

2021 APPLICATION for Dr Alex Scholes Student Scholarship

BACKGROUND

The Scholes Student Scholarship is named to honour Dr Alex Scholes. Dr Scholes had a deep appreciation of the Australian landscape and left a bequest to Trust for Nature to enable young people to study the conservation of fauna, flora and habitat in an applied way. Trust for Nature's Board has approved the use of part of his bequest funds to provide scholarships supporting post-graduate students working in the field of conservation where their research has relevance to private-land conservation in Victoria.

TRUST FOR NATURE CONTEXT

Trust for Nature is Victoria's dedicated private land conservation agency. Our goal is to protect and restore places in Victoria where wildlife and native plants can thrive, using statutory, in-perpetuity covenants pursuant to the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*. We do this for the benefit of future generations by working now with private landholders, volunteers, government agencies and others with similar vision.

Trust for Nature occupies a unique role within Victoria's natural resource management sector for the following reasons.

- It operates statewide and is Victoria's primary authority for biodiversity and natural resource management conservation on private land.
- It has helped protect more than 100,000 hectares of important habitat on private land, principally by entering into voluntary legal agreements on title across more than 1500 properties.
- It has prepared a [Statewide Conservation Plan](#) for all private land in Victoria which underpins its conservation work and provides an integrated framework for planning and operations across Victoria.

APPLICATION CRITERIA

Trust for Nature's research interests are focussed on how to improve the effectiveness of our conservation program. Research questions may help address knowledge gaps, assist with our strategic planning, assist with on-ground management or assist with decision-making about the best way to allocate resources to different aspects of our conservation program. We are also interested in research questions that help us understand our position in the broader Natural Resource Management sector and the broader rural landscape: these might include comparisons of different NRM programs or research into landholder attitudes and motivations.

Applicants are to submit a research funding proposal of no more than 1000 words which outlines:

- their research proposal and its originality as research
- the proposed methodology
- its relevance and impact in terms of private-land conservation
- its relevance to Trust for Nature's strategic conservation goals and conservation objectives, as described respectively in the Trust's [Strategic Plan](#) and [Statewide Conservation Plan](#).

Applications can be for projects already started or for projects planned to commence this year.

Applications for funding will be assessed against the following criteria and weightings:

- relevance and impact for private-land conservation in Victoria (30%)
- relevance to the six conservation objectives and associated priorities identified in Trust for Nature's [Statewide Conservation Plan](#) (30%)
- proposed research design and methodology (30%)
- applicability to Trust for Nature's conservation objectives beyond the defined scope of the project (i.e. conservation leveraging capacity or other funding support to maintain project) (10%)

While we will consider any applications which meet the above criteria, specific research projects we are keen to support this year include:

- *Investigating habitat suitability at Neds Corner Station for reintroduction of brushtail and ringtail possums*
- *Investigating habitat suitability at Neds Corner Station for reintroduction of Yellow-footed Antechinus*
- *Investigating habitat suitability at Neds Corner Station for reintroduction of Spotted Bowerbird*
- *Investigating causes of mature tree death and dieback in the semi-arid woodland community at Neds Corner Station*
- *Analysis of ecological thinning and grazing exclosure effects on understorey composition on the Gippsland Plains*
- *Cost-benefits and scale of herbivore exclosures needed to improve conservation outcomes on private land*
- *Use of pastures and crops on farming land by native fauna*

NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

- Applications will be considered that are relevant to private-land conservation, including from ecological, environmental, social, economic and policy perspectives.
- The scholarships are for post-graduate students undertaking Honours or Masters projects over one or two years. We will also consider requests for 'top-up funds' to complement Ph.D scholarships where those projects have particular relevance to our conservation work.
- The Scholes Student Scholarship is generally for \$5,000. It is paid in three instalments: at commencement, at midway point (subject to review of progress by university supervisor and Trust for Nature); and on successful completion.
- Regular communications will be held with the student, their university supervisor and Trust for Nature's Conservation Science Advisor or delegate during the project and will aim to coincide with the scholarship payment triggers: at the beginning, midway point and completion of the project.
- Trust for Nature Scholes Scholarship must be acknowledged in any publications, media, presentations or reports that arise from funded projects and that recipients will publicise the support they received from Trust for Nature and the Dr Alex Scholes bequest for their research.
- Where appropriate, it is required that Trust for Nature's staff involved in the intellectual development and implementation of the funded projects will be included as co-authors in any publications arising from the funded research.
- As part of the receipt of a Scholes Scholarship, it is required that successful applicants will
 - write a brief article about your project for the Trust's publications including website
 - be willing to give a presentation about their research to Trust for Nature staff and supporters
 - write an abstract and two page summary of the project and its key findings
 - publicise the support provided by the Trust in any external communications relating to the funded research
- Applications will be assessed by Trust for Nature and short-list interviews conducted if required.