TRUST FOR NATURE
Habitat forever

Issue 69 February 2019
Conservation BULLETIN

AUSTRALIAN BUSTARDS

Sighted at Neds Corner Station

Meet a covenantor determined to buy more land for conservation

Endangered orchid success

trustfornature.org.au

TRUST FOR NATURE

Trust for Nature (Victoria) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with private landowners to protect native plants and wildlife on their land. Two-thirds of Victoria is privately owned, which means that the protection of native plants and wildlife on private land is vital. Trust for Nature has a number of different ways to support private land conservation including, conservation covenants, an ongoing land stewardship support program for all covenantors and a Revolving Fund and the purchase of land for permanent protection.

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Front cover: The sighting of four Australian Bustards on Neds Corner Station made headlines. Read more on page 7.

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Welcome to our 69th CONSERVATION BULLETIN

We're excited to be hosting another sold out Celebrating Women in Conservation Breakfast event this month to coincide with International Women's Day. More than 460 guests will enjoy hearing from keynote speaker, CEO of Zoos Victoria, Dr Jenny Gray. The event is always a special celebration of all the wonderful women in conservation and we're proud to bring it to you in partnership with Bush Heritage Australia.

Speaking of partnerships, Trust for Nature, Bank Australia and Greening Australia were delighted to accept the Banksia Large Business Award for our collective work on the Bank Australia Conservation Reserve—an initiative that is still a world-first and has been protected with a Trust for Nature conservation covenant. Congratulations to the whole team!

Trust for Nature has been allocated around $3.9 million from the Victorian Government for 17 projects across Victoria. Many of these projects will permanently protect habitat for native plants and animals on private properties that create corridors between national parks and reserves. The funding will be implemented over three years and is part of the Victorian Government's 20-year biodiversity strategy, Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037.

Thank you to everyone who supported our tax and Christmas appeals. The funds will help us manage our reserves across Victoria and your support will help landholders who have generously protected their land with a conservation covenant to manage the ecological values of the properties. You can read more about the tax appeal on page 27.

Trust for Nature made a lasting impact in 2017-18: we registered 31 conservation covenants, controlled feral animals over 68,000ha, carried out 135 ecological surveys on covenanted properties and on our reserves and protected 1,449 more hectares of Victoria's native vegetation, bringing the total area of Victoria that is protected by conservation covenants or under Trust for Nature reserves to more than 100,000ha. We are on track in 2019 to continue this success, which is more important than ever with the increasing pressures on land use.

On a sad note, we farewelled former trustee Bill Middleton OAM who passed away in 2018. Bill had a long and distinguished career spanning 50 years' managing forests, nurseries and habitat. Bill was a valuable contributor to the Trust and the organisation is in a better place for his involvement. We also farewelled Les Smith OAM, a wonderful conservationist who passed away in December, 2018. Les was instrumental in the fight to preserve the Little Desert as a national park and establishing the nearby Urimbirra Cooperative which is protected by a conservation covenant.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Conservation Bulletin and, as always, we value your feedback if you have any. Don't forget we also issue an e-newsletter, Nature News every two months, so ensure you're on our email list to stay in touch.

Sincerely

Victoria Marles
CEO, Trust for Nature

FEEDING REGENT HONEYEATERS
North east Victoria

Will Ford - Regional Manager

Trust for Nature's Will Ford explains the finer points of tree planting to students from Chiltern Primary School on National Tree Day. Courtesy Marelle Whitaker, Chiltern Primary School.

Two hundred years ago, there used to be about one million hectares of Box Ironbark forest in Victoria. Just 25 per cent of it remains today. These forests are critical for Regent Honeyeaters which feed from the trees' nectar and whose population could be as low as 400 nationally (most remaining populations are found in Victoria and New South Wales), making it critically endangered.

Trust for Nature has been working with BirdLife Australia to increase the birds' habitat in the north east, revegetating 15ha of land north of Chiltern with more than 7,000 trees and 25 different species of shrubs. Local Mugga Ironbark flowering is spasmodic and unreliable, so in consultation with Regent Honeyeater experts, we trialled planting several non-indigenous native species to increase food year round. These include Hairpin Banksia, Crimson Bottlebrush, Spotted Gum, Yellow Gum and Silky Oak. The Chiltern community has been right behind the project, including students from Chiltern Primary School who helped plant on National Tree Day.

At a community event on Threatened Species Day, BirdLife Australia's Dean Ingwersen explained the challenges facing Regent Honeyeater conservation.

Dean said nesting success has dropped from 45 per cent in the 1990s to just 30 per cent, with predation a key factor. He said while 85 per cent of fledged young survive, there is a bottleneck at the nest and egg stage because eggs and young are being predated by goannas, Squirrel Gliders, Sugar Gliders and other birds like magpies and currawongs.

Mistletoe is also a key resource for the birds in their northern range and die-off events of mistletoes have seen Regent Honeyeaters travel to coastal areas to forage. Dean emphasised the importance of community monitoring to learn more about the species—remarkably one radio-tracked bird did a 540km round trip to Gippsland and back.

Threatened Species Day commemorates the death of the last know Tasmanian Tiger and we were reminded that not so long ago Thylacines roamed the Chiltern area, as evidenced by the nearby Yeddonba Aboriginal rock art site. We're doing our best to make sure the same fate doesn't befall birds like the Regent Honeyeater.

Trust for Nature has also completed the final year of plantings to re-establish the Mountain Swainson-pea, which was previously extinct in Victoria. The project has established populations of Swainsona recta on four properties that have conservation covenants in the region.

What to plant for Regent Honeyeaters

Regents have been recorded foraging in gardens and you can encourage nectar-feeding birds by establishing plants like Banksias and Bottlebrushes. Away from the house, consider planting species like Mugga Ironbark, Yellow Gum, Spotted Gum or Silky Oak if they're suitable to your area.

Species like the Hairpin Banksia can help to fill the autumn flowering gap, when there are fewer native plants flowering.

For information about projects in the north east contact Will Ford (03) 8631 5888 or willf@tfn.org.au

GRASSY WOODLAND – THE SHAW FAMILY'S LEGACY
Goulburn Broken

Shelagh Curmi - Regional Manager

In 2006 local farmer Merv Shaw said, "You keep telling me how special this property is, so I'll give it to you and you can turn it into a park for the public—as long as it stays open kangaroo grassland with the large old trees that are there."

True to his word, the 38ha site in Gobur near Alexandra, was donated to Trust for Nature in 2010 and named the Burge Family Reserve (Merv being a relative of the Burge family). On-ground works have transformed the site.

The natural values of the property are unique in the Gobur district. The flora includes seven species of eucalypts and more than 40 species of native herbs and grasses. Threatened animals such as the Bibron's Toadlet, Striped Legless Lizard and Diamond Firetail live on the property and it is one of few sites in Victoria where the endangered Plump Swamp Wallaby-grass occurs. There are extensive areas of grassy groundcover dominated by Kangaroo Grass.

