

22

23

NatureFoundation

# Impact Report





## Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians whose lands we live and work on and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual attachment and connections that Aboriginal people have to land, sea and community.

## Lands on which Nature Foundation works:

- Geegeela – Bindjali people
- Gidgealpa – Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka people
- Hiltaba – Gawler Ranges peoples – Barngarla, Kokatha, and Wirangu countries
- Murbpook – First Nations people of the River Murray Mallee (FPRMM) and Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated (MACAI)
- Para Woodlands – Kurna people
- Payinthe – Nature Foundation Office on Kurna land
- South Gap – Kokatha people
- Tiliqua – Ngadjuri people
- Watchalunga – Ngarrindjeri people
- Witchelina – Adnyamathanha, Kuyani and Arabana peoples
- All the lands that **field services** work occurred on
- All the lands that the **Revitalising Private Conservation** program worked on

## Our Goals

Increasing areas of habitat are conserved and enhanced for future generations.

Nature Science knowledge that leads to evidence-based decision-making.

Nature is better understood and valued.

Engaged communities that support resilient habitats.

An inspirational organisation that is financially secure and achieves operational excellence.

## Our Values

We are agile and adaptable, connecting communities through nature.

We care about each other, what we do and why we do it; we believe in the power of nature to transform lives.

We are creative and resourceful in tackling major environmental issues.

We inspire and create enjoyment through nature.

We strive for excellence in everything we do, holding each other accountable, and working to the highest ethical standards.

We are bold and adventurous in our pursuit of conservation outcomes.



## Our Footprint

### Nature Reserves:

- Geegeela – 102 hectares
- Hiltaba – 78,000 hectares
- Murbpook – 360 hectares
- Para Woodlands – 500 hectares
- Tiliqua – 85 hectares
- Watchalunga – 92 hectares
- Witchelina – 421,000 hectares

### Managed Offsets:

- Gidgealpa – 20,000 hectares
- South Gap – 1,882 hectares



# Message from the Chair

Jan Ferguson OAM



I am delighted to share another year of impact and outcomes from the vast work of Nature Foundation with you, and what a year it has been.

We are continuing to build on our success and strengthen the organisation. Now more than ever, we need to engage even more support to assist with caring for our environment and arresting species decline.

We also need to assess our impact, and we are working to increase our data collection and analysis so we can be confident we are meeting the expectations of our members and donors in having conservation impact.

This past year has also seen a number of notable organisational changes.

## Refocusing Conservation Process

In August 2022, Nature Foundation commenced a comprehensive organisational review termed the Refocusing Conservation Process. The Refocusing Conservation Process aimed to increase the biodiversity impact of Nature Foundation's programs and involved reviewing all aspects of Nature Foundation business, researching international conservation resources and best practices, and considering how the Foundation:

- Grows its biodiversity impact.
- Grows and further develops its current volunteer programs.
- Further develop its current science programs.
- Builds upon current Foundation tourism programs.
- Better positions itself to realise current and emerging carbon offset and nature-positive revenue opportunities and
- Increases its on-ground conservation management capacity by employing reserve-based Conservation Land Managers and growing our volunteer team.

Refocusing our agenda has enabled us to achieve significant financial stability, and this year, we have an outstanding result with a profit of approximately \$2.6 million. This profit will allow us to place more land under protection for conservation.

## New nature reserve management approach

Conservation Land Managers have been appointed to manage the two larger nature reserves: Witchelina and Hiltaba. This brings a consistent management approach, with all seven nature reserves now managed by staff. There is of course, much to do, and the Conservation Land Managers will be supported by volunteers to assist in the delivery of the reserve management objectives.

## New volunteer framework

We have also introduced a new volunteer framework consistent with Volunteering Australia National Standards that will guide all aspects of volunteer engagement, including volunteer role development, recruitment, induction, management, support, recognition and reporting. The new Nature Foundation volunteer model has been developed to build upon the contribution of the existing volunteers to expand volunteer impact. For an organisation of our size, we have had a relatively small group of dedicated volunteers who have achieved a great deal. However, we see this as an important opportunity to actively grow our volunteer program and ultimately, the positive impacts we can collectively have on improving our precious native habitats for future generations.

Our volunteers are vital participants of Nature Foundation, and I look forward to seeing the volunteer program grow and develop.

Fortunately, it appears we have left the worst of the pandemic behind and are able to hold more face-to-face events, providing a valuable opportunity to connect and contribute to nature conservation efforts.

I appreciate your time and passion for the Foundation and thank you for your ongoing support.

Jan Ferguson OAM



# Message from the CEO

Alex Nankivell

We are taking a global view when it comes to developing initiatives and emerging opportunities. A couple of the big concepts we are focused on are nature positive and climate change.

It's a term you have probably heard, and we are using more. "Nature Positive" refers to changing the trajectory from decline to recovery having a positive impact on nature. This term is also being adopted by the business community worldwide. It is no longer enough for businesses and organisations to be balancing or neutralising their environmental impact. It needs to go beyond making a greater, positive investment, and we're seeking opportunities to work with them through nature-based solutions.

It's also important to recognise that climate change and nature are not separate issues. Anything we do to mitigate climate change through carbon projects, sequestration etc should be a benefit to nature as well. This is the approach we are taking. Carbon markets provide an opportunity for revenue streams but also build additional biodiversity-friendly nature-positive outcomes.

Internally we have welcomed several new staff this year, who have the skills and expertise to assist the organisation in telling our story and raising our public profile, growing our nature-positive projects, managing our reserves to best practice standards and expanding our volunteer program to provide opportunities for the community to contribute to the solution.

I am confident that the hard work everyone involved with Nature Foundation has put in this year has helped lay the foundations for the next 40 years.

Thank you.

Alex Nankivell

I am delighted to present our Impact Report for the financial year 2022-23, highlighting the significant progress and accomplishments achieved by Nature Foundation in our ongoing mission to preserve and protect our planet's precious ecosystems and biodiversity. For over 40 years, the Nature Foundation has been committed to playing its role in repairing nature, and it has never been more important than right now.

This past year also marks my first year as CEO. A key focus over this time has been our commitment to our third strategic goal, developing partnerships, collaboration, and working together to expand our impact. Many of these partnerships and collaborations are outlined in this report and include:

- Participation in several recovery teams: Regent Parrot and Pygmy Bluetongue Lizard Recovery Teams
- Australian National University Regent Parrot ecology
- University of NSW investigating the impact of grazing on biodiversity by macropods and developing new methods for the Nature Repair Market
- Green Collar and the Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation
- Kangaroo Island Landscape Board: feral cat eradication and Kangaroo Island nursery
- Mount Lofty Ranges Threatened Birds Alliance
- Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation
- Australian Land Conservation Alliance
- SA Nature Alliance

Our Nature Foundation members are also supporting these partnerships and their vital conservation work, and we really need to be working together as much as possible, as we are at a crossroads with many dire statistics around biodiversity globally. Last year, an intergovernmental panel of scientists said one million animal and plant species were now threatened with extinction.



 **155** 155 bird species were surveyed across Hiltaba and Witchelina.

**\$1.25M**



Managing the threats of invasive species including foxes, rabbits, goats and weeds, and \$1.25m raised over 3 years for feral cat eradication on Kangaroo Island.

**71**



Kids on Country program held 6 camps positively impacting 71 young Aboriginal people.

 **>500,000 Ha**

7 nature reserves across South Australia, comprising over 500,000 hectares conserved, managed and contributing to resilient ecosystems.



**\$1,924,964**

Since 2000, Nature Foundation has awarded \$1,924,964 in research grants to post-graduate students, academics, and the community to kickstart research careers. This financial year, seven researchers were awarded grants in the May 2023 grant round of \$60,000, including two recipients of the Roy & Marjory Edwards Scholarship. Of these seven researchers, five students are carrying out their research on Nature Foundation nature reserves.

**554**

554 people visited Hiltaba and Witchelina to experience nature.



**8,999**

More than 8,999 volunteer hours with a value of \$419,533 have assisted us in advancing nature conservation in South Australia.



**15**

Habitat for 15 nationally threatened fauna species protected and actively managed.



## engagement



Nature Foundation has been invited to partner with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation and Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board on a multi-partner Landscape Priorities Fund project, which works closely with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation to facilitate Ngarrindjeri-led landscape management. The project will focus on building the resilience of Ngarrindjeri lands through identifying and delivering on-ground restoration works to improve the environmental and cultural resilience of Yarlular-Ruwe (water and lands). Ngarrindjeri community members will support Nature Foundation's conservation program at Watchalunga Nature Reserve.

**2,100**

2,100 seedlings planted by staff, volunteers and community participants at Tiliqua and Watchalunga Nature Reserves.





