gave me some confidence in photographing people. Thank you so much for the opportunity to take the photos at the Bioblitz."*

**Nikita Tabuteau, volunteer photographer**

*"I just wanted to say thanks so much for asking me to be involved with the Bioblitz. I had a fantastic time and I was blown away by everyone's enthusiasm (including the kids)! Looking forward to next year's already!"*

**Helen Waudby, Murray Catchment Management Authority**

**Photos:**

Page 1 - Peter Spencer, Nikita Tabuteau, Page 2 - Nikita Tabuteau, Page 3 - Catherine Allan, Page 4 - Liam Grimmett