The newly formed Burge Family Reserve Committee of Management, a group of committed local volunteers and neighbours, works with the Trust to guide future management. Representatives from the Taungurung Clans, the Australian National University, Landcare and Country Fire Authority have all also assisted with advice or knowledge about the Reserve's management.

Tragically, Merv was killed in a vehicle accident in 2018. One of his wishes was to see a walking track, a nature trail and seats built in the Reserve which the Committee is working on so others can enjoy the Kangaroo Grassland Merv valued so much.

Trust for Nature reserves have been acquired over the years in different ways, some were purchased with help from governments, philanthropic organisations and community funds, others were donated to the Trust. Now any gifts of land are encouraged to be accompanied by endowment funds to manage the land or are sold with covenants and proceeds invested in conservation.

The late Merv Shaw donated the Burge Family Reserve.

Kangaroo Grass meadows

The Grassy Woodlands at Burge Reserve are part of the nationally endangered Box-Gum Woodland and Derived Grassland Community.

The best practice guidelines and ecological information provided in the National Recovery Plan for this community recognise the need to prevent the build-up of grass litter from native and exotic grasses to ensure the survival and recruitment of the smaller herbs and lilies which live in the open gaps and bare ground between the grass tussocks. Recommended options for managing this build-up of grass litter include ecological burning or strategic grazing by stock.

For more information search for the National Recovery Plan White Box - Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland on the Department of Environment and Energy website https://environment.gov.au.

For more information about projects in the Goulburn Broken region contact Shelagh Curmi (03) 8631 5888 or shelaghc@tfn.org.au

SAVING YELLOW-WOOD
East Gippsland

Robyn Edwards - Area Manager

Marie Anne and Peter Murrell own a mixed business near Lakes Entrance, running cattle and boutique cottage accommodation.

A 25ha conservation covenant protects significant values on the property including rare Warm Temperate Rainforest and threatened Riparian and Limestone Box Forests and a range of threatened species such as Sooty Owl, Square-tailed Kite, Tree Goanna, Azure Kingfisher, Yellow-wood and Limestone Blue Wattle. The property also has more than 120 bird species.

The first thing the Murrells did when they purchased the property in 2002 was fence the biodiverse areas and establish the covenant. Weed control and revegetation have improved the biodiversity greatly but Sambar Deer have inhibited plant recruitment and damaged trees and shrubs in some areas, particularly in the rainforest and the wet gullies. Damage is caused by their browsing, pugging soil, antler rubbing and creating wallows.

A stand of rare Yellow-wood trees in the rainforest gully was being ringbarked and any natural regrowth recruitment was being eaten (deer are attracted to Yellow-wood because of its sweet, pungent smell). After seeing the results of a fencing trial by Trust for Nature, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the East Gippsland Rainforest Conservation Management Network the Murrells invested in fencing the Yellow-woods and it has been successful in stopping the ringbarking and saplings are now growing.

Peter said, "There are very few stands of Yellow-wood in East Gippsland that are not suffering the same fate. It was important to us to try and contribute to stopping another threatened species becoming extinct in the region. Unfortunately the deer damage is evident across the rest of the property and fencing all of the gullies is not practical or economical, plus it would prevent the movement of wildlife. I think fencing small areas is useful to protect a threatened plant but not to protect the entire habitat and forest. Deer control needs to be considered in conjunction with any exclusion fencing."

See article on page 16 for more information about deer control.

For more information about projects in the East Gippsland region contact Robyn Edwards (03) 8631 5888 or robyne@tfn.org.au

Tips for protecting rainforest

- Exclude fuel reduction burning as rainforest species do not tolerate burning
- Monitor and control weeds regularly
- Plant missing native species, in particular rainforest vines and major canopy species
- Control deer (ensure you have correct permits and qualified persons)
- Erect deer exclusion fencing around threatened species if practical.

Black-faced Monarch in a blackwood tree planted in 2014.

BUILDING HOMES AT NEDS CORNER STATION
Mallee

Peter Barnes - Neds Corner Station Manager

For more information about projects in the Mallee region contact Greg Ogle (03) 8631 5888 or grego@tfn.org.au

After successfully raising $52,913.38 through the crowd funding campaign Haul for Habitat, 250 tonnes of logs have made their way to Neds Corner Station and are in the process of being distributed within the 500ha predator free exclosure.

This campaign captured the attention of hundreds of Victorians and demonstrated the love people have for this property and what has been achieved there since it was purchased by Trust for Nature in 2002 with government and philanthropic support. Thanks to the Victorian Government for matching every dollar raised and to everyone who supported the campaign.

Haul for Habitat has prevented logs, remaining aft er a major infrastructure project, from potetially being discarded, and utilised them to build habitat for native animals found on Neds Corner Station which use fallen wood as part of their habitat. These include threatened or near-threatened species such as the Fat-tailed Dunnart, Brown Treecreeper, Bearded Dragon, and Carpet Python.

Neds Corner Station has made a remarkable recovery over the last decade so it's not surprising that plants and animals are returning but station managers Colleen and Peter Barnes still did a double take when they saw four Australian Bustards.

Bustards were once a common bird across Australia but are now rare in southern Australia. In an interview with the ABC Peter Barnes said, "I pulled up to water our new plantings on this rise and looked across and here they were just walking quietly through the bush. It was so exciting, I just thought wow, this is pretty special."

In the same ABC story, BirdLife Australia's Sean Dooley said it's hoped this is a precursor to a more permanent population. "We do see occasional records of bustards in north-west Victoria … but to have four birds there and seemingly hanging around for more than just a day or two is really encouraging sign that the landscape is being brought back into balance."

One of four Australian Bustards sighted at Neds Corner Station.

Adam Blake - Regional Manager

SCIENTISTS ACHIEVE ORCHID HOLY GRAIL

Wimmera

In a world first, a self-sustaining population of an endangered orchid species has been created through a reintroduction program. The Colourful Spider-orchid (*Caladenia colorata*) is endangered nationally with small populations of the plant remaining in just a handful of sites in Victoria and South Australia.

Orchids are notoriously fickle and difficult to reintroduce back into the wild because they are so dependent on having the right environment and pollinator.

The Colourful Spider-orchid is part of a decade-long Orchid Conservation Program led by the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and includes teams of volunteers, Trust for Nature, Australian Network for Plant Conservation, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, Australasian Native Orchid Society, Grampians Threatened Species Hub, and private landowners.

The successful reintroduction of 700 plants in the Wimmera region gives scientists the confidence that other endangered orchid species can also be reintroduced and be self-sustaining.

Orchids have a relationship with mycorrhiza fungi in order for seed to germinate and oft en depend on a single species of pollinator—in the case of the Colourful Spider-orchid, a particular species of wasp.