# Increasing and enhancing habitat

**Goal 1:** Increasing areas of habitat are conserved and enhanced for future generations.

## Refocusing conservation

In 2022, Nature Foundation commenced a Board-initiated process to review and refocus our conservation efforts and impact. Four principles guided the Refocusing Conservation Process:

1. **Protection of key species and habitat** owned and managed by Nature Foundation
2. **Achieving world-leading conservation science** on all Nature Foundation nature reserves
3. **Achieving best practice governance and financial management**
4. **And refocusing Nature Foundation for future growth** (through land/new reserve acquisition)

Nature Foundation completed the review and planning process in FY2022-2023, and we are now focused on delivering the outcomes. Some of these are included in this report, such as the launch of the Forever Nature Fund and our new volunteer management framework.

The process also reinforced something we have long known: that achieving significant gains for biodiversity requires partnership and collaboration.

Our 'Towards 2030 Strategic Plan' includes multiple objectives related to partnerships and collaborations, and it is an area we actively undertake across all areas of the Foundation. We are proud to work with many like-minded individuals and organisations to strengthen our conservation efforts and address critical knowledge gaps. Together, we will progress towards our shared goal of a strong and resilient country.

Murpbok Lagoon reflections. Credit: Lucy Clive



**\$20M**

our target

**\$1.2M**

Forever Nature Fund

## Launching our Forever Nature Fund

In mid-December 2022, we launched our most ambitious appeal in Nature Foundation's 41-year history, the Forever Nature Fund.

With over 7.7 million hectares of terrestrial habitat cleared in Australia between 2000 and 2017\*, habitat loss has already caused the extinction of 62 Australian terrestrial species. The compounding impacts of climate change will cause a further decline in Australia's biodiversity, with increasing species and ecological communities being listed as threatened across the country.

The Forever Nature Fund has been created to raise money to purchase and manage land with high biodiversity value to preserve existing and create new areas of critical habitat for our native plants and animals. We will use data-driven scientific and environmental assessment tools to identify high conservation value properties. The Fund will enable our team to act quickly and decisively when a suitable property becomes available.

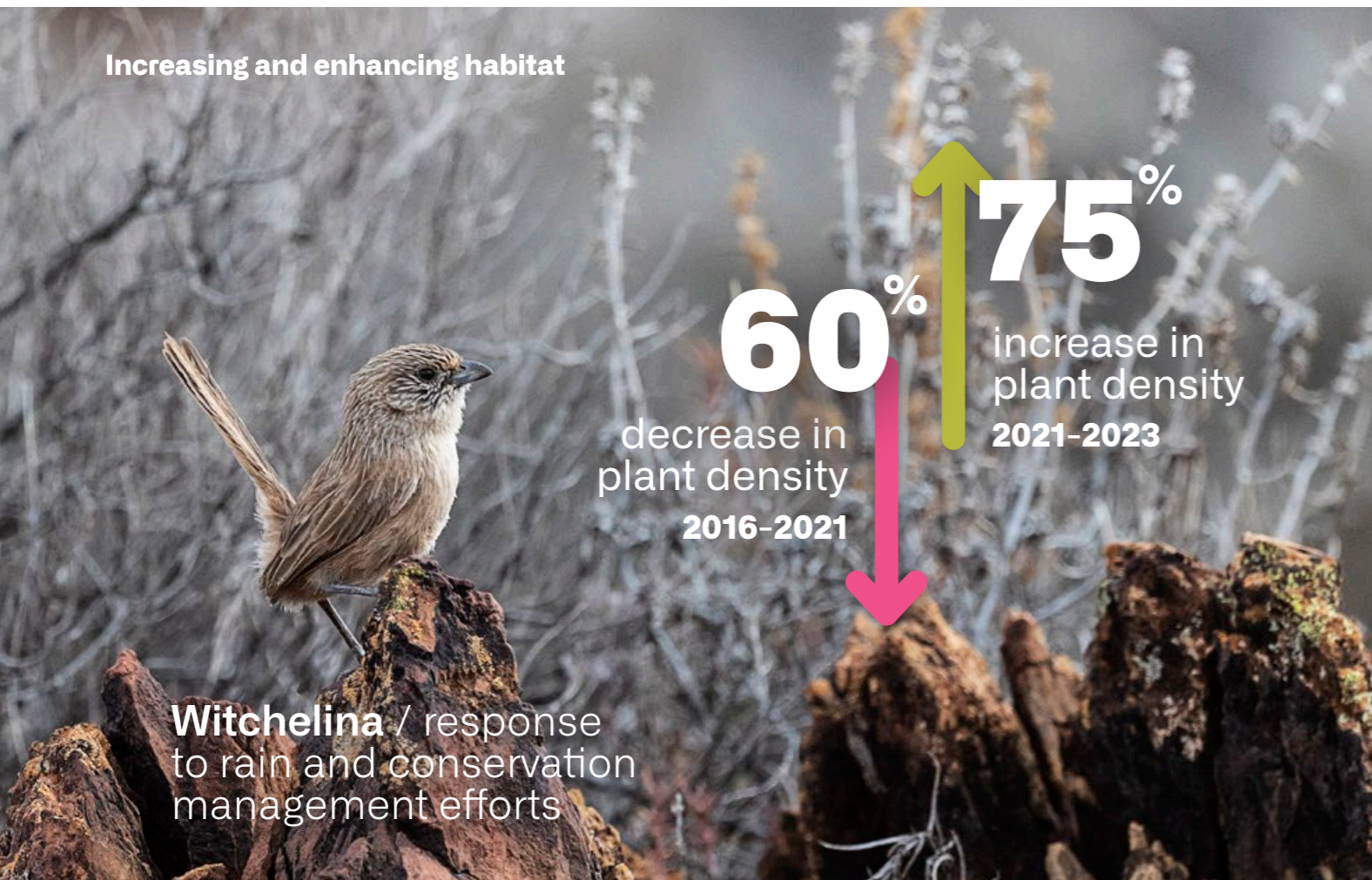
The aim is to acquire land at a scale that provides high impact and sustainable nature conservation, supporting our ambitious target to double the amount of land we protect to 1 million hectares by 2030 and Australia's broader commitment to protecting 30 per cent of land and sea by 2030.

\*(Source: DCCEEW 2021 Australia State of the Environment Report).

