

# Learning from Biodiversity Conservation in the Rangelands

## Conservation and Production



## Introduction

The research station Fowler's Gap is owned and managed by the University of NSW. Since 1966 the 39,000 hectare property has been the site of research and monitoring of the Barrier Ranges north of Broken Hill. It's long-term record keeping on the ecological changes of the area provides understanding to the changing lands of the Far West of NSW. With sites across the property having been monitored for more than 30 years the changes of controlled grazing from livestock, introduction of pests and changing weather patterns all have impacted the land. Fowler's Gap is now completely destocked, and the expected changes are to be monitored over the coming years.

Fowlers Gap was chosen as the location for this field day as it falls within the 'Broken Hill Complex' bioregion. With its historical data and recent changes in management practices it provided a fantastic backdrop for discussion around Biodiversity Conservation and the topic of conservation and production.

## The Issue

The shift in focus from a working property to an entirely conservation and research-based approach has been a shift for both the university management team and neighbouring properties. The key theme for this field day being 'Conservation and Production' is very relevant to the work being done. The change in management practices such as fencing and watering points can sometimes prove contentious with surrounding landholders, as it can alter the natural movement of wild animals across the landscape. The quantity of controlled and uncontrolled grazing on the property was hindering efforts to allow rejuvenation of the land. Likewise, the past 30 years has seen the property running conservation and production simultaneously however is now solely focusing on conservation for the foreseeable future.

Due to its lengthy history in the area many long term locals have a personal connection with fowlers gap; with their openness to artists, nature enthusiasts and school visits many people have seen the changing landscapes at the research station.



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## The Solution

Attendees to the day were like minded individuals - with many having a prior connection with the research station and were curious to understand the direction that it would be taking. The director of Fowler's Gap spoke of the changes and future plans, accompanied by the university. Researchers gave presentations on threatened species, fencing and soil science. These talks were complemented with site visits into the paddock to highlight the different inclusion and exclusion fencing and demonstrate the importance of ground cover for soil health with a water infiltration demonstration. The day allowed for constructive discussion around the importance of conservation verse production and how to integrate them together. Using in field demonstrations participants were able to see the change in pasture and soil structure as a direct result of the management decisions of improved pest fencing and reducing watering points on the property to decrease the enticement for feral and native animals to graze the paddocks.

## Moving Forward

The field day was a fantastic opportunity to highlight the biodiversity conservation trust in conjunction with western Landcare representation. It provided insight to participants on the space around Private Land Conservation. Moving forward it will provide education to landholders and the broader public on the strengths and challenges that conservation and production present and how they can work harmoniously within the Western district of NSW. The event also solidified the relationship with Western Landcare and University of NSW whilst showcasing the work of the Biodiversity Conservation Trust.

**Deeper  
understanding of  
threatened species**

**Building a greater  
understanding of the  
impact uncontrolled  
grazing has on ground  
cover.**

**Highlighting the use  
of inclusion and  
exclusion fencing**

**The importance of  
personal connection  
to properties  
extending further  
than stock  
production.**