The conservation program is using protected sites on Parks Victoria land and sites that have Trust for Nature covenants on them, which means they will be protected forever even if the properties change hands, giving greater long-term certainty for the orchids' survival. Orchids are threatened by land clearing, weeds, grazing, trampling and theft s by poachers (which means the location of sites is highly guarded).

The Orchid Conservation Program also found more than 300 flowering endangered Tawny Spider-orchids (*Caladenia fulva*), growing on a separate covenanted property near the Grampians. This new, large and unrecorded population is one of the species we translocated to covenanted sites elsewhere. Recovery work on this species had already taken place and was proving successful on another nearby covenanted property.

Covenanted properties provide the safe and natural environments that these orchids need to establish and thrive.

For more information about projects in the south west contact Adam Blake (03) 8631 5888 or adamb@tfn.org.au

***Caladenia fulva*. Courtesy Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.**

Regional updates

CURBING COAST TEA TREE
Corangamite

Chris Lindorff - Regional Manager

Native plants can sometimes become environmental weeds, expanding beyond their natural distribution to invade vegetation and outcompete other native species.

This is the case for Coast tea tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) which is a weed on the Western Australian coastline. In Victoria the tea tree is at home along foreshores and coastal dunes, with an historic natural distribution as far west as Anglesea. Further west this five metre, salt-tolerant and hardy shrub has been planted for windbreaks, dune stabilisation, and in gardens and it's outcompeting native understorey plants and drastically changing habitats.

On Geoff and Geraldine Harris's 80ha covenanted property west of Anglesea, Coast Tea Tree had a stranglehold over low coastal heathland, growing densely and overshadowing other plants. As a result the large Coast Tea Tree was removed to curb its spread and allow the heathland with banksias, hakeas, sheoaks, guinea-flowers, and many orchid and lilies to thrive. Following the removal, an explosion of tea tree seedlings grew over at least two hectares and so a number of groups, including Trust for Nature, the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative, and volunteers helped by hand-pulling seedlings and cutting-and-painting larger plants.

For more information about projects in the Corangamite region contact Chris Lindorff (03) 8631 5888 or chrisl@tfn.org.au

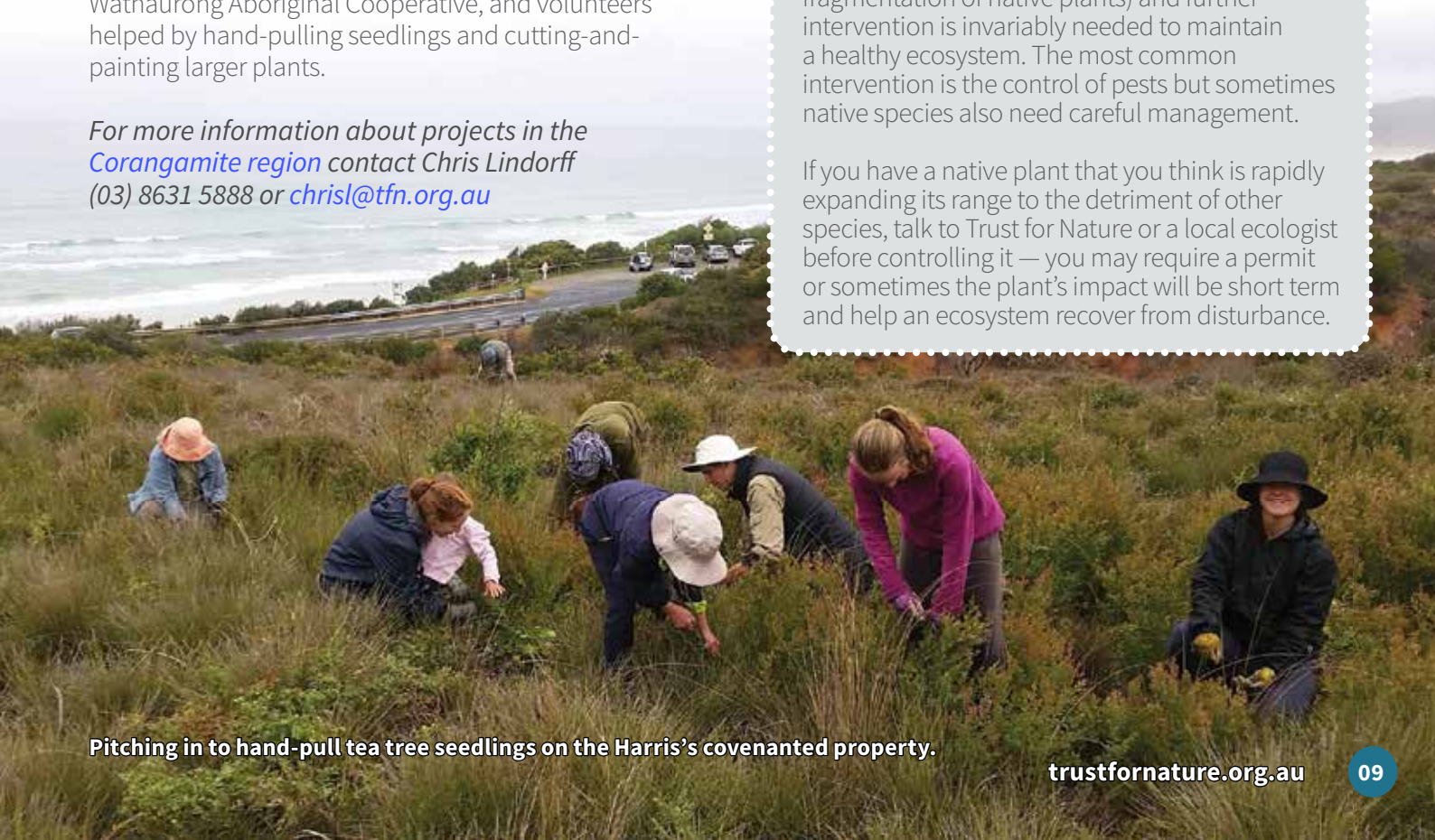
The heathland is recovering with great diversity of native herbs and shrubs growing where once only Coast Tea Tree grew. Seedlings will need to be hand-pulled for a few years to exhaust the Tea Tree seeds stored in the soil.

When native plants go too far

How is it possible for native species to become a problem? Plant colonisation and distribution is complex. In the case of Coast Tea Tree at Anglesea, fire might have encouraged its growth and frequent fires might have affected other long-lived and slow growing plants.

The environment is largely controlled by humans (i.e. the introduction of pest plants and animals, starting and stopping fires, soil disturbance, and fragmentation of native plants) and further intervention is invariably needed to maintain a healthy ecosystem. The most common intervention is the control of pests but sometimes native species also need careful management.

If you have a native plant that you think is rapidly expanding its range to the detriment of other species, talk to Trust for Nature or a local ecologist before controlling it — you may require a permit or sometimes the plant's impact will be short term and help an ecosystem recover from disturbance.