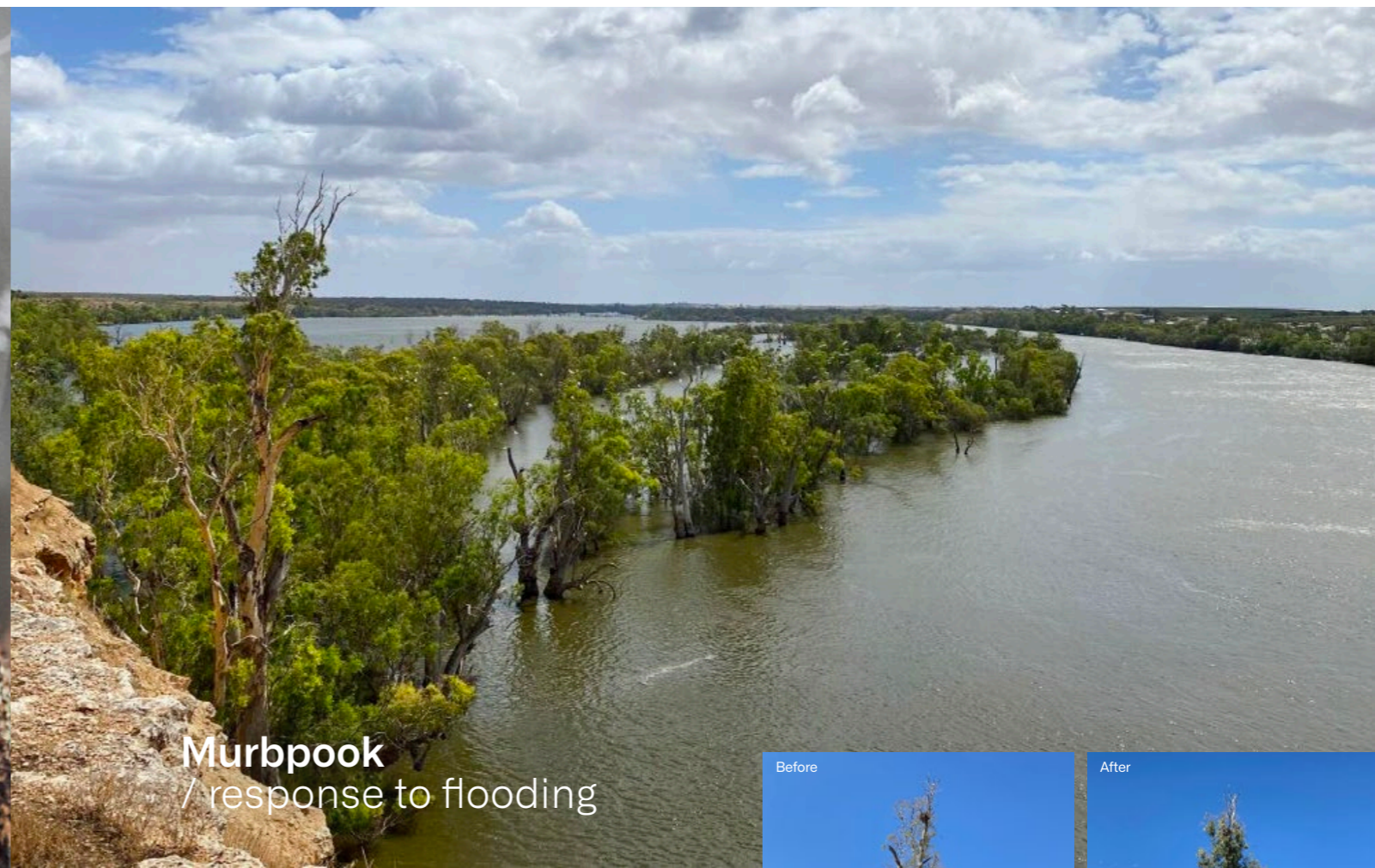
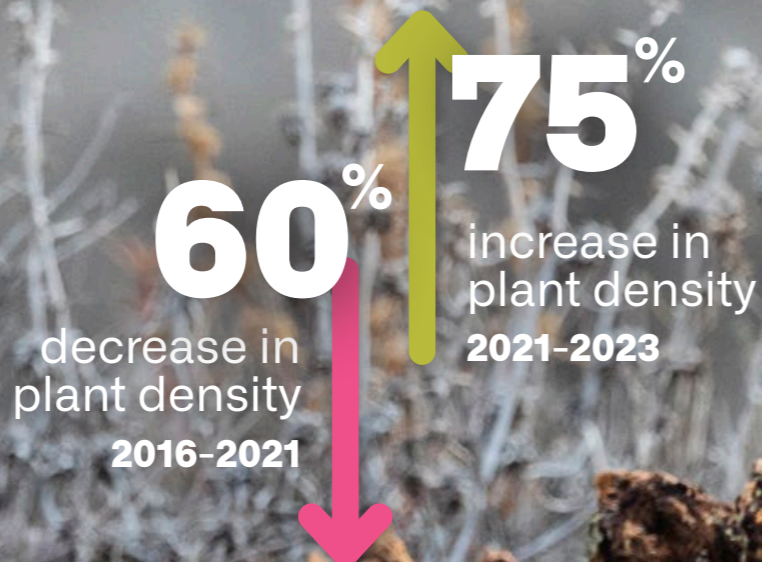




Increasing and enhancing habitat



**Witchelina** / response to rain and conservation management efforts



**Murbpook** / response to flooding



Witchelina Nature Reserve is a 4,210km<sup>2</sup> former pastoral property in the north of South Australia. Over the past ten years, Nature Foundation has actively managed Witchelina for conservation, using strategies including stock exclusion and consistently managing feral grazing species such as rabbits and goats.



Following the significant rain events of late 2022, we are pleased to see the positive impact these conservation strategies and environmental conditions have had on the native vegetation after several very low rainfall years. Vegetation growth offers ongoing benefits to the soil and plants in the area, along with native birds. Dense shrub provides an ideal habitat for Thick-billed Grasswrens and other small birds, offering shelter and refuge from predators.

*Eragrostis setifolia* (Neverfail) offers significant functional benefits as a stabilising flora component within arid landscapes. Even once the above-ground plant matter has died back and dried off following prolonged drought periods, these plants have a dense and robust basal tussock. When rain comes, the basal tussock helps slow and distribute water flow over a wide area, helping retain organic matter and seed resources.

Vegetation surveys have demonstrated the recovery of vegetation that was heavily impacted by the severe drought of 2018-2019.



Following the recent flood event experienced in the Riverland, Nature Foundation are keenly tracking the impact of the flood on vegetation at Murbpook Lagoon, where flooding began as early as July 2022.

The northern wetland received its first environmental watering in April 2022, and the high rivers filled the main lagoon in July 2022. As the water level of the River Murray continued to rise throughout the latter half of 2022, the water spread out onto the floodplain, providing the vegetation there with its first real drink since the last flood event of 2016.

Before the flood, tree health surveys had noted the stressed state of many River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) trees fringing the northern wetland and the main lagoon. The latest survey in April 2023 has yielded some optimistic results.

Since the flooding, mature River Red Gum trees have shown promising signs of recovery in the form of significant epicormic growth, i.e. shoots growing from the trunk or the base of branches. River Red Gums are essential habitat for the nationally Vulnerable Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus monarchoides*), which builds its nests in the hollows of red gums near water.

The local lignums have also responded positively to the flooding, with Spiny Lignum (*Durna horrida ssp. horrida*) and Tangled Lignum (*Duma florulenta*) showing dozens of new plants growing where there were only one or two.





Increasing and enhancing habitat

## Gidgealpa / cross fence comparison

Gidgealpa Station is a pastoral property near Moomba in South Australia's northeast leased by Santos. Santos engaged Nature Foundation to establish and provide ongoing management of a 20,000 hectare area to fulfil their Significant Environmental Benefit (SEB) offset requirements.

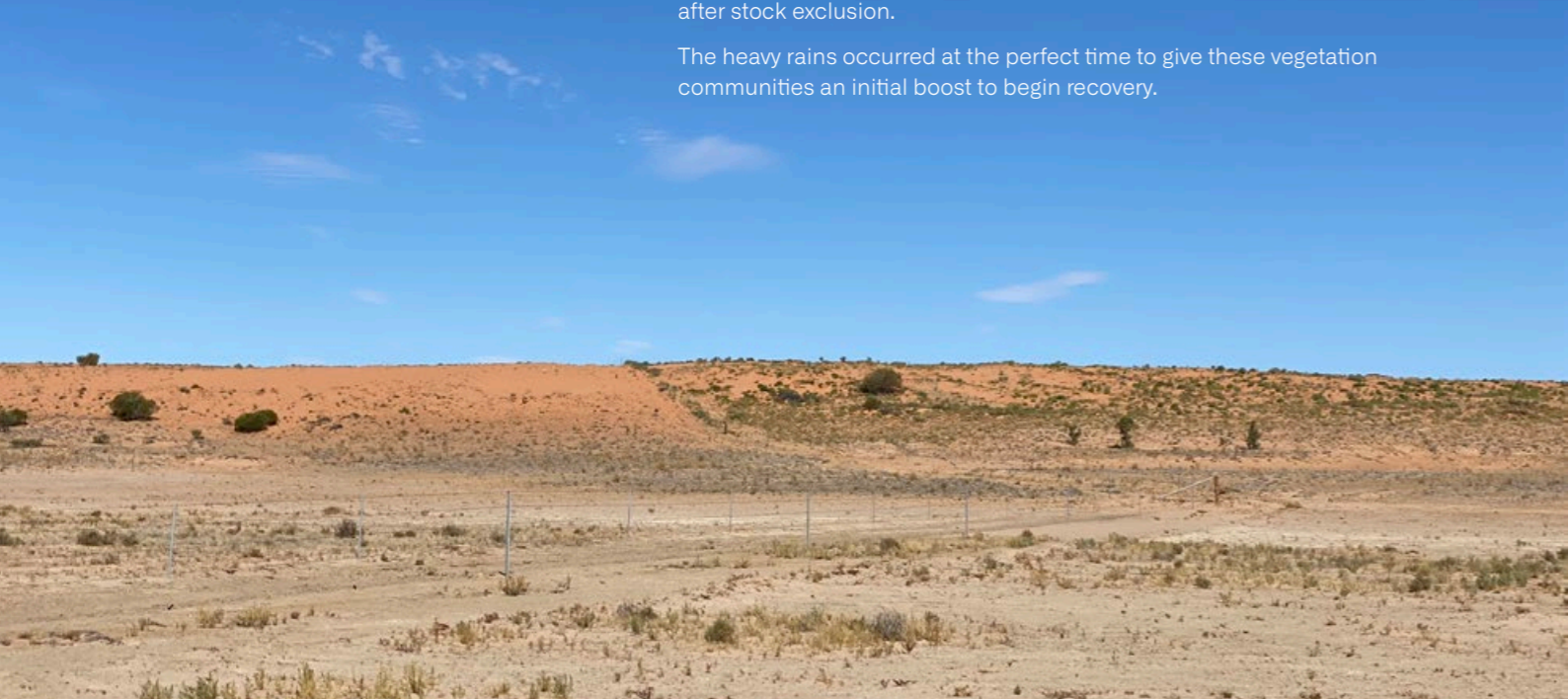
A critical initial conservation land management action for the property was destocking the offset area in June 2021, and it is encouraging to note the first signs of ecological recovery following this initiative and the recent rainfall increase in late 2022.

