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# Flora and Fauna Assessment 161 Marsh Court, Ashbourne

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Prepared for Ashbourne Landcare Group



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background

In 2021, the Ashbourne Landcare Group commissioned the author to conduct flora and fauna assessments across twelve private properties occurring within the Ashbourne district. The project was funded by a grant provided by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA).

The surveys confirmed that the private lands across the Ashbourne district are of very high conservation significance. The following ecological values were recorded across the 12 properties:

- 306 separate plant species, 220 which are indigenous and 86 introduced,
- 59 separate bird species,
- eight plant species listed as *Endangered* or *Critically Endangered* under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee List,
- numerous plant species of regional significance,
- 43 of the plant species observed have not previously been (officially) recorded in the area according to a 10km radius search of the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA). Twenty-five of these are indigenous and 18 are introduced.

This report presents the results of the flora and fauna assessment at 161 Marsh Court, Woodend. It provides a list of the flora and fauna species that were recorded, a description of vegetation and habitat values and some recommendations for the maintenance and enhancement of ecological values.

### 1.2 Study area

161 Marsh Court is approximately eight hectares in size and is part of a large patch of bushland that extends west from the Campaspe River. The entire property supports bushland with the exception of a small clearing for the house and garden in the south. The property contains two dams, located to the east of the house and in the north-western section.

### **1.3 Methods**

161 Marsh Court was assessed for approximately three hours on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2021. All areas of the property were traversed on foot and a list was compiled of all flora and fauna species observed. For fauna, most species were recorded from identification of calls (e.g. birds, frogs) or scats and tracks. Notes were taken on the vegetation, habitat features and management issues, whilst photographs were taken of representative areas.

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## 2.0 RESULTS

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### 2.1 Flora species

During the December 2021 survey, a total of 71 flora species were recorded at 161 Marsh Court (see Appendix 1). Of these, 58 are indigenous species and 13 are introduced. Although no FFG-listed or regionally significant flora were observed, three of the species are considered to be of local significance, including Purple Beard-orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*), Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*) and Showy Violet (*Viola betonicifolia*).

### 2.2 Vegetation description

Most of the property is dominated by a relatively young cohort of Narrow-leaf Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata*) and Candlebark (*Eucalyptus rubida*) with occasional Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) and Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). The north-eastern section was cleared more recently (by the previous landowner) and has been colonised by scattered Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*).

The understorey throughout the property varies between open areas dominated by Wallaby-grass (*Rytidosperma* spp.), Grey Tussock-grass (*Poa sieberiana* ssp. *siebrriana*) and Weeping-grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) to denser areas containing Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) and shrubs such as Common Cassinia (*Cassinia aculeata*). A wide variety of forbs are scattered throughout including Twining Fringe-lily (*Thysanotus patersonii*), Showy Violet (*Viola betonicifolia*), Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*), Small St John's Wort (*Hypericum gramineum*) and Common Raspwort (*Gonocarpus tetragynus*). The dams and a small scrape in the northern section support a variety of wetland species such as Hollow Rush (*Juncus amabilis*), Floating Club-sedge (*Isolepis fluitans*) and Matted Pratia (*Lobelia pedunculata*).



**Plate 1 Silver Wattles that have colonised the previously cleared area in the north-eastern section**



**Plate 2 the dam in the northern portion supports a narrow fringe of native rushes and sedges**

### 2.3 High threat weeds

Of the weeds recorded within the property, six are considered to be high threat species that are recommended for control. These species are listed in Table 1 below. All of these species are restricted to scattered individuals at low density.

**Table 1 High threat weeds recorded at 161 Marsh Court in December 2021**

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acacia baileyana</i>	Cootamundra Wattle
<i>Acacia floribunda</i>	White Sallow-wattle
<i>Acacia howittii</i>	Sticky Wattle
<i>Billardiera heterophylla</i>	Bluebell Creeper
<i>Rubus anglocandicans</i>	Common Blackberry
<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse

### 2.4 Fauna

During the December 2021 survey, a total of 25 fauna species were recorded, including 20 bird, two frog and three mammal species. Five additional species previously observed on the property by the landowner have also been added to the list, including the regionally significant Feathertail Glider (*Acrobates pygmaeus*) (see Appendix 2). The property would support a much greater diversity of fauna species, however due to the high mobility and cryptic nature of many species, it would take a survey across multiple years and seasons to prepare a detailed list.