Pitching in to hand-pull tea tree seedlings on the Harris's covenanted property.

PROTECTING HABITAT IN GREATER MELBOURNE
Port Phillip and Westernport

Ben Cullen - Regional Manager

Trust for Nature is looking to protect more properties that have high conservation values in greater Melbourne and extended areas to add to the 249 covenants in the region which are protecting 3,843ha.

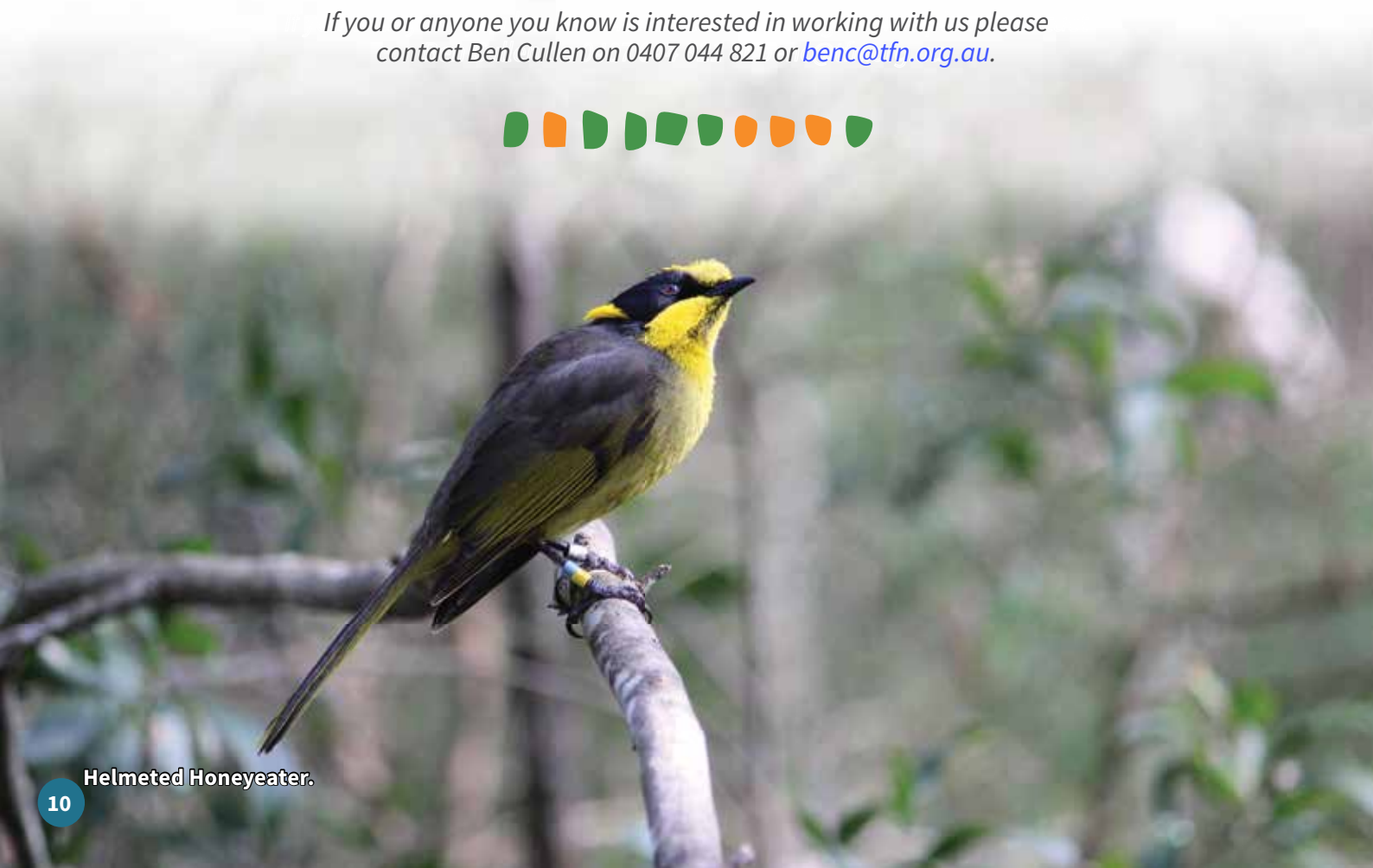
The Iconic Estates initiative was announced by the Victorian Government in 2018 with the aim to covenant properties in targeted areas of Port Phillip and Westernport, as well as other areas of Victoria. As part of this project the Trust is seeking landowners in the catchment area to permanently protect important native vegetation and habitat on their land through conservation covenants.

Priority native vegetation and habitat on private land has been identified as that which act as buffers around public land reserves, create corridors between public land reserves, and support threatened ecological communities, threatened species and/or threatened species habitat. If this sounds like your land we'd like to hear from you.

Another project in the Port Phillip and Westernport region is the Faunal Emblems initiative which protects habitat for the nationally endangered Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum, both are Victoria's faunal and avian emblems. Also launched by the Victorian Government in 2018 this project is partnering with landowners in the Yarra Ranges who are interested in protecting their land with conservation covenants.

By protecting properties forever with a conservation covenant, participants will be helping to secure the future of these two iconic Victorian species. Landowners may also be eligible for a range of financial incentives, including funding for on-ground works that will protect and enhance the conservation values of your property.

If you or anyone you know is interested in working with us please contact Ben Cullen on 0407 044 821 or benc@tfn.org.au.



Helmeted Honeyeater.

LOOKING AFTER CHAIN OF PONDS
West Gippsland

John Hick - Regional Manager

At first glance a 'chain of ponds' could look like a series of dams, but they're more complex and interesting. They are a system of irregularly spaced, oft en oval-shaped wetlands linked by shallow floodways and they used to be common across south eastern Australia.

While Victoria no longer has any completely intact chain of ponds systems, the Providence Ponds and Perry River catchment in Gippsland retains the most intact system of ponds we know of. They have been affected by land clearing, stock access and excavation of ponds for use as dams. Trust for Nature is working with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and local farmers to protect and improve the condition of the ponds.

Through the Protecting Our Ponds project, funded by the Victorian Government's Our Catchments Our Communities program, we are carrying out weed control, revegetation and increasing the area of protected habitat in the catchment.

A key project partner is HVP Plantations, which has pine plantations in the area. HVP manages a network of riparian corridors and has identified several hundred ponds. We're working with HVP to improve the protection and condition of riparian vegetation and ponds along the Paisley Creek corridor near one of the Trust's more than 40 reserves, Paisley Park, and the Perry River. HVP will replace pines and weeds along the riparian corridor with native plants and place a conservation covenant on the land, protecting the ponds, adjoining habitats and the native plants and animals they support forever.

The Trust and HVP are also developing a 20 year strategic plan to identify other opportunities for protecting the ponds and adjoining habitats across HVP's estate within the Providence Ponds and Perry River catchment.

