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Impressive results for Strathbogie Shire's Roadside Conservation Assessment to date

Ecologists Tim D'Ombra, Janet Leversha and Ian Castle from Biodiversity Services have embarked on a spring-summer assessment of roadsides in the Strathbogie Shire.

Several weeks into the assessment, Tim said they were very impressed with the quality and standard of roadside vegetation in the region.

"In comparison to other shires, we have been stunned by the size and significance of the trees and the number of trees with hollows," he said.

Tree hollows are a fantastic asset on roadsides, as they act as shelter and breeding sites for a variety of animals, particularly birds.

This assessment involves driving along each Council-managed road, recording every plant species identified on the roadsides.

Every time they record a species it is geographically referenced and photographed.

An assessment of the conservation value and nature of the native vegetation on the roadsides is made.

"Whilst the ground layers on many of the roads in the Strathbogie Shire are degraded, the roads are scoring in the high value category on the Roadside Advisory Conservation Committee scoring system because of the number of trees and shrubs and the habitat value", Tim said.

They did note some infestations of weeds including St John's Wort, Bridal Creeper and One-leaf Cape Tulip on the roadsides just out of Euroa; however, compared to other shires they have found far less invasive woody weed infestations at this stage.

The assessment will provide Council with a huge amount of detailed data that will make roadside management a more time and cost-effective process.

The data will provide direction for weed management which will better protect private property from weed infestations and better prepare the Shire for bushfire season.

Many weeds are highly flammable and create a huge hazard during fire emergencies.

"In some other shires, we've seen a huge increase in boom-spraying roadsides which not only temporarily kills the weeds, but kills native plants that may have been effective in helping crowd out or stop the spread of weeds along the road," Tim said.

Careful spot spraying of weeds allows for better cover of native vegetation, which will reduce the weed and fire risks.

Over their years of work in Victoria, the team has seen more regeneration of trees and shrubs than there was 20 years ago, but the ground layer of roadsides has suffered in many areas.

Some significant native vegetation the team has identified includes Bull Oak, Silver Banksia, Euroa Guinea flower, Snow Gum, Austral ladies tresses, and a variety of pea and wattle shrubs.

The team will often be travelling slowly along the back roads in a white van with flashing safety lights and a 'Caution Survey Vehicle' sign over the coming weeks, so please slow to a safe speed to pass, which will also help to reduce dust.

Mayor Amanda McClaren said this data will assist Council to protect and enhance the Shire's natural environmental assets which is a key strategy in the Council Plan.

"Roadside conservation is hugely important, particularly given we are a Shire with over 2500km of roads," Cr McClaren said.

"This data will allow Council to minimise risks and capitalise on the natural resources that are found on our roadside."

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