

Case Study

Collecting biodiversity baseline data

Considerable work was undertaken in 2020 to retrospectively progress Sustainability Plan targets 4.5.2; *Establish biodiversity baseline data for Parkville and Southbank campuses by mid 2017*, and 4.5.3; *Establish biodiversity data for the remaining campuses by end of 2018*. Collection of biodiversity baseline data proved to be considerably more resource intensive than first predicted when the Plan was first published, however the project made significant progress in 2020 through a dedicated project officer aided by student interns.

Collection of baseline data for seven biodiversity metrics began across the University's entire property portfolio, including all seven campuses, in late 2019. Significant progress in measuring each metric was made when three student internships were created for semester 2 to assist with the project. A further two internship opportunities were created in the 2021 summer semester following the success of this trial.

The students received course credit for their contributions as part of direct learning through a University of Melbourne internship subject and gained direct and meaningful work experience implementing sustainability on campus. All students have since secured employment in related fields following their experience.

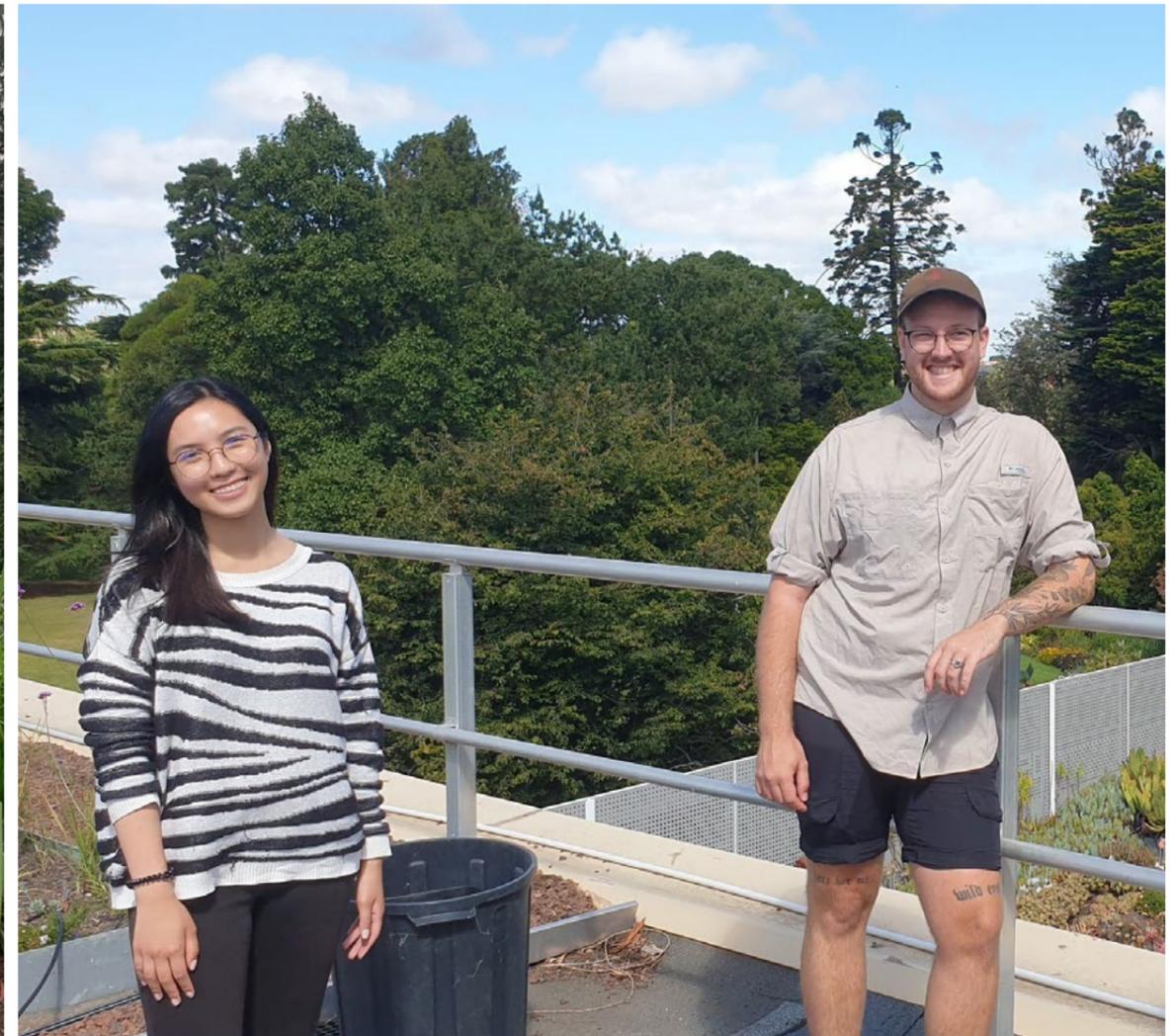
Collection of all biodiversity baseline data is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

The data and subsequent analysis will be used to inform biodiversity-related targets and indicators in the new Sustainability Plan and Biodiversity Management Plan 2021–2025. This information will enable the University to improve the management of the campus grounds, informing future landscape design, species selection and priority areas for new vegetation to support biodiversity. A complete set of baseline data will also serve as a valuable teaching and learning resource for staff, students and the general public.

Progress highlights:

In 2020, collected Parkville plant inventory data increased to 81% completion. Across the year, the Parkville Grounds staff collected a staggering 4,504 records representing an estimated 34,200 plants. 89% of plantable area data on the Burnley campus was collected by a Master of Spatial Engineering intern. The student helped to convert and update a nearly 20-year-old map of the Burnley campus grounds to create three preliminary datasets of garden beds, lawns and ponds.

Collection of fauna and fungi data increased to 72% completion in 2020. A Master of Environmental Science intern extracted citizen science observations from the *Atlas of Living Australia* to screen our campuses for sightings of endangered fauna and fungi. Over 1,000 unique fauna and fungi were found to previously and/or currently reside on University campuses, with 47 of these threatened by extinction.



Images

Sustainability interns out in the field collecting data and some of the wildlife they encountered.