For more information about projects in west gippsland region contact John Hick (03) 8631 5888 or johnh@tfn.org.au

Protecting chains of ponds

If you are lucky enough to have chains of ponds on your property, here's some tips for looking after them:

- retain or restore the fringing native vegetation around the ponds to improve habitat quality, provide litter fall into the wetland, provide shading and lower water temperatures
- prevent access and trampling by livestock or other herbivores
- prevent effluent or pollutants entering from adjacent land
- control weeds – with great care near aquatic habitats
- reduce spread of Chytrid fungus to frogs by disinfecting your footwear before entering the wetland site.

Aerial view of chain of ponds between Stratford and Bairnsdale. Photo courtesy Wellington Shire Council.

Deanna Marshall - Area Manager

PROTECTING WOODLAND BIRDS
North central

The Kara Kara-Wedderburn region in north central Victoria has retained a significant area of high quality native vegetation.

Through the Trust for Nature and Bush Heritage Australia *Kara Kara-Wedderburn Landscape Plan 2016—2020* we are connecting habitat and protecting a range of plants and animals from the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve through to the Kara Kara National Park. A three year Victorian Government Biodiversity On-ground Action grant is helping us do this in collaboration with Bush Heritage, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Part of the project is to encourage landowners to permanently protect their land with a conservation covenant. The first covenant secured was on the Mathews' 45ha property in Fiery Flat, which has high quality Hills Herb-rich Woodland and Grassy Woodland, both significant ecological communities in Victoria and Australia. The property has fantastic habitat for many woodland dependent birds.

Rainer Mathews said, "We took sheep off the property 17 years ago and it's been amazing to see the result. A lot of plants that were being suppressed by stock, and which were then barely visible, are now abundant. Woodland birds that are in decline elsewhere, like Diamond Firetails, Brown Treecreepers, Hooded Robins, Painted Honeyeaters and Brown-headed Honeyeaters, have actually been increasing in number on our property."

The property also has granitic outcrops, with over 20 ephemeral pools known as gnammas. These gnammas contain rare aquatic plants such as: Small Quillwort, Striped Water-milfoil, Small-flower Mud-mat and Winged Water-starwort. A number of spring soaks are also on the property as is an Indigenous rock well with an intact lid, which is a significant cultural heritage site.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises works crew has conducted rabbit and high threat weed control across the property and they're assessing whether to carry out a formal Cultural Heritage Assessment. We look forward to working with other landowners in the Kara Kara-Wedderburn area who are interested in permanently protecting their land with a conservation covenant to provide habitat for woodland birds.

The Mathews family on their property in Fiery Flat.

Protecting small, ephemeral wetlands

Spring soaks, gnammas and other, small, ephemeral wetlands often support unique or highly specialised species of plants and animals.

They are vulnerable to soil disturbance, grazing and changes in hydrology. Where spring soaks have been protected from all grazing pressure near Wedderburn, there has been recovery of some of the key indicator plants. If you have even a small wetland on your property, consider fencing it from all grazing so that it can be a small oasis for wetland plants, dragon-flies, frogs and birds.

For more information about projects in the north central region contact Deanna Marshall (03) 8631 5888 or deannam@tfn.org.au

TAKING CARE OF BROLGAS AND BANDICOOTS
Glenelg – Hopkins

Adam Merrick - Conservation Officer

For more information about projects in the Glenelg-Hopkins region contact Adam Merrick (03) 8631 5888 or adamm@tfn.org.au

Two breeding pairs of Brolgas have been recorded on Trust for Nature's Pallisters Reserve north west of Warrnambool, and there are signs their population is increasing.

Pallisters is one of the Trust's more than 40 reserves across Victoria. It is 254ha of wetlands and lowland forest, with more than 125 bird species and boasts many orchid species. The Reserve is named after its previous owner and was bought by Trust for Nature with support of The Ross Trust, Hartley Foundation, Ingram Trust, Victorian Department of Conservation and Environment and donations.

Brolgas are listed as vulnerable in Victoria and pair for life, using the same nesting area for up to 20 years. Feral animals such as foxes prey upon their eggs and the nests are sensitive to water level fluctuations. Trust for Nature is working to give the birds a secure future on the Reserve with the support of a project funded by the Victorian Government's Biodiversity On-ground Action initiative to control predators and protect nesting Brolgas.

Controlling predators will also help another threatened animal we'd like to see more of on Pallisters, Southern Brown Bandicoots. They're in very low numbers in this region of Victoria and the project is aiming to increase their population not only by controlling predators but also by planting 15,000 understorey plants for habitat —3,000 were planted by volunteers at a community planting day and many were planted by the Reserve's hard working and voluntary Friends of Pallisters Reserve.

This project builds on the work the group has already done to restore and enhance habitat for Brolgas and bandicoots and all other wildlife that live on the Reserve.

The two Acacias lending a hand at Pallisters, Acacia Blake (left) and Acacia Merrick.

How to help

Brolgas rely on well vegetated wetlands to feed and breed. If you're on a property with wetlands, protect them from stock grazing during winter and spring, restore their natural hydrology if needed, for example by plugging outlet drains, and control feral predators.

Southern Brown Bandicoots live in isolated populations throughout southern Victoria and the Grampians region. They are very susceptible to predators such as foxes, dogs and cats so control them (keep dogs and cats away particularly between dusk to dawn) and provide understorey shrubs for shelter and improved connectivity between habitat patches and isolated populations.

ON A MISSION TO PROTECT thousands of hectares

PAUL DETTMANN

Paul Dettmann bought his first property in 2008 to protect it with a conservation covenant.

He has since established about 40 covenants on properties across Victoria, making him one of Trust for Nature's largest covenantors.

A sixth generation farmer with agricultural qualifications from Dookie College (with a masters in private land management of private conservation areas), Paul has turned conservation into a business, leveraging private industry to protect land through a diversified business model that services environmental markets such as carbon offsets. He uses the land for offsets and carbon trading and is also interested in eco-tourism.

He chooses his properties based on their conservation values and their proximity to other protected areas like national parks.

Paul said, "We like to have diversity across the state. We're working across a range of ecosystems and we focus on connectivity. National parks are big areas of biodiversity—they're like continents and the land in between the parks are like islands. We want to link them up."

"The United States' view of conservation is much bigger than ours. We have a limited view of conservation —theirs includes forestry and ranch land but there are synergies between low input grazing and conservation.

"I think we need to understand and integrate farming and conservation more. Farmers are the biggest land managers and rather than there being a tension between agriculture and conservation, we need to find synergy."

He anticipates his work will include a lot more sustainable agriculture over the next 10 years and he hopes to have models that have significant covenants but are also profitable for agriculture, with the goal to covenant at least another 10,000ha. Paul's business often covers the cost of the covenanting, which can be upwards of $30,000 each.