Habitat features observed within the property included:

- Scattered small logs. These are important for fauna that live or feed at ground level to provide cover from predators.
- Healthy litter layer, including sticks, leaves, bark and humus. A healthy litter layer is essential for many insects.
- Diverse plant communities, providing food and habitat for various mammals, birds, insects and other fauna. Plant communities with many different species are better quality habitat than low diverse communities due to the variation in different flowers that attract specific insects. They are also more structurally diverse and provide better cover and shelter.
- The dams provide habitat for frog species which rely on water for breeding, as well as a small range of water-bugs. These features are also a source of drinking water for mammals and birds.

The property is also connected to a large patch of bushland and is therefore an important part of a network of corridors that allow fauna to move across the landscape.

## 2.5 Management issues and recommendations

Maintaining and enhancing the ecological values of the property will require protection of the bushland and occasional management. The following actions should be considered by the landowners:

- Control of high threat weeds shown in Table 1. Smaller plants can be removed by hand, however larger plants may need to be cut at ground level and painted with herbicide. If the landowners wish to avoid using herbicide, plants can be regularly cut at ground level. They will continue to re-shoot but at least will be kept at a low height and will not spread further seed.
- Retention of as many logs across the bushland area as possible, particularly the larger ones.
- Additional areas for hollow dependant fauna could be provided by installing nest-boxes.
- Some areas of the property support a low cover and diversity of understorey species. The landowner could consider replanting a range of forbs and small shrubs such as Blue Pin-cushions (*Brunonia australis*), Common Everlasting (*Coronidium gunnianum*), Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*), Glycine (*Glycine spp.*), Murrnong (*Microseris walteri*), Tall Daisy (*Brachyscome diversifolia*), Common Trigger-plant (*Stylidium graminifolium*), Trailing Shaggy-pea (*Podolobium procumbens*) and Golden Bush-pea (*Pultenaea gunnii*). These would ideally be planted in a fenced area to prevent grazing by native and introduced herbivores.



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### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

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A total of 71 flora species and 25 fauna species were recorded during the brief assessment at 161 Marsh Court, including several locally significant plant species. The property also supports habitat for a wide variety of fauna species.

Maintaining and enhancing the ecological values of the property will require ongoing protection of native vegetation and controlling high threat weeds.

## Appendix 1 - Flora species recorded at 161 Marsh Court in December 2021

Key to symbols	
*	Introduced species
#	Non-indigenous native species

Status	Scientific Name	Common Name	FFG Status
#	<i>Acacia baileyana</i>	Cootamundra Wattle	
	<i>Acacia dealbata</i> subsp. <i>dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle	
#	<i>Acacia floribunda</i>	White Sallow-wattle	
#	<i>Acacia howittii</i>	Sticky Wattle	
	<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	Blackwood	
	<i>Acacia verticillata</i> subsp. <i>verticillata</i>	Prickly Moses	
*	<i>Acetosella vulgaris</i>	Sheep Sorrel	
*	<i>Aira elegantissima</i>	Delicate Hair-grass	
	<i>Amyema pendula</i>	Drooping Mistletoe	
*	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass	
	<i>Arthropodium strictum</i> s.s.	Chocolate Lily	
	<i>Austrostipa rudis</i>	Veined Spear-grass	
*	<i>Billardiera heterophylla</i>	Bluebell Creeper	
*	<i>Briza maxima</i>	Large Quaking-grass	
	<i>Brunonia australis</i>	Blue Pincushion	
	<i>Calochilus robertsonii</i> s.l.	Purple Beard-orchid	
	<i>Cassinia aculeata</i> subsp. <i>aculeata</i>	Common Cassinia	
	<i>Cassinia sifton</i>	Drooping Cassinia	
	<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>	Common Bird-orchid	
	<i>Coronidium scorpioides</i> s.s.	Button Everlasting	
	<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea	
	<i>Dianella revoluta</i> var. <i>revoluta</i> s.l.	Black-anther Flax-lily	
	<i>Dichelachne rara</i>	Common Plume-grass	
	<i>Dillwynia cinerascens</i> s.s.	Grey Parrot-pea	
	<i>Drosera auriculata</i>	Tall Sundew	
	<i>Drosera peltata</i> s.l.	Pale Sundew	
	<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>	Messmate Stringybark	
	<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i> subsp. <i>radiata</i>	Narrow-leaf Peppermint	
	<i>Eucalyptus rubida</i>	Candlebark	
	<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i> subsp. <i>viminalis</i>	Manna Gum	
	<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>	Common Raspwort	
	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Purple Coral-pea	
*	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog	
	<i>Hydrocotyle foveolata</i>	Yellow Pennywort	