On a recent visit to the Gidgealpa SEB offset area, ecologists were pleased to record the return of the first perennial grass species (*Eragrostis* sp.) to one of the monitoring sites. In addition, the long-lived perennial species *Eragrostis setifolia* (Neverfail) was also recorded in large areas. These perennial grasses were observed in a *Maireana aphylla* (Cottonbush) low shrubland, which showed strong signs of recovery following the stock removal, combined with the recent rains. Although recovery in arid areas usually takes many years, it is encouraging to see vital perennial species still present in the seed bank and ready to emerge when conditions are optimal.



Another site that noted an improvement in vegetation condition was a Very Low Open Woodland comprised of *Grevillea striata* (Beefwood), which has benefited from the exclusion of stock, which would have likely spent long periods using the trees for shade and grazing. The increased leaf cover observed on the trees increases the shading of the tree trunks, reducing stress during extreme heat. The increased leaf cover also increased ground shade, allowing colonisation of perennial species such as *Einadia nutans* (Climbing Saltbush) and *Enchylaena tomentosa* (Ruby Saltbush). With the absence of cattle spending time under these trees, there is an increase in leaf litter and ground cover and reduced root exposure due to a lack of disturbance. These are all fine scale, but positive changes observed less than 24 months after stock exclusion.

The heavy rains occurred at the perfect time to give these vegetation communities an initial boost to begin recovery.



## Hiltaba / goat impact survey

According to reports from neighbouring pastoralists, who have been on the land for several generations, feral goats began moving into the Gawler Ranges in the mid-1980s. From this point, goats became established in the landscape, with populations growing to unsustainable levels.

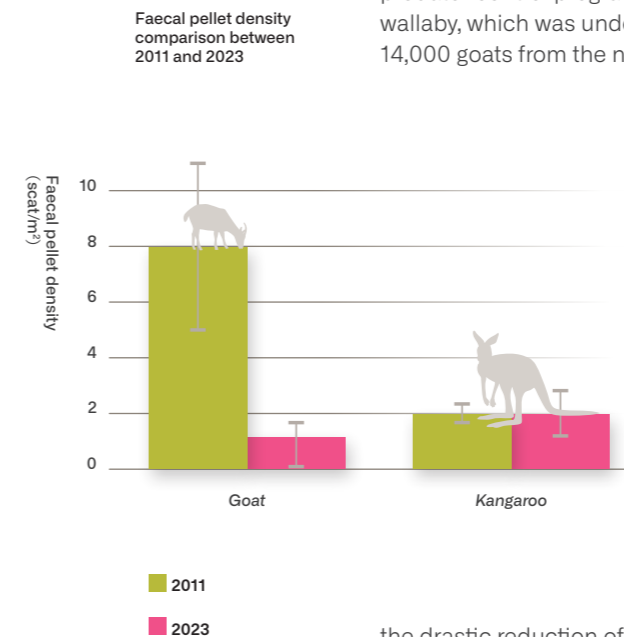


Feral goats significantly impact native vegetation through soil damage and overgrazing of native herbs, grasses, shrubs and trees, causing erosion and preventing the regeneration of native vegetation. This can flow onto other species, for example, populations of Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, which have been severely affected by overabundant goats. Goats compete with Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby for rock shelters and food, exposing wallabies to a greater likelihood of predation by foxes and Wedge-tailed Eagles.

Nature Foundation purchased the Hiltaba pastoral lease in 2012. At this time, the property was a working station and had been continuously grazed by sheep since the late 1800s. The property also had large numbers of goats that, over many years, had seriously impacted the vegetation on the granite hills, which is also the habitat of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby.

Significant efforts were being made in the Gawler Ranges National Park to control goats and foxes to benefit the wallabies through the Bounce Back program, which had begun demonstrating success with Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby populations recovering.

In 2012, Nature Foundation implemented similar intensive herbivore and predator control programs to promote the recovery of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, which was under serious threat. Since 2012, we have removed over 14,000 goats from the nature reserve.



In 2023, we commissioned Eco-Knowledge to undertake a goat impact survey, resampling sites previously surveyed in 2011-12. The objective of the survey was to evaluate the change in vegetation conditions in areas of critical wallaby habitat. Several key goat impact variables were measured, including goat faecal pellet density and browse impact on plant species of varying palatability.

The final report is still being finalised, and we hope to share more details soon. In the meantime, we are delighted to report some initial findings. Since the implementation of goat management, there has been a significant reduction in goat faecal pellet density from 7.7/m<sup>2</sup> (SE +/- 3) down to 0.6 (SE +/- 1.33). The decrease in goat activity is reflected in

the drastic reduction of browsing impact on palatable plant species. The average browse index (Morellet) of the comparable plant species also dropped significantly from 0.56 to 0.15, indicating a specific reduction in browsing pressure by goats.

The goat control and the associated predator control program have also benefited the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby population, showing strong signs of recovery over the last few years.



## Increasing and enhancing habitat

### Revitalising private conservation in South Australia

Established and funded by the South Australian Government, the Revitalising Private Conservation in SA (RPCSA) Program was established as a pilot to explore third-party delivery of community environmental grants. The Program was led by Nature Foundation as the principal delivery partner and set formal program service delivery arrangements with Conservation SA, Livestock SA, Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, and Trees for Life.

The purpose of the Revitalising Private Conservation in SA Program was to:

1. Expand funding for landholders of Heritage Agreements in South Australia.
2. Grow the number of Heritage Agreements in South Australia.
3. Deliver private conservation outcomes that focus on joined-up, protected corridors of vegetation at a landscape scale and
4. Promote climate resilience within the state's private conservation network through improved management of new and existing Heritage Agreements.

The RPCSA Program successfully delivered 123 grants to various landholders and stakeholders throughout South Australia despite the adverse impacts of unseasonably wet conditions and COVID-related unavailability of contractors experienced during Program delivery.

The grants achieved a wide array of environmental and community engagement outcomes; some specific examples include:

- Landowners on the Eyre Peninsula working to enlarge an existing enclosure from 891 hectares to 3,828 hectares with an 18km fence to exclude cats, foxes, goats, kangaroos and domestic stock to support viable populations of six nationally threatened species.
- A partnership of seven landowners, covering 16 Heritage Agreements over 6,151 hectares of the Murraylands, continued 30 years of delivering coordinated pest control programs to protect the remnant vegetation and the fauna they support.
- Establishing a wildlife corridor of more than 20 property owners working together to improve the native vegetation on more than 20 contiguous properties from Morialta Conservation Park to Cherryville to enrich one of Australia's ten biodiversity hotspots.
- More than 27 landowners whose high biodiversity properties total 217 hectares and contain at least six nationally and 30 locally threatened species and ecological communities worked together to improve biodiversity and connectivity from Mark Oliphant Conservation Park to Belair National Park.
- Four landowners worked together to establish perennial native grasslands in a grassy woodland with a focus on three Irongrass species (*Lomandra spp.*), a critically endangered community in South Australia, with a focus on species that provide food resources for endangered resident fauna such as the Diamond Firetail finch (*Stagonopleura guttata*).



### Watchalunga / biosphere project

Nature Foundation acknowledges its role as a conservation steward within the local and broader regional landscape and as a positive influence to inspire and mobilise communities to protect and restore local habitat, particularly within the Finnis catchment.

Watchalunga Nature Reserve does not exist in isolation and is interdependent with its surrounding landscape. Therefore, Nature Foundation has established a biosphere project that aims to expand conservation efforts beyond the boundary of Watchalunga into the surrounding landscape. This includes Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren (*Stipiturus malachurus intermedius*) surveys on neighbouring properties and engaging with landowners about the endangered native bird's conservation status and management.

Funding received from WIRES Australian Wildlife Rescue Organisation and Disney Conservation Fund is assisting Nature Foundation with undertaking Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren surveys outside of Watchalunga Nature Reserve. Nature Foundation engaged its specialist Emu-wren surveyor to conduct the first regional survey on a property along the Tookayerta Creek.

# Science and knowledge

Goal 2: Nature Science knowledge that leads to evidence-based decision-making.

## Impacts of climate change on conservation

Climate change and biodiversity loss are intrinsically linked and together pose the greatest risk to survival on planet earth. As the world ramps up actions to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate, at Nature Foundation we are focusing on directing our mitigation and restoration efforts locally on actions that are within our control to change.

Australia's *State Of The Environment Report 2021* was released last year, and it unfortunately highlighted the deterioration of our environment and biodiversity, particularly through the impacts of climate change. When we developed our 'Towards 2030 Strategic Plan' in 2019 we knew that continuing to build ecosystem resilience through the protection and management of habitat will remain critical to ensure our landscapes are connected with a diversity of refuges where animals can retreat during the hard times.

