

CONSERVATION IMPACT REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD JANUARY 2022 - JUNE 2024

*The decade
to deliver*





Acknowledgement of Country

The Nature Conservancy acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this nation. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. We are committed to honouring the continued deep spiritual, cultural, environmental and economic connection of First Nations peoples to Country and their rich contribution to society.



Ormiston Gorge, Northern Territory. Credit: Harriet Ambrose, TNC Photo Contest 2017.

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Credit: Maxence Atzori/TNC Photo Contest 2022.



Australia is one of 17 megadiverse countries worldwide, with many of our species found nowhere else in the world.



A message from the Chair

Unleashing Impact Through Unrestricted Giving.

The stories you'll read about in this Impact Report tell of impactful science, formidable partnerships, and an unyielding commitment to protecting the lands and waters on which all life depends.

I count my good fortunes having had a seat at the table at the start of The Nature Conservancy's impact in Australia. I recall my initial introduction to TNC, where the organisation was described as 'the problem solvers for the environment'. This resonated. It was such a core component of my professional life that I immediately understood the mission. These first conversations, joined by another leading philanthropist, David Thomas, resulted in TNC coming to Australia.

Twenty-two years ago, we already knew the crucial role of Australia as one of 17 megadiverse countries worldwide, with many of our species found nowhere else in the world. With Australia having the highest mammal extinction rate in the world, we now all understand how critical and urgent it has become to innovate and take conservation solutions to scale.

The freedom our scientists have to explore ideas and trial potential environmental solutions frequently comes from unrestricted funding. This is important to me as a philanthropist, as a businessperson and as a firm believer in the power of science. By not tying funding to a particular program, we allow TNC's leadership - those with deep knowledge and experience - to choose where the impact of funding will be the greatest.

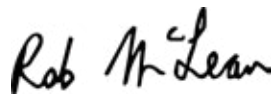
Take for example a recent huge win for TNC - the historic purchase of Vergemont Station in the Channel Country, Queensland. TNC leveraged a record single \$21 million gift and was able to assist the Queensland government to purchase the property, which will become a 300,000 hectare national park, to add to a 1.5 million hectare protected area corridor. Leveraging significant gifts is another hallmark of TNC, and the outcome of this huge addition to the National Reserve System is an excellent result for conservation.

Of course, the costs associated with a conservation-based acquisition of this magnitude extend beyond the purchase of the land. Investment in a skilled team to deliver feasibility studies, program administration, governance and due diligence is critical to ensure that an acquisition will deliver meaningful and sustainable long-term conservation impact. While the acquisition-specific gift was critical to delivering a landmark achievement, the success of this outcome also hinged on additional unrestricted funding from other generous donors to cover these less visible, but essential costs.

I may be largely preaching to the converted - as many of the extraordinary achievements in the pages that follow were made possible by you. Your commitment to supporting TNC without constraints has been nothing short of remarkable.

Thank you for being such an important part of our story. I am thrilled to share with you the impact your support has had. Together, we are rewriting the narrative of philanthropy—one unrestricted gift at a time.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Rob McLean AM

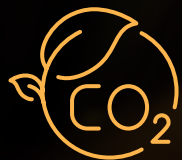
Honoris Causa UNSW

Chair, The Nature Conservancy Australia
Advisory Board

Desert Veins in Western Australia. Credit: Brooke Pyke/TNC Photo Contest 2023.



Our work in numbers



Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduced

1,946 Mt CO₂e/year



Oceans Protected, Restored
or with Improved Management

1,643,259 Ha



Shellfish Reefs Restored

21 across Australia



River Systems with
Improved Management

3,154 kms



Freshwater Protected, Restored
or with Improved Management

163,606 Ha



Lands Protected, Restored
or with Improved Management

29,007,715 Ha

Giant Kelp underwater at Blackmans Beach, Tasmania. Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.

People with Improved Opportunities or Participation

13,547 people



Number of Staff

51 in Australia



Number of Staff

5,800 globally



Photos Received from Photo Contest Globally

289,000



Donor EDMs

67 sent



Youtube videos

82,500 views



Media mentions

More than 3,500



Conservation Overview

A message from the Director of Conservation.

One of the things that attracted me to TNC all those years ago, was its basis in science. A global network of experts applying proven, practical and scalable solutions to our planet's biggest conservation challenges? Sign me up!

Fast forward a decade and the pull is just as powerful and the science just as clear. Everything we do at TNC works to directly address the interconnected climate and biodiversity crises. Our focus remains on scaling solutions from idea to impact to achieving system change.

At the heart of our conservation efforts is the recognition that science is most impactful when combined with local ecological, Indigenous and traditional knowledge. That's why TNC's conservation work is increasingly co-produced: often developed and implemented in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other expert NGOs, which is critical to durable and equitable conservation solutions.

