

CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL FIELDTRIP EXPERIENCE USING AN ONLINE SETTING

Simone Louwhoff^a, Singarayer Florentine^b, Kushan Tennakoon^c

Presenting Author: Simone Louwhoff (s.louwhoff@federation.edu.au)

^aSchool of Science, Psychology and Sport, Federation University, Churchill, VIC 3842, Australia

^bSchool of Science, Psychology and Sport, Federation University, Mt Helen, VIC 3350, Australia

^cSchool of Science, Psychology and Sport, Federation University, Berwick, VIC 3806, Australia

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Fieldtrips present a myriad of valuable learning opportunities for students in Environmental and Conservation Science programs and have become an integral part of their learning process. However, COVID-19 protocols presented us with a dilemma; how could we capture the benefits and learning experiences of a traditional fieldtrip in an online setting?

In the core unit Invasive Species, this was addressed through a series of short, *in situ* videos and images taken by individual teaching staff at more than eight sites across Gippsland, Berwick and Ballarat. These were compiled into a virtual fieldtrip book (VFB), which examines the management challenges associated with different invasive species and processes. It also allowed us to scaffold key questions which could help to embed important knowledge principles.

Whilst we found that it was difficult to truly capture all the facets which comprise a 'real-life' fieldtrip experience, student feedback indicated that the majority of respondents appreciated having online examples presented to them in lieu of the traditional fieldtrip. In the longer-term, the goal is to further improve and develop the VFB into a comprehensive resource and alternative option for fieldtrips (as needed), and as a valuable revision resource.

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