Paul said conservation covenants are a way to protect land forever, regardless of who owns it. He said, "Although I am sure we will be doing things better in the future, we can clearly see we are living with fragile natural systems that can be damaged or destroyed so I want to make sure that whoever follows in managing the properties can't undo the good work and years of protection we've put in, that's the main reason I strongly believe in establishing conservation covenants on land.

"Without a covenant, if you get hit by a bus tomorrow your legacy could be lost. All your work could be undone if it's not protected."

Paul has seen an increase in covenanting since he started but hopes that it will be slowing down because we've done the work we need to do.

"Not all areas are suitable for conservation covenants and hopefully in 50 years there will be fewer people doing it simply because we will have protected the bulk of the remaining intact private land native vegetation," he said.

Paul Dettmann.

PROTECTING LAND
from deer

The drier than normal year has put additional pressure on native vegetation with many properties feeling the combined effects of less rainfall and increased browsing by deer. This pressure has also been reflected in the Victorian Government's release of a Draft Victorian Deer Management Strategy and the Australian Government's current Senate inquiry into the impact of feral deer, pigs and goats in Australia.

Deer have expanded their range and increased in numbers substantially in Victoria in recent years, with some species now found in peri-urban and urban areas. The Trust provided feedback to the Deer Management Strategy and an update on the Strategy is due in early in 2019.

In some areas the damage caused by deer browsing, trampling, antler rubbing and wallowing is severe and can have a long lasting detrimental effect on the native vegetation. There are many options available to private landholders to control the impacts of deer, including culling, guarding plants, and exclusion fencing.
If you want to protect a small population of threatened or locally significant plants from deer, using some robust wire tree guards can be a good option. Trust for Nature has also had some success in Gippsland protecting the endangered Dwarf Kerrawang, a low spreading groundcover, using steel cages that are pegged down over the plant. Although exclusion fencing is costly, it can be an option for small plots if deer numbers in your area are high.

Landholders may also wish to control deer numbers on their properties by culling. Some landholders may be able to do this activity themselves (provided they have the necessary licences and qualifications) or it may be possible to employ professional shooters or use qualified recreational hunters. It some cases, commercial deer harvesters may even pay for deer control on your land.

If you want to discuss managing deer on your covenanted property, contact the Stewardship Coordinator Karen Tymms on 0417 327 514 or email managementplans@tfn.org.au. The Game Management Authority also has fact sheets, www.gma.vic.gov.au. You can read about the experience landowners in East Gippsland have had with deer on page 6.

Mature stag.

SIX PRINCIPLES of ecological restoration

BY DR. DOUG ROBINSON, TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION SCIENCE COORDINATOR

All of us managing habitat for conservation in Victoria are aware of the major transformations that have occurred to the land and its natural environments over the past 200 years—everything from broad scale clearing, timber harvesting and rabbit plagues, through to water extraction for human use.

One of our shared goals as conservationists is to restore the health of the habitat and the complexity of the flora and fauna living on the land, but how do we get to that healthy place, and how do we know when we have arrived?

Trust for Nature is one of 12 organisations which have been working with the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia to develop national standards for ecological restoration in Australia.

The second edition of these standards was launched in 2017 and is available at: www.seraustralasia.org/resources, along with information on how to assess the condition of the habitat on your property and some ecological indicators to use.

The standards outline six key principles for ecological restoration projects, however big or small:

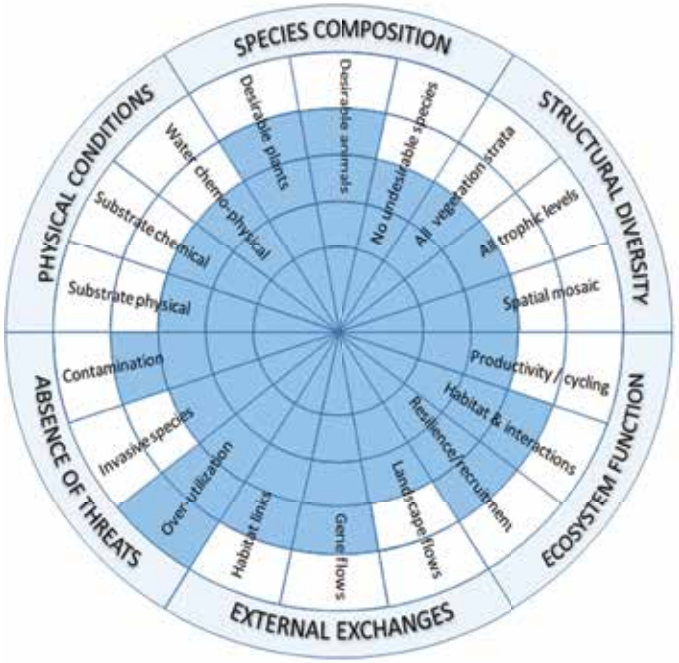
• identify an appropriate reference ecosystem to set recovery targets and assess the success of an ecological restoration project (for example, the habitat condition benchmarks defined for every Ecological Vegetation Class)

• plan the restoration approach based on the level of degradation of the site and its ability to recover naturally

• assess the existing and planned condition of the ecosystem against clear goals and objectives, using measurable indicators

• aim for full recovery, as much as possible

• work synergistically between science and practitioners to continue to improve conservation outcomes, and



Neds Corner Station recovery wheel

• recognise people are essential to the success of ecological restoration.

The updated standards and summary brochure also provide helpful practical information to assist with planning and implementing restoration projects, including the innovative 'recovery wheel' and a 5-star rating system for restoration recovery progress.

The Trust has begun using the standards to assess ecosystem recovery at our largest reserve, Neds Corner Station. The recovery wheel pictured above shows the condition of the saltbush/bluebush shrublands at Neds Corner Station today—showing overall a very positive trend compared to when it was purchased in 2002.

Given the rapidly increasing impacts of climate change, we all need to think about how we can best improve the health of the environment. The standards and their resources can help us assess the health of properties and focus our conservation eff orts.

SPRING INTO NATURE
September to November

Hundreds of people had the chance to explore Trust for Nature reserves that were open to the public in October and November as part of our annual Spring into Nature event. From touring and tree planting on Pallisters Reserve near Warrnambool to cooking damper at the Bank Australia Conservation Reserve, there was lots to see and do.

Planting at Pallisters

Friends of Wanderslore put on a fantastic open day each year

Wotjobaluk Dancers entertained guests at the Bank Australia Conservation Reserve

WRITER'S FESTIVAL

Ben Cullen from Trust for Nature was a guest speaker at a session dedicated to the late John Clarke at the 2018 Literacy Festival of Phillip Island in July. A former ABC broadcaster John owned—with his wife Helen—a nature property on the Island that is protected with a covenant. The Festival celebrates all forms of storytelling and it featured speakers Adam Briggs from A.B. Original and Professor Tim Flannery.