In 2022, we developed a Strategic Plan with deliberately ambitious goals that rely on this large-scale, locally effective and globally relevant conservation approach. In this report you'll read about five conservation-based goals that align with our overarching strategic approach.

These outcomes work to both inspire us and hold us to our vision. They cover our key focus areas, which include Climate Change, Oceans, Freshwater, Lands and People.

The stories in these pages provide a pulse check on how we're doing. They share themes of powerful partnerships, innovative solutions and local insight, and are fuelled by the support of some extraordinarily generous donors. They offer a clear view of where progress has exceeded expectations, and a path forward where we are still laying foundations to ensure our targets are met. What remains true for all though, is our commitment to the promise we made when we set out to end this defining decade in a better place than when we entered.

The world may feel different from when I joined all those years ago, but now, more than ever, I know TNC is at the fore of redefining conservation, to achieve real impact at scale to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends.

Yours for nature,



Tony Jupp
Director of Conservation (Australia)

Landscape at Vrilya Point, Queensland. Credit: Ella Colley/Gum Tree Foundation.

2030 Goals

At The Nature Conservancy we see the interconnectedness of all things – the air we breathe, the lands we cherish, the waters that sustain us. We're committed to protecting these vital elements for the health of people and planet.

Our conservation programs are created with this connectivity in mind. This is crucial for tangible, lasting results. With human wellbeing and biodiversity conservation equally driving our efforts, we strive so people and nature can thrive.

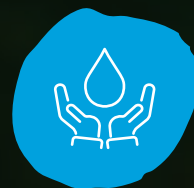
While our conservation goals are categorised into priority areas, covering Climate Change, Oceans, Freshwater, Lands and People, our impact touches down simultaneously on several areas at once. As you read through this report, we've included a visual guide to help show the areas of impact across our work.



Climate Change



Oceans



Freshwater



Lands



People

Adelaide Coastal Wetlands, South Australia.
Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.



Impact to date:

Climate Change





Our goal

By 2030 we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by **6.7 million tonnes** of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per year through increased abatement and sequestration.

Other 2030 goals met by this work:



Our progress

Our work has contributed to a reduction of 1.9 million tonnes of CO₂e for the last financial year, approximately 29% of annual target achieved.

This is around the same as removing the average annual emissions of



410,000

cars from our roads.

Adelaide Coastal Wetlands, South Australia.
Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.

How does TNC help reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

To limit climate change, we work with partners across Australia to:

- 1. Prevent the emission of more greenhouse gases (abatement) and**
- 2. Store greenhouse gases in vegetation (sequestration).**

Our work in the field

We preserve and restore carbon sinks

TNC works with partners across Australia to protect ecologically significant areas and restore ecosystems that play a critical role as carbon sinks and support a wide range of species. Wetlands, forests, oceans and soil all capture carbon from the atmosphere and store it, contributing to our work mitigating climate change.

We have supported the long-term protection of several significant properties, homes to important ecosystems, such as wetlands, which are critical for both the protection of biodiversity and the sequestration of carbon.

In 2022, TNC, with generous contributions from the Wyss Foundation and the Art into Acres initiative through Re:wild, supported the purchase of The Lakes by the Queensland Government for addition to the National Protected Estate. This stunning 35,300 hectare property contains a variety of endangered and under-protected ecosystems, including woodlands, wetlands and riverine corridors, which are important carbon sinks, as well as vital habitat for the threatened Northern Greater Glider.

TNC has cemented its position as a leader in the Blue Carbon space. Blue carbon – the carbon stored in coastal ecosystems – is of growing interest among scientists and policymakers worldwide as a critical climate change mitigation and adaptation tool. Coastal wetlands such as mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrasses capture and store larger amounts of carbon than forest areas, and if undisturbed, this carbon can remain in the sediment for thousands of years. This makes protecting and restoring blue carbon ecosystems (or habitat) an important (or critical) natural climate solution.

In 2023, we supported the development of two of Australia's first blue carbon projects in Queensland and South Australia. Collectively, these sites will generate carbon credits over 326 hectares of mangrove and saltmarsh wetlands.

Working with our partners, we expanded on-ground coastal restoration activities across 2,000 hectares of public and private land within the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary – Winaityinaityi Pangkara. This project receives generous funding from the Australian Government's DCCEE, Smartgroup and the COMON Foundation and is a unique partnership between The Nature Conservancy, Kurna as the Traditional Owners, the South Australian Department for Environment and Water, Adelaide Plains Council, Flinders University, The University of Adelaide, Birds SA, BirdLife Australia, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and Green Adelaide.