While many aspects of climate change can feel out of control to the individual and small organisation, focusing on what we can influence and do is crucial. As the *State Of The Environment Report* highlighted, nature conservation and biodiversity are intertwined with climate change. Biodiversity offers a robust nature defence system against climate change impacts.

A straightforward example of how this operates is through the revegetation and restoration of an ecosystem to return to it to a state where plants and animals can fulfil their lifecycles. The actions that we are actively engaging in to ensure this occurs include:

- Managing ecosystems to be as resilient as possible to buffer flora and fauna against climate changes.
- Investing in research and projects (particularly through our student grants) that investigate the impacts of climate change on our native landscapes, flora and fauna.
- Exploring and being involved in nature-based solutions such as carbon sequestration that both benefit nature conservation and mitigate climate change.
- Continuing to acquire land of high conservation value or partnering with landholders to increase the area of habitat managed for biodiversity.

These actions will provide our environment and biodiversity additional support, increasing ecosystem resilience in what appears to be a rapidly changing world. Collectively, the world is beginning to mobilise its resources to avoid the worst effects of climate change and biodiversity loss and together we remain committed to continuing our contribution to the solution.

Witchelina sunset. Credit: Alun Thomas







## Achieving biodiversity impact

The global loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem goods and services has arguably become the most critical issue of our time. The impacts of climate change are set to place even more strain on the natural systems that support life on our planet.

Protected areas globally are becoming the final refuge for threatened species and natural ecosystem processes, with species richness of 10.6% and abundance of 14.5% higher inside protected areas than outside.

Nature Foundation is committed to managing and conserving the significant biodiversity values of its nature reserves and managed conservation areas. For Nature Foundation to manage these areas most effectively and efficiently, it is essential to develop results-based management systems to ensure informed decisions are made based on evidence derived from data collection, analysis and evaluation.

Over the past year, the Science and Knowledge team has reviewed its reserve management processes, using a five-step process to achieve biodiversity impact. This approach involves designing effective monitoring methods and data management systems.

The results of this process will enable us to better understand the impacts of our interventions, their outcomes and whether they have improved the state of biodiversity or if biodiversity is better off than in areas without management intervention. It will also allow us to make informed results-based decisions and adjust management strategies to continually improve biodiversity impact.

A practical example of this process is the annual monitoring of the Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren (*Stipiturus maluchurus intermedius*) population at Watchalunga Nature Reserve. We redesigned our survey program to undertake monthly surveys between August and January. These regular surveys will help us construct a more reliable trend throughout the season and allow us to identify the number of breeding pairs in the region, vital information for supporting this threatened species.

## ARC Linkage grant / are overabundant kangaroos jeopardising conservation outcomes?

In 2022, a research team led by Professor Mike Letnic, Dr. Adrian Fisher and Associate Professor Will Cornwell from the University of New South Wales were awarded an ARC (Australian Research Council) Linkage grant in partnership with Nature Foundation and Bush Heritage Australia to investigate the impact high numbers of kangaroos are having on ecosystems at Witchelina Nature Reserve, Boolcoommatta and Fowler's Gap.



Kangaroos can have marked effects on grass cover, the production of grass seed and reduce the availability of soil nutrients. However, how these impacts translate to the functioning of ecosystems and wildlife populations at large scales in arid Australia is unknown.

An interesting idea emerging in food web ecology is that energy may either go through the green food web, from living plants into herbivores, or through the brown food web, into a parallel set of species via dead plant material and decomposers such as termites. Many of the conservation priorities for land managers depend on the functioning of the brown food web.

The goal of this research project is to understand how kangaroo grazing influences the biodiversity value of arid conservation reserves and disrupts the functioning of brown food webs by preventing the accumulation of dead plant material, which in turn supports brown food webs involving termites, lizards and small mammals. Many small birds, including the Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*) require the cover provided by dead plant material for shelter.

To understand the effects of kangaroos at Witchelina, the research team will monitor kangaroo numbers and experimentally assess the impact of kangaroos on ecosystems by excluding them from 16 hectare enclosures.

The team will then monitor the responses of soils, invertebrates, plants and small vertebrates inside the enclosures and nearby control areas where kangaroos graze. To date, two enclosures and control plots have been established, and monitoring, which commenced in March 2023, is being undertaken using a mixture of active methods such as bird surveys as well as continuous passive methods such as acoustic recorders to monitor birds and camera traps to monitor the responses of small mammals and reptiles. Time-lapse cameras have been installed to monitor vegetation responses continuously. In addition to these methods, the team will use drone and satellite imagery to monitor vegetation inside and outside the enclosures and analyse historical satellite imagery to investigate vegetation recovery on Witchelina since becoming a conservation reserve in 2010.





Science and knowledge

## Student Grants

Providing student research grants is a key feature of our Science and Knowledge program, where we assist students in progressing their post-graduate studies and careers. The program encourages students in the ecological sciences and helps us understand our nature reserves better.

Since 2000, Nature Foundation has awarded \$1,924,964 in research grants to post-graduate students, academics, and the community to kickstart research careers. This financial year, seven researchers were awarded grants in the May 2023 grant round of \$60,000, including two recipients of the Roy & Marjory Edwards Scholarship. Of these seven researchers, five students are carrying out their research on Nature Foundation nature reserves.

We are pleased to highlight this year's recipients:

### Grand Start Grants / Honours

These grants provide up to \$2000 for one year to assist an Honours student undertaking research. Projects may be field-based or involve non-field-based research such as geographic information systems, remote sensing-related projects, or data analysis.

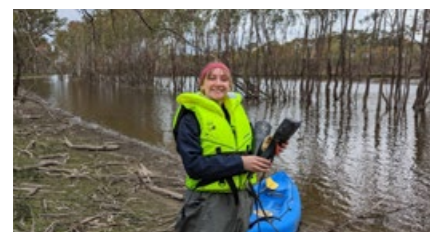
#### Lachlan Greenwood

*Bachelor of Science (Honours) (Biodiversity and Conservation), Flinders University*

Lachlan's project involves looking at how the vegetation density of fringing habitat influences the trophic ecology of Watchalunga wetland. He is researching the diet and distribution of Australian Smelt (native), Flat Headed Gudgeon (native), Mosquitofish (invasive), and Carp (invasive), along with the distribution of any other fish and invertebrate specimens caught.

#### Emily Wilson

*Bachelor of Science (Honours) (Biodiversity and Conservation), Flinders University*



Environmental water delivery is a conservation action that returns water to off-channel wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin. There is a growing concern that salts (transported with water) could accumulate at these sites and poison them. Emily's project aims to quantify this salt accumulation, in both surface water and soil, at wetland sites throughout the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin.

### Grand Starts Grants / PhD

PhD/Masters Grand Start Scholarships provide grants of up to \$3000 per annum for a maximum of three years to assist a PhD/Masters student undertaking research.

#### Matt Smith



*PhD, University of New South Wales, UNSW Sydney*

Thick-billed Grasswrens are a small endangered bird found on Nature Foundation's Witchelina Nature Reserve. During the last drought, there were concerns that kangaroos with no natural predators on Witchelina may have overgrazed the landscape and contributed

to the decline of Thick-billed Grasswrens. Matt aims to address these concerns by monitoring Thick-billed Grasswren populations, habitat changes and resource availability under different kangaroo grazing intensities to inform conservation efforts by determining if and how kangaroos impact Thick-billed Grasswrens.

#### Jack Bilby

*PhD, University of New South Wales, UNSW Sydney*

Australian arid zone mammals will be subjected to incredible pressures by climate change, and yet we know very little about how they respond to heat. Jack is investigating how native and invasive species cope with extreme temperatures and how physiology, phylogeny, behaviour, and land management will impact their ability to survive.



### Nature Foundation Scientific Expedition Foundation RL & GK Willing Grant

This annual grant provides up to \$2000 for one year to support an Honours student.

The student's research must focus on:

1. Trends in the abundance and distribution of native populations of South Australian fauna and flora; or
2. Soil, water, geology or climate where it will affect the abundance and distribution of native populations of South Australian fauna and flora.

This is a partnership between Nature Foundation and Scientific Expedition Foundation.

#### Rebecca Greening

*Honours in Ecology and Environmental Science, The University of Adelaide*

Rebecca's project studies the TGB Osborn Vegetation Reserve at Koonamore in South Australia to determine if spatial patterns of soil nutrient accumulation and microbial community compositions are different between 98 years of livestock grazing exclusion versus areas grazed since the 1860s.

Despite the known pervasive effects of livestock, most studies suggest they do not impact the observed spatial patterns of soil nutrients in arid lands or redistribute resources in the landscape.

