

Monster mouse-ear hunt

A volunteer program supporting the eradication of this high risk weed in Kosciuszko National Park



Mouse-ear hawkweed

Mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) was first detected on the Main Range in Kosciuszko National Park in December 2015. This weed is the only known infestation in New South Wales.

Hawkweed is a member of the daisy family and originates from Eurasia. It is a serious weed in many countries, including the USA, Canada, Japan and New Zealand, where it threatens biodiversity and agricultural productivity. Mouse-ear hawkweed poses a major threat to the Australian Alps because it can create monocultures and outcompete native species. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is committed to eradicating mouse-ear hawkweed.

Volunteers are instrumental in protecting sensitive environments from hawkweed invasion by helping to find plants during the summer season. This season, NPWS will conduct three-and-a-half-day surveys that coincide with peak plant development. Surveys will be conducted from Tuesday to Friday afternoon (induction is on Monday afternoon).

What to expect

Mouse-ear hawkweed likes good views, which means surveys are conducted in some of the most scenic areas on the Main Range in Kosciuszko National Park.

Volunteers will be accommodated in shared lodgings in the Perisher Valley or Jindabyne, at no cost to volunteers. Accommodation is available from the Monday afternoon through to the Friday morning of the week's activities. More information will be provided on booking.

Volunteers will need to self-cater all meals and snacks for the week.

Each Monday afternoon of the volunteer week, volunteers will meet at the designated accommodation for an induction (plant identification and survey techniques) and safety briefing. On Tuesday, volunteers will be taken into the park to find plants in the wild.

Four-wheel drive transport to and from mouse-ear hawkweed survey areas will be provided by NPWS.



What to bring

In addition to toiletries and casual clothing, please bring bedding (sleeping bag, pillow) and towels.

To ensure your experience is safe and comfortable, please bring the following:

- personal medication (e.g. EPI pen, hay fever prevention)
- all food and lunch box
- good walking boots (waterproof)
- thick socks
- long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- hat (broad brimmed)
- warm clothing and wet/wind weather gear (weather changes rapidly, even in summer months)
- gaiters to knee height.
- 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).

Volunteer fitness

A moderate to high level of physical fitness is needed as surveys require a lot of walking.

Volunteers should be able to walk at least 4 km a day and be able to negotiate natural terrain (no paths) and moderate to steep slopes on uneven surfaces.

2022-23 volunteer program

Volunteers are invited to attend in the following weeks:

- Week 1: 12 December, (weed specialists)
- Week 2: 3 January
- Week 3: 9 January
- Week 4: 16 January
- Week 5: 23 January (requires previous program experience)
- Week 6: 30 January
- Week 7: 6 February (requires previous program experience)
- Week 8: 13 February
- Week 9: 20 February
- Week 10: 27 February
- Week 11: 6 March
- Week 12: 13 March
- Week 13: 21 March

Maximum of 4 to 8 volunteers per week.

Volunteer participants required from Monday afternoon (3:30pm) to Friday midday. Bookings are essential.

Go to the NPWS www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/hunting-mouse-ear-hawkweed and click on 'Join up!'

Weed 'sniffer' dogs

Weed Eradication Detector Dogs are highly trained working dogs employed during the program to 'sniff out' hawkweed. NPWS is currently working 2 dogs to assist with detecting those hard-to-find plants.

These animals are confident in the detection of both mouse-ear and orange hawkweed.

Remote helicopter assisted surveys

Helicopters are used to deploy ground teams, of 4 to 5 people per team, to remote areas to survey for hawkweed. Surveying these remote areas is critical to delimit the extent of hawkweed across the Main Range.

Teams are supervised by NPWS accredited officers and comprised of 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 mouse-ear hawkweed or orange hawkweed volunteer programs.

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

Other programs

Orange hawkweed (*Pilosella aurantiaca*) is also found within Kosciuszko National Park. It has similar characteristics to mouse-ear hawkweed and is as competitive and aggressive. The bright orange flowers, displayed between December and February, are the major difference between the two hawkweeds.

Orange hawkweed was first discovered in Kosciuszko National Park in 2003 and has been under eradication since.

NPWS has a separate volunteer program for orange hawkweed, 'Hunting Hawkweed', which is managed out of Khancoban.

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

Cover photo: Mouse-ear hawkweed (Jo Caldwell/DPE); Page 2 (left to right): Remote, helicopter assisted, surveys conducted across the Main Range in the hunt for hawkweed (Rebecca Mooy/DPE); Volunteers and NPWS staff survey high priority areas of the Main Range in the hunt for hawkweed (Rebecca Mooy/DPE); Connor, weed eradication detector dog 'sniffs out' mouse-ear hawkweed on the Main Range (Jo Caldwell/DPE); Page 3: Purple stripe on lower petal of mouse-ear hawkweed (Mark Hamilton/DPE).



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Environment and Heritage, Department of Planning and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124.

Phone: 1300 361 967 (environment and national parks enquiries); Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au;

Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au.

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