Our Blue Carbon Investment Fund feasibility investigations have been a pivotal body of work providing us with greater oversight of the capital requirements, for potential project locations, and the barriers to establishing financing mechanisms to scale the protection and restoration of blue carbon habitats. This included feasibility assessments for blue carbon tidal restoration in Queensland and South Australia across 65,000 hectares of coastal wetlands. This work identified that the restoration of these areas has the potential to store 8.7 million tonnes of carbon over 25 years, highlighting Australia's significant role in the global blue carbon space. TNC Australia has also been at the forefront of driving policy and planning changes to increase opportunities for scaling this work across South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

Our Blue Carbon Investment Fund feasibility investigations have been a pivotal body of work providing us with greater oversight of the capital requirements, for potential project locations, and the barriers to establishing financing mechanisms to undertake the work. It also highlighted the importance of developing publicly available and culturally appropriate markets for non-carbon benefits of blue carbon projects, such as coastal resilience and biodiversity.

All of our blue carbon work has been undertaken while building the capacity of Traditional Owners, landholders, and partners with the aim of scaling natural climate solutions across Australia.

TNC Australia is now a global leader in the blue carbon space.



Cape York, Queensland. Credit: Annette Ruzicka/TNC.



Fighting Fire with Fire

Across northern Australia, our Indigenous partners combine traditional ecological knowledge and cultural practice with cutting-edge fire science to manage Country with fire.

When large scale wildfires happen, mostly in the late dry season, they burn considerable areas of habitat that are vital for our endemic species. With cool burning in the early dry season, the fires are smaller, less intense and help prevent more destructive wildfires from occurring later in the season. They therefore generate a lot less greenhouse gas emissions.

We have supported partners to achieve a considerable net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from savanna fire while creating economic opportunities on Country. With the sale of carbon credits, people can stay on or return to Country and maintain ancestral connections to their lands and waters.

The revenues of carbon credit sale can be reinvested into enterprises aligned with cultural values and Indigenous people have a sustainable model to care for Country for ecological and cultural outcomes, the way they want to.

Case Study: Returning to the past to change the future

Conserving Cape York to restore Angkamuthi culture.

When the Queensland Government announced it was handing the northern most section of Cape York Peninsula back to Traditional Owners, it was an obvious win for the precious plant life and rare animals that call the region home. The agreement returned land to three local Indigenous groups, a historic transfer that would help secure the protection of the region's coastal lakes, open woodlands, cloud forests and vibrant wetlands.

It was a momentous day for Angkamuthi elder Sandra Woosup, who'd spent 27 years fighting for the recognition and return of her ancestral lands. But the joy she experienced was about much more than environmental conservation. It was about ensuring the survival of her people's culture, bringing back the past to transform their future and by starting to manage 'our lands our way'.

Sandra had grown up listening to her elders talk about the deep connection between the Angkamuthi Clan and Country. But as an adult, she noticed how far many of her people had drifted from their land. "Most of them have lost that connection," Sandra says. "They had no one to teach them, so they really struggle." Throughout it all, one question kept resurfacing: "Who's going to teach them?"

The answer, Sandra realised early on, was that it had to be her and the other emerging Angkamuthi elders. "We have to get it right for our children," she says, "so we don't leave them with nothing."

That motivation inspired Sandra to work with her family to support Angkamuthi Tribal Aboriginal Corporation. She knew that just getting their territory back wasn't enough to save Angkamuthi culture. To achieve that, they needed a clear plan for the future. So, with help from The Nature Conservancy, she and the other elders created the Angkamuthi Healthy Country Plan, outlining their goals for the next ten years, including how to manage the land and revive their cultural traditions.

It was a long process, but one made easier by collaboration. "We were still struggling, looking for funding. And then The Nature Conservancy was there to help us. With the plan, now, everything is just falling into place." The Nature Conservancy has also played a key role in helping the Angkamuthi people rediscover and document their language, identify traditional bush foods, and navigate complex decisions about mining and land use.

There's still more work to be done, but even in the two short years since the handover, the positive impacts are already visible. "We've mapped all the places, recorded all our stories, and archived them, so when future generations come, they can just follow the path we've set. They'll know their Country, their protocols, their practices," Sandra says. This includes how to care for the land: which areas to burn, which scrub to keep intact, where the turtles are and how to protect them.

Today, Sandra is looking into working with organisations willing to assist the Angkamuthi people in getting younger generations out on Country where they can learn their cultural values and ways of living back on Country, build a healthy relationship and understanding of their culture. "A camp will give us the opportunity to sit around the fire with our young people, and to support and to build them up as strong persons in understanding their identity," Sandra says. "To say 'I'm here for you.'"

For Sandra, the most important thing the plan is helping her instil in the young people is the principle of stewardship.

"We always say, look after Country, because the Country will look after us."



Sandra Woosup. Credit: Luke Preece/TNC.