However, the long history and widespread nature of livestock grazing may suggest that grazing is confounding studies, so Rebecca's project aims to fill this knowledge gap to ensure our rangelands are managed sustainably.



**We wish all of our 2023 grant recipients well with their projects.**

### Roy and Marjory Edwards Scholarship

This scholarship provides up to \$12,000 per annum for up to three years to support a student at an Australian university. This scholarship was initiated in 2002 by a generous donation from Mrs Marjory Edwards to establish a perpetual scholarship in conservation biology.

#### Beth Treglown

*Bachelor of Science (Honours) (Animal Behaviour), PhD in Freshwater Ecology, Flinders University*

Beth's project will investigate three South Australian wetlands and how the environmental factors at each site influence plant and animal community structure. A key part of this project will be surveying fish, frogs, and their prey to better understand distribution and diet.



#### Kantine (Chih-Yun) Liu

*PhD, The University of Adelaide*

Freshwater rock-holes can be found on many granite outcrops in arid and semi-arid regions of Australia. When filled with rainwater, they support a unique diversity of aquatic invertebrates and serve as a main water source for many local wildlife. Kantine's project focuses on assessing and mitigating climate change impacts on these precious freshwater ecosystems at Hiltaba Nature Reserve.





Science and knowledge



**Regional Regent Parrot surveys**

Nature Foundation has partnered with Mid Murray Landcare SA in a Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board grassroots grant providing critical financial support with Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus monarchoides*) surveys at Murbpook Lagoon.

The Regent Parrot is listed as Vulnerable in federal (EPBC Act 1999), and state (NP&W Act 1974) legislation, and the species' ongoing survival depends on conservation action to better understand why the species has been declining.

In addition to this grant we have also partnered with Australian National University (ANU) in a nest success research project. The project collaborations will assist Nature Foundation to learn more about the breeding and population status of the species within its nature reserve.



**Geegeela**  
/ baseline flora and fauna surveys

Nature Foundation secured funding through a Limestone Coast Landscape Board Grassroots Grant to undertake a spring fauna and flora survey at Geegeela Nature Reserve, located in the Bangham district of the upper south-east of South Australia.

This survey was a repeat and expansion of an original biological survey undertaken in 2021, and we will use the data to measure the change in fauna and vegetation composition over time.

Nature Glenelg Trust, together with volunteers, undertook the survey, which included such methods as pitfall traps, Elliot and cage trapping, ramble vegetation surveys, roofing tile grids, bird surveys, digital sound recording of amphibians and invertebrate ramble walks.

The 2022 survey resulted in 47 plant species added to the flora list. Numerous orchids were recorded, including the nationally listed Elegant Spider Orchid (*Caladenia formosa*). Additional reptile species were recorded, with five of the six taxa spotted under roof tiles. Additionally, ten new bird species were added to the list.

Nature Glenelg Trust assisted Nature Foundation with engaging South East Aboriginal Focus Group members with a field visit to Geegeela Nature Reserve. Traditional Owner involvement commenced with the Limestone Coast Landscape Board arranging an on Country nature walk at Geegeela Nature Reserve, where participants shared stories about Bangham Country, the reserve, the flora and fauna, and the significance of these values to Traditional Owners.

Students from the local Frances Primary School also visited Geegeela Nature Reserve, contributing to the survey, learning about survey techniques and giving students an opportunity to experience the environment. The students safely assisted with the roof tile grid surveys and were fortunate to spot a Mitchell's Short-tailed Snake (*Suta nigriceps*).

This project is supported by the Limestone Coast Landscape Board's Grassroots Grants program, and is funded by the landscape levy.



**Understanding and valuing nature**

**Goal 3: Nature is better understood and valued.**

**Kids on Country**



**Learning about country made me feel more connected to my culture."**

*Kyiesha, Ceduna Area School*

Nature Foundation's Kids on Country program delivers a balanced offering that combines on-country camps, workshops and online learning to allow young Aboriginal people across South Australia to develop their skills, abilities and strengths and inspire future careers in conservation land management.

The newly SACE-accredited program also creates opportunities for positive social change through exposure to workplace practices, improved job readiness and increased confidence to pursue work experience, enabling participants to contribute more within their communities.

Six Kids on Country camps took place this year, hosting 71 young Aboriginal people, with two camps rescheduled due to wet weather and resulting road closures. Since 2016, 368 participants have completed the program.

A partnership with the National Indigenous Australia Agency (NIAA) has secured the next three years of the program, allowing Nature Foundation to further develop and grow Kids on Country into our own Junior Ranger Program, providing an even greater positive impact to a range of stakeholders.

To meet the demands for the program from the South Australian Department for Education and Aboriginal communities across South Australia, we are expanding the Kids on Country team. This will allow us to deliver camps simultaneously on Witchelina and Hiltaba nature reserves in 2024.

The program's growth will strengthen relationships with the Adnyamathanha/Kuyani people and the Gawler Rangers Aboriginal Corporation (GRAC), along with Nature Foundation's positive reputation with the Aboriginal language groups across South Australia.

In addition, Nature Foundation is establishing a Kids on Country Aboriginal Advisory Group to advise on the program's delivery and future development.

Nature Foundation was also successful in securing a grant to provide an opportunity for native title holders to return to Country through two Family on Country camps to occur in late 2023.



## Understanding and valuing nature

### Watchalunga / Ngarrindjeri Landscape Priority Fund

Nature Foundation recognises the importance of preserving and celebrating Australia's Indigenous cultural heritage. We work closely with Traditional Owners to embed Aboriginal cultural knowledge in everything we do and to achieve better management outcomes with shared ecological and cultural values.

Nature Foundation was therefore thrilled to be invited to partner with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation and Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board on a multi-partner Landscape Priorities Fund project, which works closely with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation to facilitate Ngarrindjeri-led landscape management. The Landscape Priorities Fund is an initiative of the Government of South Australia funded through landscape levies.

The focus of this project is to build the resilience of Ngarrindjeri lands through identifying and delivering on-ground restoration works to improve the environmental and cultural resilience of Yarlular-Ruwe (water and lands).

Ngarrindjeri community members will support Nature Foundation's conservation program at Watchalunga Nature Reserve, including assisting with setting up motion detection cameras, fish surveys and revegetation works and surveys.

To help improve partnership engagement, the Nature Foundation team have already participated in several invaluable Ngarrindjeri cultural inductions, delivered by Ngarrindjeri community leaders and Elders to increase understanding of Ngarrindjeri and Aboriginal history, impacts of colonisation and current barriers facing Ngarrindjeri communities.

### Pygmy Bluetongue Recovery Team / setting up monitoring protocols

The Pygmy Bluetongue lizard (*Tiliqua adelaidensis*) is listed as endangered under both national (EPBC Act 1999) and state (NP&W Act 1974) legislation. It was also included as a Top 110 Priority Species in the Threatened Species Strategy published by the Australian Government.

Nature Foundation is committed to better understanding the conservation status of this cryptic species. It is working with the Pygmy Bluetongue Recovery Team to develop a population monitoring protocol to standardise survey methods when researching different populations. There is currently no approved survey method for monitoring a population, and Nature Foundation is leading the field with this work. Tiliqua Nature Reserve is home to a population of Pygmy Bluetongue lizards. We must devise a consistent way of monitoring the size of our population and its response to climate change and on-ground land management activities. The Science and Knowledge team is implementing the monitoring protocol in spring 2023, which will help source a population estimate of the Tiliqua population.

### Mount Lofty Ranges Bird Recovery Alliance

Nature Foundation has been invited to join the Mount Lofty Ranges Bird Recovery Alliance, a new initiative launched by the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board in 2023.

Many bird species are known to be declining in the Mount Lofty Ranges, and the alliance has been formed to strengthen efforts to tackle the issue through combined resources and actions. The alliance will bring a collaborative approach through knowledge sharing by a diverse range of partner organisations, an aligned plan for action and leveraging opportunities by acting together.

This is an exciting opportunity for Nature Foundation to collaborate with other stakeholders, and staff members have been appointed to the Learning & Research and the Communication & Partnerships working groups.

## Collaboration for conservation

Nature Foundation is proud to partner and collaborate with the following organisations to enhance nature conservation and positive biodiversity impact:

- Regent Parrot Recovery Team
- Pygmy Bluetongue Lizard Recovery Team
- ANU Regent Parrot Ecology
- University of NSW
- GreenCollar and other natural capital investors
- Mount Lofty Ranges Bird Recovery Alliance
- Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation
- Australian Land Conservation Alliance
- SA Nature Alliance





# Engaging communities

## Goal 4: Engaged communities that support resilient habitats.

### Volunteer impact

Nature Foundation has a long and proud history of volunteering, from the initial contribution of our founders (Dr Barbara Hardy AO, Warren Bonython AO, Mark Bonnin AO and David Cleland), our members and supporters who provide community participation at our planting days and other events, those who serve on our committees and contribute to conservation and nature-based tourism efforts on our reserves.

