

# Hunting hawkweed

A volunteer program supporting eradication of this high-risk weed from Kosciuszko National Park



## Join the hawkweed team

Since 2009, over 400 volunteers have assisted in the search for orange hawkweed. Volunteers are instrumental in protecting sensitive environments, like alpine bogs, from hawkweed invasion. Work alongside National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff and other conservation guardians to find every last hawkweed plant.

## What to expect

Orange hawkweed likes good views, which means surveys are conducted in some of the most scenic areas of Kosciuszko National Park.

Volunteers will be accommodated at Currango Homestead near Tantangara and at Khancoban (shared house, at no cost to volunteers). Accommodation is available from Sunday evening through to Saturday morning of most weeks of the program. Information will be provided on booking.

Volunteers will need to bring enough food for a week and prepare their own meals.

Each Monday, at the start of the Hunting Hawkweed week, volunteers meet for an induction and safety briefing. Volunteers are then taken into the park to practice orange hawkweed identification and participate in surveillance.

Transport to and from volunteer accommodation to the survey areas will be provided by NPWS.

## Volunteer fitness

In this eradication program, 'every last plant' must be found and treated, which requires walking through dense vegetation, over rough and uneven terrain in the peak of summer. A moderate to high level of physical fitness is needed as surveys require a lot of walking. Volunteers should be able to walk approximately 4 km a day and negotiate natural terrain (no paths) and moderate slopes on uneven surfaces.



## 2022–23 volunteer program

Volunteers are invited to attend on the following weeks:

- Week 1: 20 November, Tantangara
- Week 2: 27 November, Khancoban
- Week 3: 4 December, Khancoban (requires previous program experience)
- Week 4: 09 January, Khancoban (requires previous program experience)

Minimum participation time is 1 week, Monday morning to Friday inclusive. Four to 10 volunteers welcome per week.

Bookings are essential.

Go to the NPWS [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/hunting-hawkweed](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/hunting-hawkweed) and click on 'Join up!'

- warm clothing and wet weather gear (weather changes rapidly, even in summer months)
- gaiters to knee height (to protect legs)
- 1–2 litre water bottle (for drinking water); recommend 2L+ hydration bladder with flexible sipping straw
- day pack/backpack with waist strap
- insect repellent and sunscreen
- camera (for capturing the views).

## Getting there

Khancoban is a small NSW township associated with the development of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. Suggested routes to Khancoban are:

- Alpine Way –via Cooma, Jindabyne and Thredbo
- Snowy Valley tourist drive –via Tumbarumba and Tooma Valley on the Tooma Road.

## What to bring

Volunteers must supply all bed linen and towels in shared accommodation. In addition to toiletries and casual clothing, please bring the following to ensure your stay is safe and comfortable:

- personal medication (e.g. EPI pen, hay fever prevention)
- all food and a lunch box
- good walking boots (waterproof)
- thick socks
- long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- hat (broad-brimmed to shade face and neck)

## Orange hawkweed

Orange hawkweed (*Pilosella aurantiaca*) is a species of daisy that originates from northern and central Europe. It has invaded many countries, including the USA, Canada, Japan and New Zealand, where it threatens biodiversity and agricultural lands.

This species was first discovered in Kosciuszko National Park in December 2003 and has been a part of a control and eradication program since that time. It poses a serious threat to the Australian Alps and surrounding environments, including productive farmland. Orange hawkweed is known to outcompete native and pastoral plants and can create monocultures.

## Detection innovations

Two innovative survey techniques have been developed and incorporated into the program to increase detection of hawkweed in remote locations:

Highly trained weed eradication detector dogs (WEDD) are improving detection rates by finding hawkweed hidden within tussocks or plants too small for humans to find. The dogs are motivated to work hard for the reward of a tennis ball.

Remotely piloted aircraft (drones) fitted with a high-resolution camera are used to survey large areas for hawkweed. Images of target areas are processed with an advanced algorithm that detects the bright orange hawkweed flowers. Humans then confirm and control any positive detections.

## Remote helicopter assisted surveys

This activity uses a helicopter to deploy ground teams, of up to 5 people per team, to remote areas to survey for hawkweed. These remote survey areas are critical in delimiting the extent of hawkweed within the Jagungal Wilderness Area.

Teams are supervised by NPWS accredited officers, and comprised of only experienced team members, to provide the best chances of detecting hawkweed.

This activity is only open to volunteers who have previously participated in a week of ground surveillance in either the orange hawkweed or mouse-ear hawkweed programs.

For bookings or inquiries, please call the Hawkweed Volunteer and Partnerships Coordinator during business hours on 0488 588 739.

Cover photo: Orange hawkweed flower heads (Jo Caldwell/DPE); Page 2: (left to right): Drones hunt for hawkweed from the air (Mark Hamilton/DPE); Volunteers and staff survey for orange hawkweed, new site Farm Ridge (Rebecca Mooy/DPE); Weed eradication detector dog, Sally, always enthusiastic and ready to hunt for hawkweed (Jo Caldwell/DPE); Page 3: Volunteers and NPWS marking hawkweed plants (Jo Caldwell/DPE).



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