TRUST FOR NATURE
gathers

Trust for Nature has more than 50 staff across Victoria and once a year in November we all get together for a staff conference. It is also an opportunity to hear more about what each other is doing and to celebrate our conservation achievements.

CELEBRATING supporters

It's always enjoyable to meet with our supporters and share our conservation milestones with them. We had a chance to do that in November at a small event where we wished everyone a safe and happy festive season. Supporters also had the opportunity to hear from Jennifer Rolland who bought an 84ha property near Horsham from Trust for Nature's Revolving Fund initiative. She and her husband have since done a great job of managing weeds, feral bees and rabbits on the property.

TRUSTEES on site

Trust for Nature is governed by a board of 10 Trustees and whenever they get a chance they visit our regional staff to see our conservation work in action and meet our project partners. Here they are on the Moolort Plains in central Victoria at Long Swamp: Murray Family Conservation Reserve which is a 200ha ephemeral deep freshwater marsh, two hours north west of Melbourne. Trust for Nature, with support from the North Central Catchment Management Authority, donors and the community, purchased 145ha of Long Swamp in 2016, adding to an initial gift of 40ha in 1992.

BREAKFAST WITH Dr Jenny Gray

To help celebrate International Women's Day, Trust for Nature and Bush Heritage Australia are holding their eighth annual Celebrating Women in Conservation Breakfast in February.

Special guest speaker is CEO of Zoos Victoria, Dr Jenny Gray (pictured). Jenny brings a passion for animals and the environment to help transform Zoos Victoria into a Zoo Based Conservation Organisation in a financially sustainable manner. Jenny was appointed President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums in 2017. The breakfast attracts over 460 guests each year.

ADDING TO VICTORIA'S protected landscape

Another **1,295ha** in Victoria protected!

Putting a conservation covenant on a property is one of the single most important things a landowner can do to protect plants and animals. It truly gives them a home forever and helps to fight extinction.

Properties eligible for covenants can be big or small. They have important plant and animal species or have the potential to support them. Commonly they are in regions that have been identified in Trust for Nature's Statewide Conservation Plan for Victoria as critical habitat.

If you have a property you would like to protect call us on (03) 8631 5888.

These are just some of the properties that have had covenants put on them in the last six months.

West Gippsland

- **Yanakie, 1.9ha**
- **Toora, 15ha**
- **Tarwin Lower, 23.6ha**
- **Leongatha, 31.8ha**
- **Perry Bridge, 4.3ha**

Port Phillip and Westernport

- **Emerald, 6.7ha**
- **Yellingbo, 7.6ha**
- **Hoddles Creek, 13.3ha**
- **Bend of Islands, 13ha**
- **Emerald, 6.1ha**
- **Red Hill, 19.6ha**
- **Pakenham Upper, 3.7ha**

Corangamite

- **Boonah, 6.6ha**

Glenelg Hopkins

- **Tyrendarra, 32.1ha**

North Central

- **Moonambel, 56.3ha**
- **Greenhill, 262.2ha**
- **Fiery Flat, 46.6ha**

Wimmera

- **Wartook, 46ha**
- **Black Ranges, 129.1ha**
- **Germania, 60ha**

FEATURE COVENANT
Ninyeunook, 129.5ha
Wimmera region

This covenanted property has a number of significant features. It has a large area of high quality Plains Savannah which is endangered in the Victorian Riverina bioregion. It contains a small patch of Plains Woodland, which is also endangered in the bioregion, with many large old Bulokes scattered throughout.

It provides potential habitat for the critically endangered Golden Sun Moth which is listed in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and the critically endangered Plains-wanderer is on a covenanted property 2kms away. The property sits adjacent to high quality remnant native vegetation along the Avoca River and it has a large Red Gum scar tree and earth oven mound.

Plain-wanderers live near the property. Courtesy David Baker-Gabb.

Gold Sun Moth. Courtesy (CC by 2.5 AU) Mark Williams via natureshare.org.au

Right: Indigenous Scar Tree at the eastern end of the covenanted property.

A big THANK YOU to all the landowners who have volunteered to protect their land with a conservation covenant.

REVOLVING FUND

For information about the Revolving Fund, contact us on (03) 8631 5888

MEET COCKATOO SANCTUARY'S new owners

Above: Some of the beautiful flowers on Cockatoo Sanctuary.
Below: Liz Brown taking to weeds on the property.

Seventy-two kilometres from Horsham is a piece of land that has largely been left alone. Where woodland birds, Growling Grass-frogs, Lace Monitors, Hooded Robins and the nationally endangered Red-tailed Black Cockatoos live without interference.

It's also a place that provides connection with and memories of people and landscapes for its new owners Liz Brown and David Munday. They bought the property 'Cockatoo Sanctuary' from Trust for Nature's Revolving Fund in 2018 and enjoy its seclusion and natural beauty. The couple live in East Gippsland, so buying a property a long way from where they live was a significant commitment. Liz explains their logic: "Our sense was that this was a much more fragmented landscape than where we live in East Gippsland and its conservation value was high, whereas there's a lot of public land in our area which has its threats but is fairly natural. From an economic perspective this 209ha was a big parcel of land for a small price.

"We had been looking at the property section of the Trust for Nature website for a while wanting to buy a property for conservation. My dad passed away and we had money from his estate. This is what we wanted to use the money for, it was important to us and we know it would have been something he would have enjoyed, especially providing habitat for lots of different birds."

One of the conditions of buying a Revolving Fund property is that the new owners agree to put a conservation covenant on it. This is something that pleases Liz because she can rest assured that the property will be protected forever.

Cockatoo Sanctuary lived up to its reputation on one of their early visits when they saw Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, as well as honey eaters, Diamond Firetail finches and even a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest.
Liz said, "We had Rosellas feeding in a nest above us and there are two types of monitors, kangaroos and emus on the block. We saw six or seven different orchids. It's really nice to think the property can keep on just doing its thing."

Trust for Nature's Revolving Fund is used to buy and sell private land with high conservation values. Once purchased, we sell the property to an owner willing to protect it with a conservation covenant. Sale proceeds are returned to the Revolving Fund to purchase more property, creating a continuous conservation investment cycle.

You can see a list of properties for sale through the Revolving Fund at www.trustfornature.org.au.

SHOW ME THE MONEY!

BY MARNIE LASSEN, TRUST FOR NATURE STRATEGIC PROJECTS MANAGER

Some of the delegates at the Conservation Finance Intensive.

Everyone working in conservation knows that the need to invest in the protection and restoration of our natural environment is growing, particularly in the face of climate change.

In contrast, the traditional sources of conservation funding, governmental and philanthropic, are static or declining. So how do we find new ways to fund conservation? Finding answers is front and centre in our minds and something we explored on behalf of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance.