Since we began documenting formal volunteer hours in 2017, 21,654 hours of volunteer contribution have been recorded.



Over the past financial year, 103 Nature Foundation volunteers have contributed 8,999 hours of effort across our nature reserves, office and events, supporting tourism, conservation, infrastructure projects and community engagement.

Some examples of the specific areas supported by our volunteers include:

- Fence removal and repair across the nature reserves to support conservation activities and movement of wildlife.
- Office administration and event management particularly at the launch of the Forever Nature Fund.
- Scientific writing and analysis of data relating e.g., distribution mapping of Thick-billed Grasswrens.
- Participation in surveys including camera trapping and Short-tailed Grasswren surveys at Hiltaba.
- Installing new walking trail signage across all our Hiltaba walking tracks. The signage was funded through a conservation grant from Athletic Brewing's Two For the Trails program.
- General clean up and cottage repair at Murbpook Nature Reserve.
- Completion of the Hiltaba shearing shed restoration. The roof repair and other efforts throughout the shearing shed now offer a historic and valuable area for guests to gather and enjoy.

### New volunteer program

Over the past 18 months, Nature Foundation has undertaken an organisational review of activities against our 'Toward 2030 Strategic Plan', along with feedback from members and the public, industry-relevant research and exploring emerging opportunities in the carbon and nature-positive markets.

Through this process, it became apparent that a new, consistent volunteer management approach was required across all seven nature reserves, providing more opportunities for interest-based participation and increasing our capacity to deliver gains for biodiversity and nature conservation.

All these considerations led to Nature Foundation's new volunteer framework based on the national standards for the engagement and management of volunteers provided by Volunteering Australia. The framework comprehensively covers all aspects of volunteer engagement, including role development, recruitment, induction, management, training, support, acknowledgement, recognition and reporting.

The volunteer program offers four areas of volunteering involvement that are connected to our strategic plan and help us achieve our goals:

1. Conservation volunteers
2. Tourism volunteers
3. Infrastructure volunteers, and
4. Project volunteers

With the ongoing work required to positively influence biodiversity and our natural environment, we are excited by the new volunteer program and its ability to allow us to support and scale our conservation efforts across South Australia and beyond.

Our volunteers are vital participants of Nature Foundation, and we look forward to seeing the volunteer program grow and develop.

**“ I love volunteering with Nature Foundation. It allows me to visit beautiful places and assist with conserving our Australian flora and fauna.”**

Coral Johnson



### Nature-based tourism

In line with our strategic objective to connect people with nature, our nature-based tourism offerings at Witchelina and Hiltaba continued their popularity this past year, with 554 visitors to the two reserves seeking nature experiences. Travellers, tourists and various groups enjoyed the accommodation and facilities offered, including walking trails and driving tracks.

We continue to receive incredibly positive feedback from visitors who enjoy the beautiful landscapes and can gain insight into our work and experience nature conservation in action.

Huge thanks go to our team of volunteers for hosting guests and maintaining the facilities. Your dedication and passion for conservation and sharing these unique landscapes is greatly appreciated.

We look forward to welcoming more guests and groups to experience these places first-hand and encouraging them to support Nature Foundation in additional ways.



### SEG biological survey

In April 2023, Scientific Expedition Group Inc (SEG) volunteers undertook a biological survey at Witchelina Nature Reserve. As with many past year's activities, the survey was slightly impacted by rain, though this didn't dampen the spirits of the 18 volunteers—five on their first SEG trip—led by scientist Andrew Sinel.

The biological survey concentrated on mammals and reptiles north/northeast and southwest of the homestead. In each region, four sites were established among similar terrain/flora, each consisting of two pitfall lines, fifteen Elliot traps, a few cages, and funnel traps.

SEG volunteers monitored the areas over the following seven days, and various species were identified, including dunnarts, house mice, skinks, geckos, dragon lizards, and one Short-tailed Snake (*Suta Suta*).

### Four Seasons Bushwalkers

In May 2023, 22 Four Seasons Bushwalkers group members spent a week at Witchelina Nature Reserve. Their stay incorporated daily walks on the many tracks and trails, hearty meals to regain their energy, evening campfires with sing-alongs, guest speakers and games.

The varied walking trails allowed the group to experience the spectacular landscape and rock formations of Witchelina, along with its flora, fauna and birdlife, ruins and historical remnants.

The group left tired but invigorated by their experiences in this unique part of South Australia.





## Engaging communities

### Birds SA bird surveys

Birds SA undertook two major bird surveys on the larger nature reserves this past year, surveying Hiltaba for the second time in July 2022 and Witchelina for the 15th in October 2022.

For each repeatedly visited site, we tally all individual birds observed. To consider bird species richness, we use Margalef's Bird Diversity Index, based on the work of Spanish naturalist Ramon Margalef, which weighs the number of species recorded over the individuals. This helps minimise the impact a small number of hyperabundant species might have over the diversity of species observed. We use generalised additive models to record how averages of these values change over time.

#### Hiltaba bird survey

Rainfall was above average to the end of July, with notable falls in January. This contributed to the local vegetation with abundant growth of annuals and considerable regeneration of shrubby species.

Over the four days, a total of 206 records of 54 bird species, comprising 1,007 individuals, were made at the 20 survey sites, and 142 records of 29 species (576 individuals) during the driven segments, giving a combined total of 348 records (1,583 individuals) of 58 species.

Bird species identified included four rare species: Pink Cockatoo (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*), White-browed Treecreeper (*Climacteris affinis*), Gilbert's Whistler (*Pachycephala inornata*) and White-winged Chough (*Corcorax melanorhamphos*). Honeyeaters were represented by ten species, and six species of the Thornbill family were recorded.

We look forward to conducting further bird surveys at Hiltaba over the years to understand local bird trends better and increase our impact.

#### Witchelina bird survey

Following exceptional rainfall in the first five months of 2022, the vegetation responded dramatically, with extensive germination of herbs, ground covers and shrubs, and considerable regeneration of trees and shrubs, including the Eucalyptus coolabahs on West Mount Creek. However, the following months were relatively dry, so by October, the annuals were drying off.

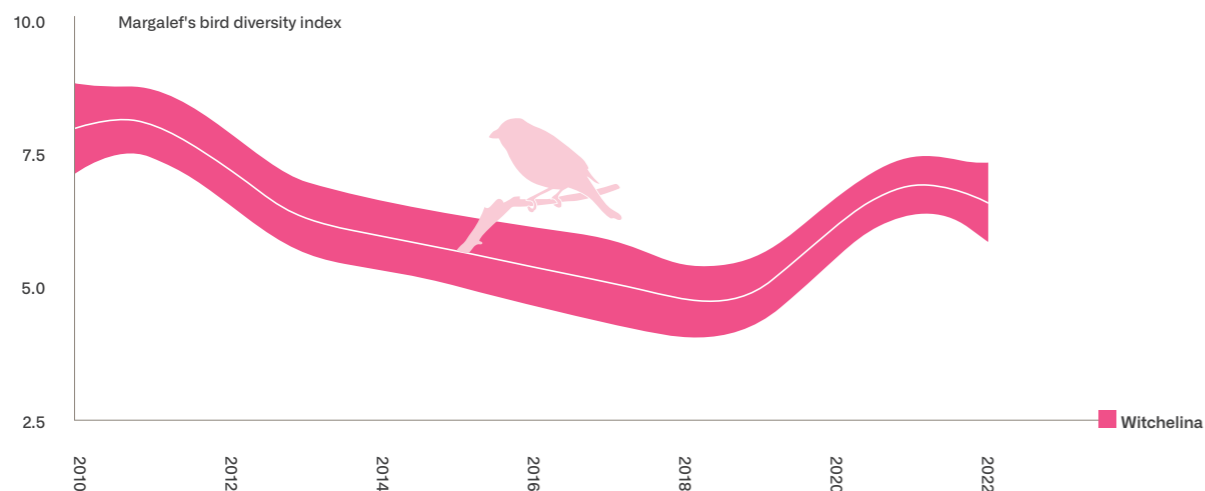
Over the five days, a total of 561 records of 92 bird species, comprising 7,445 individuals, were made at the 32 survey sites, and 478 records of 39 species (1,760 individuals) during the driven segments, giving a combined total of 1,039 records (9,205 individuals) of 97 species.

The species total is four fewer than for the May and June 2022 survey but still comparable with the highest recorded in November 2011 when a total of 126, including 40 water-dependent species, were recorded.

For many of the more sedentary or resident bird species, the numbers had remained the same despite the improvement in vegetation. Still, a few insectivores and seed-eaters were in high numbers.