Status	Scientific Name	Common Name	FFG Status
	<i>Hypericum gramineum</i>	Small St John's Wort	
	<i>Isolepis fluitans</i>	Floating Club-sedge	
*	<i>Isolepis levynsiana</i>	Tiny Flat-sedge	
	<i>Isotoma fluviatilis subsp. australis</i>	Swamp Isotome	
	<i>Juncus amabilis</i>	Hollow Rush	
	<i>Juncus holoschoenus</i>	Joint-leaf Rush	
	<i>Lagenophora stipitata s.l.</i>	Common Bottle-daisy	
	<i>Leptospermum continentale</i>	Prickly Tea-tree	
	<i>Lobelia pedunculata s.s.</i>	Matted Pratia	
	<i>Lomandra filiformis subsp. coriacea</i>	Wattle Mat-rush	
	<i>Luzula meridionalis var. flaccida</i>	Common Woodrush	
	<i>Lythrum hyssopifolia</i>	Small Loosestrife	
	<i>Microlaena stipoides var. stipoides</i>	Weeping Grass	
	<i>Opercularia varia</i>	Variable Stinkweed	
	<i>Oxalis perennans</i>	Grassland Wood-sorrel	
	<i>Poa sieberiana</i>	Grey Tussock-grass	
	<i>Poranthera microphylla s.s.</i>	Small Poranthera	
	<i>Pteridium esculentum subsp. esculentum</i>	Austral Bracken	
	<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>	Tall Greenhood	
*	<i>Rubus anglocandicans</i>	Common Blackberry	
	<i>Rytidosperma geniculatum</i>	Knead Wallaby-grass	
	<i>Rytidosperma laeve</i>	Smooth Wallaby-grass	
	<i>Rytidosperma spp.</i>	Wallaby Grass	
	<i>Senecio glomeratus</i>	Annual Fireweed	
	<i>Senecio hispidulus s.l.</i>	Rough Fireweed	
	<i>Senecio phelleus</i>	Stony Fireweed	
	<i>Solenogyne dominii</i>	Smooth Solenogyne	
	<i>Stellaria pungens</i>	Prickly Starwort	
	<i>Thelymitra spp.</i>	Sun Orchid	
	<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Kangaroo Grass	
	<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>	Twining Fringe-lily	
*	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse	
	<i>Veronica calycina</i>	Hairy Speedwell	
	<i>Viola betonicifolia</i>	Showy Violet	
	<i>Viola hederacea sensu Entwisle (1996)</i>	Ivy-leaf Violet	
*	<i>Vulpia bromoides</i>	Squirrel-tail Fescue	
	<i>Wahlenbergia stricta subsp. stricta</i>	Tall Bluebell	

## Appendix 2 - Fauna species recorded at 161 Marsh Court in December 2021

Key to symbols	
*	Introduced species
L	Previously recorded by the landowner

Status	Common name	Scientific Name	Type	FFG Status
	Australian King-Parrot	<i>Alisterus scapularis</i>	Bird	
	Australian Magpie	<i>Cracticus tibicen</i>	Bird	
	Banjo Frog	<i>Limnodynastes dumerilii</i>	Frog	
L	Bare-nosed Wombat	<i>Vombatus ursinus</i>	Mammal	
	Black Wallaby	<i>Wallabia bicolor</i>	Mammal	
	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>	Bird	
	Brown Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza pusilla</i>	Bird	
	Common Froglet	<i>Crinia signifera</i>	Frog	
	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i>	Bird	
L	Eastern Brown Snake	<i>Pseudonaja textilis</i>	Reptile	
	Eastern Grey Kangaroo	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>	Mammal	
	Eastern Yellow Robin	<i>Eopsaltria australis</i>	Bird	
L	Feathertail Glider	<i>Acrobates pygmaeus</i>	Mammal	
	Grey Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>	Bird	
L	Kreffft's Glider	<i>Petaurus notatus</i>	Mammal	
	Laughing Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i>	Bird	
L	Lowland Copperhead	<i>Austrelaps superbus</i>	Reptile	
	Pallid Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis pallidus</i>	Bird	
	Pied Currawong	<i>Strepera graculina</i>	Bird	
	Rufous Whistler	<i>Pachycephala rufiventris</i>	Bird	
	Sacred Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>	Bird	
	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	<i>Chalcites lucidus</i>	Bird	
	Short-beaked Echidna	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i>	Mammal	
	Striated Pardalote	<i>Pardalotus striatus</i>	Bird	
	Striated Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza lineata</i>	Bird	
	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Bird	
	Superb Fairy-wren	<i>Malurus cyaneus</i>	Bird	
	White-naped Honeyeater	<i>Melithreptus lunatus</i>	Bird	
	White-throated Treecreeper	<i>Cormobates leucophaea</i>	Bird	
	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	<i>Lichenostomus chrysops</i>	Bird	