We did a global audit of the different ways that conservation can be funded. Conservation finance doesn't just include actual cash for on-ground projects, but also policy settings such as tax incentives, or grants to support the testing of a new concept. The US-based Conservation Finance Network and Australian experts supported and critiqued this work, resulting in a Conservation Finance Scoping Paper describing 26 different conservation finance mechanisms used worldwide and how they fit to the Australian context. The Paper has 10 recommendations on how to increase funding to private land conservation, ranging from creating a national environmental trust fund to adapting our taxation laws to provide better incentives for landowners to protect their land.

Trust for Nature, on behalf of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance, then hosted a two day Conservation Finance Intensive where 130 people from the not-for-profit, private and government sectors gathered to learn about conservation finance. Delegates heard from two American and over 20 Australian expert speakers, providing a 'tasting platter' for attendees to learn about the many approaches described in the Conservation Finance Scoping Paper.

Trust for Nature anticipates continuing this work and looking for new ways for our organisation and conservationists Australia-wide to grow the pool of funding. We are grateful for funding from the Australian, Victorian and New South Wales governments to enable this project, which is built on five years of work on conservation finance by Trust for Nature (generously funded by the RE Ross Trust).

You can see the Scoping Paper at trustfornature.org.au and be kept in the loop about future activities in this space by calling us on 8631 5888 or email marniel@tfn.org.au.

EXPERTS MATCHED
with covenantors

Some of the expert volunteers who are generously giving their time to work with convenantors.

Covenantors now have the opportunity to tap into the natural history and ecological skills and knowledge of a special group of volunteers under a new pilot program recently launched by Trust for Nature.

The Expert Volunteers Program is trialling linking convenators with people who are experienced in their landscapes and can share plant and animal knowledge, or talk about land management issues such as emerging weeds. The experts come from a range of backgrounds and all have good knowledge about plants, animals, conservation and land management through personal or professional experience and interest over many years.

The pilot program has been generously funded over two years by the John T. Reid Charitable Trusts and complements our existing stewardship program. Unlike the property visits done by staff under the Trust's stewardship program, visits by pairs of volunteers will be more informal and allow for a good exchange of information, increasing the level of support covenantors get from Trust for Nature.

Interested in participating?

Some covenantors have already been matched with expert volunteers in their region however if you're interested in participating please give Dr Doug Robinson a call on 03 8631 5888.

JTR
JOHN T REID CHARITABLE TRUSTS

NATURE'S BEST friend

Many individuals from volunteer committees of management and friends groups have dedicated decades to looking after Trust for Nature reserves. Dr Graeme Lorimer (pictured right, with Chris Russell, Executive Director, Cranbourne Gardens) from Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves in Kilsyth South near Melbourne is one of them and his incredible dedication was recognised when he received a Best Friend Award from the Victorian Environmental Friends Network.

The award was presented in front of 100 Friends members at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne.

Want to join a working bee?

Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves regularly run working bees so if you want to help out with the management of this precious urban jewel please email Graeme at graeme@meg.org.au.

So much of what we do couldn't be achieved without the dedication and goodwill of our volunteers. Many assist with planting, weeding, fencing, monitoring and field events. We also appreciate the volunteers who provide office support.

Your contributions are invaluable!

Harbury Reserve.

Thank

$52,913.38 FOR Neds Corner Station

« DONATE HERE & HELP »
PROTECT HABITAT FOREVER

Thanks to the overwhelming support from the public we raised $52,913.38 in four weeks to transport 250 tonnes of logs over 500kms to Neds Corner Station, and enable additional fencing works on the predator proof exclosure where the logs will be housed. The 30,000ha former sheep station west of Mildura was historically cleared, leaving little shelter for wildlife. The logs were remaining after a major infrastructure project and reusing them prevented them from potentially being burned and/or mulched.

Thank you also to the Victorian Government which matched dollar for dollar, up to $25,000, and provided an additional $2,000 to help establish and manage the campaign.

PROTECTING the bush

BUSH PROTECTION

Some of the most vital habitats for our state's threatened species are under threat, and many of them are on private land. With competing uses for land we are losing woodland, grassland and wetland areas at an alarming rate, but together we can make a difference. Trust for Nature has a unique power in Victoria to protect nature through conservation covenants.

You can support our work each month through the Bush Protection program, ensuring greater patches of habitat are protected for future generations. Go to www.trustfornature.org.au for more information or call Nick on (03) 8631 5888.

GIVE US A CHANCE to say 'thank you'

Including Trust for Nature as a beneficiary in your will is your gift to the future preservation of nature in Victoria. Nature is not only essential to the existence of life, it gives us the gifts of beauty, wonder, recreation and enjoyment. With its many gifts given to us freely to be treasured, we also have the pleasure and the responsibility of handing it on to future generations.

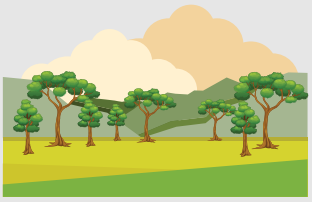
If you are considering or have included the Trust in your will, please let us know. We would like the opportunity to recognise and thank you for your generosity and also have the opportunity to discuss with you the intentions of your gift. Please call Paul or Leanne on (03) 8631 5888.

you!

« DONATE HERE & HELP »
PROTECT HABITAT FOREVER

SUPPORTING
our reserves

Trust for Nature relies on the support of people like you to help us restore and maintain our conservation reserves across Victoria. The recent Christmas appeal focused on raising funds to look after these reserves, many of which were donated to Trust for Nature or bought with funds raised from the public. Thank you for your support!



42 TRUST FOR NATURE **Reserves covering 36,000 hectares**

equivalent to

6,020 MCG stadiums

approximately **720,000** Back yards

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT
for West Gippsland

An extremely generous donor has offered to match, dollar-for-dollar up to $500,000, for the establishment of a West Gippsland Conservation Fund. The Fund will be structured to grow over time and the returns will be used to provide a stable and ongoing revenue stream for private land management in West Gippsland, a region that extends from the south-eastern limits of metropolitan Melbourne and Western Port Bay in the west to the Latrobe Valley in the east. We look forward to bringing you more information so stay tuned.

Trust for Nature is planning to establish similar funds for all of its regions across the state.

$301,336 RAISED TO
increase protected land

The 17-18 tax appeal raised $301,336 to support landowners who have generously put conservation covenants on their land (such as Elke Seeck and Glenn Cottier pictured), protecting it forever, even after it changes hands. The funds will also go towards the cost of covenanting (which can be upwards of $30,000) so we can protect more private land.

Thank you!

"It's surely our responsibility to do everything within our power to create a planet that provides a home not just for us, but for all on Earth"
-Sir David Attenborough-

As a not-for-profit organisation, Trust for Nature welcomes public support for its conservation work. All contributions of $2 and more are tax deductible.

To find out more about how you can help support Trust for Nature or to make a donation towards our conservation work, call Leanne Down (03) 8631 5888 or visit trustfornature.org.au

Pultenaea

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