By far, the most abundant species was again the Zebra Finch (*Taeniopygia guttata castanotis*), which was recorded at all sites except Murrumbidgee Waterhole and the Homestead and was also observed nesting at some of the survey sites.

This data represents a much larger long-term dataset that can be used to analyse changes in bird abundance and communities due to changes in climatic conditions. We can also map which areas of the nature reserve are essential habitats for different species and direct our management activities accordingly.



### Artist Residency Program

Nature Foundation's Artist Residency Program celebrated its fourth year in 2022, with three artists awarded residencies, which they undertook in late 2022. Caroline Johnson and Mandy Pryse-Jones spent two weeks at Hiltaba and Katie Bradley at Witchelina.

Their resulting artworks were exhibited at The Main Gallery, Halifax Street, Adelaide, in June 2023, with the exhibition opened by the Honourable Susan Close MP, Deputy Premier for South Australia and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water.

Four artists have been awarded residencies in 2023: Georgina Sambell, who will spend time at Witchelina; Mary Pulford, who will spend time at Hiltaba; and Tim Thomson and Rosana Cohen, who will spend time at both Witchelina and Hiltaba.

Launched in 2019, the Artist Residency Program aims to:

- Reflect Nature Foundation's conservation vision by encouraging artists to become immersed in the natural environment and to respond to it in their creative work;
- Support the work of participating artists interested in remote natural environments by providing them with opportunities for substantial visits to Witchelina or Hiltaba.

Nature Foundation gratefully acknowledges the Artist Residency Program sponsorship by the Helen James Endowment Fund.



### Watchalunga / planting day

On National Tree Day in July 2022, 50 keen community participants planted 1,750 rushes and sedges at Watchalunga Nature Reserve.

These infill plantings in the existing Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren habitat will further thicken and enhance the area, appealing to this shy and secretive bird's nesting and foraging preferences. This productive day was facilitated by Nature Foundation and Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning Group (GWLAP), with GWLAP undertaking site preparation (weed control and auguring holes) before the planting day.

Annual planting days have been held at Watchalunga since 2017, contributing to the revegetation of 5 hectares of native habitat.





# Financial stability

**Goal 5:** An inspirational organisation that is financially secure and achieves operational excellence.



## Refocusing conservation / financial stability and forecasting

Part of Nature Foundation's refocusing conservation efforts has been on achieving the strategic goal of financial stability, which has involved financial forecasting to allow us to plan for the future, confidently ensuring our conservation impact.

This process has assisted with increasing income, investments and total member equity while reducing expenses, which positively impacts other areas of the business.

## Hiltaba / carbon project update

Climate change and nature are not separate issues, and anything we do to mitigate climate change through activities such as carbon projects and sequestration should also benefit nature. Nature-based solutions such as our Hiltaba carbon sequestration project demonstrate the mutually beneficial outcomes of carbon projects and biodiversity.

The vegetation regeneration at Hiltaba is measured by comprehensive monitoring and evaluation techniques by skilled scientists, and this regeneration offers value as a carbon asset. The impact of carbon assets is significant for our financial stability.

In October 2022, the Clean Energy Regulator issued the first batch of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) for the Hiltaba Human-Induced Regeneration Carbon project for the initial reporting period from 2020 to September 2022. These ACCUs were sold by our project partner, GreenCollar, in January 2023, with the resulting income significantly supporting Nature Foundation's financial security and our ongoing nature conservation impact.

This project provides demonstrable benefits through positive changes in native vegetation regeneration and regrowth and is also supported by strong engagement with traditional owners. In November 2022, Nature Foundation hosted the inaugural Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation's Women and Girls Camp at Hiltaba, funded by GreenCollar and successfully delivered by our Kids on Country team.

We also hosted a delegation of corporate partners and GreenCollar and Nature Foundation executives at Hiltaba to see a successful carbon sequestration project. Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation (GRAC) Leslee Warrior welcomed guests to Country.



## Field services work

Nature Foundation has been engaged to support GreenCollar's National Field Program by conducting vegetation surveys. Our Field Services teams have undertaken ground-truthing and biomass surveys related to Carbon and Nature Positive projects across ten properties in South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales, with a forward fieldwork schedule through to November 2023.

The positive response to our previous field services work has led to more properties being added to the contract, which has contributed to employment growth, increasing the capacity of the Field Services team to 12 team members through the recruitment and onboarding of six new casual field staff.

Diversification of Nature Foundation's income through additional services such as our fieldwork positively impacts our environmental results and financial stability. At the same time, the growth in demand and resources in the sector demonstrates improvement and strength for Australia's environmental services industry.



Financial stability



**Bushbank SA revolving fund**

Nature Foundation’s Bushbank SA program was established in 2003 to purchase and protect blocks of high biodiversity value by on-selling the land to people who value and care for nature, with all proceeds returning to a fund to support future land purchases that protect our natural environment.

The Blanchetown Bushland Estate was created through the Bushbank SA program and has resulted in 10,172 hectares of Mallee bushland now protected in perpetuity under Heritage Agreements. The last of the remaining lots settled in 2022 and 2023, and all 11 lots are now being managed and enjoyed by a community of landholders for the primary purpose of nature conservation and biodiversity.

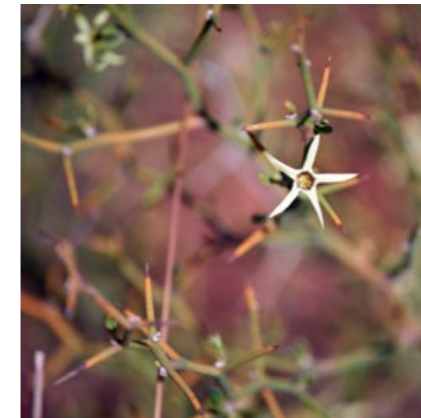


**Gift in Will for Nature**

Leaving a Gift in Will to the Nature Foundation helps contribute to our vision of conserving natural habitats for future generations. Nature Foundation encourages its supporters to consider a Gift in Will, and we are pleased to announce that a Gift in Will can be specifically left to the Forever Nature Fund.

Forever Nature Fund has been created to raise capital to purchase and manage critical habitat areas, prioritised using data-driven scientific and environmental assessment tools.

We are delighted and appreciative that more supporters are considering Nature Foundation as a way of leaving a legacy for nature, thereby increasing our capacity to do vital biodiversity conservation work. In the last financial year, we received a 65% increase in confirmed Gifts in Will on the previous year.



**Appeals, Major Gifts and donations**

The decision to review and concentrate on our fundraising efforts has shown promise.

Nature Foundation has experienced an encouraging year with its two major appeals and the ongoing projects we support, receiving significant gifts towards its nature reserves and programs.

With the funds raised from appeals and donations, we have invested in:

- Forever Nature Fund
- Conservation programs at all nature reserves
- Infrastructure maintenance at Witchelina and Hiltaba nature reserves
- Kangaroo Island conservation programs

A Major Gift has contributed to:

- Conservation management and infrastructure at Hiltaba Nature Reserve

These generous donations allow us to take opportunities to protect new habitats and implement conservation programs that mitigate threatening processes and improve conditions for threatened species and biodiversity in general. They also allow us to maintain, improve and enhance the infrastructure to facilitate on-ground management, providing unique and valuable opportunities for people to experience our nature reserves and witness conservation in action.



**Vision for Nature**

Nature Foundation is most grateful for the growing commitment of our supporters by leaving a Gift in Will. Those who confirm a gift to Nature Foundation in their will are invited to join our Vision for Nature group. Vision for Nature brings together people with a deep concern for and commitment to our natural environment thriving well beyond our lifetimes.

Over the past year, we hosted two enjoyable events for our Vision for Nature group members.

The first was a tour to Monarto Safari Park in October 2022 to observe threatened species in the magnificent open reserve. With the growing number of endangered and threatened species in Australia, it was a pertinent time for reflection and learning more about the importance of protecting habitat for species to thrive.

The second tour was to Tiliqua Nature Reserve in May 2023. Dr. Lucy Clive provided a comprehensive summary of the Pygmy Bluetongue lizard, explaining their cryptic life within spider burrows in open grassland habitats.

We encourage all supporters who want to learn more about leaving a Gift in Will to get in touch.





## We invite you to support us

Conserve, restore and protect natural landscapes, flora and fauna to ensure their survival.

## Become a volunteer

Whether it's meeting like-minded people, gaining new skills, or offering your specialist skills for a great cause, volunteering for nature can be a fantastic experience.

## Make a donation or bequest

The generosity of donors enables us to achieve so much for nature conservation in Australia. Donations can be large or small, individual or corporate, regular or occasional. They can be financial or in the form of land, water or goods. Every donation counts.

## Become a member

Join a wonderful group of people dedicated to conserving, restoring and protecting natural landscapes, floodplains and wetlands, and make a difference. We warmly welcome new members.

## We'd love to hear from you

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