Impact to date:

Oceans





Our goal

By 2030, we will protect, restore and improve management of **5.2 million** hectares of ocean.

Other 2030 goals met by this work:



Climate Change



People

Our progress

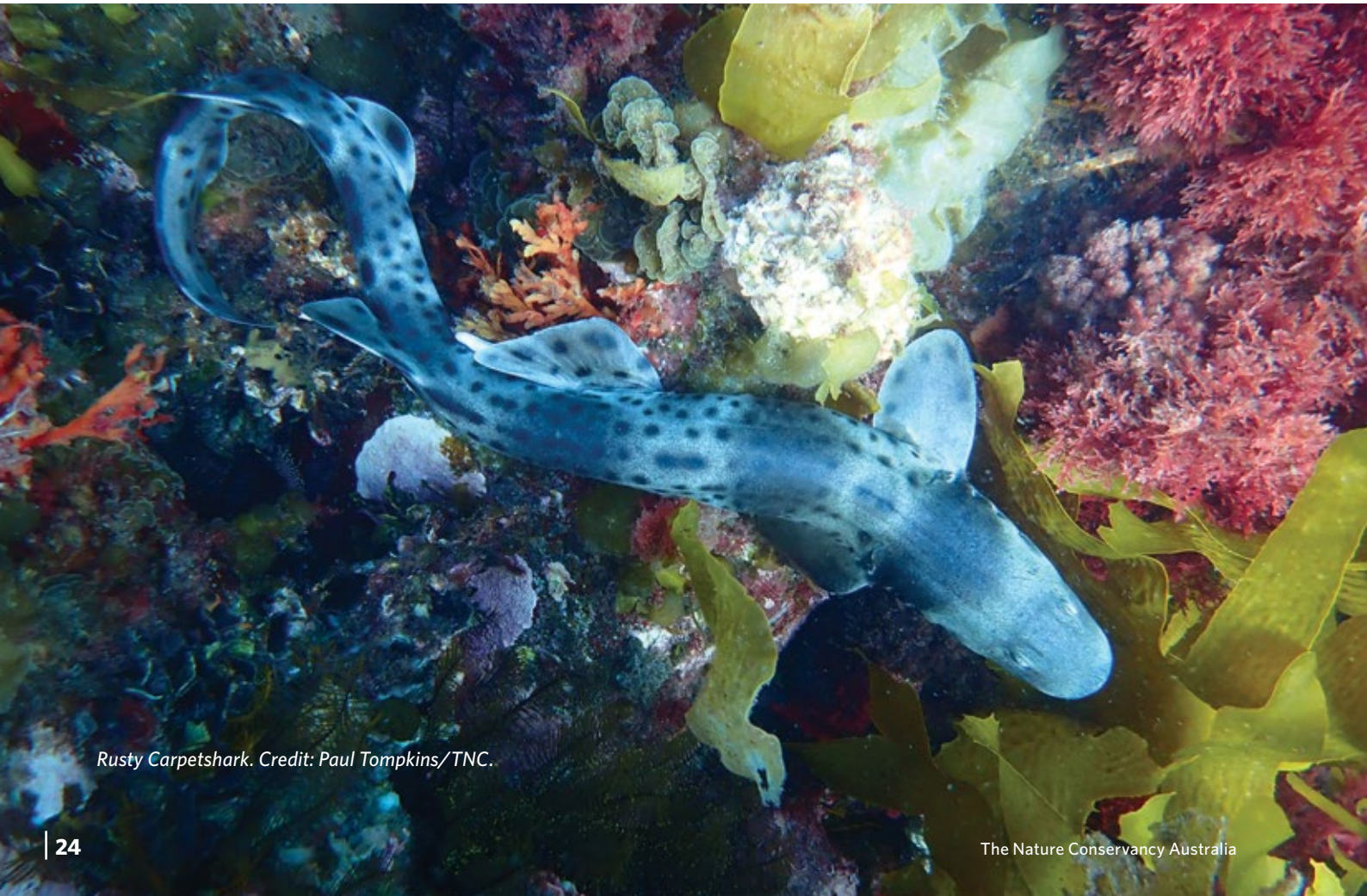
1.643 million hectares, approximately 32% of target achieved so far.

This is around the size of



800,000

Melbourne Cricket Grounds.



Rusty Carpetshark. Credit: Paul Tompkins/TNC.

How does TNC support our oceans' health?

Our work focuses on:

- 1. Restoring threatened marine habitat: Shellfish reefs and kelp forests provide vital habitat to countless species that rely on them for food, reproduction and protection. Yet, they are some of the world's most threatened oceanic ecosystems, with 95% of Giant Kelp forests having declined in Tasmania since the 1970s and less than 8% of Australia's native shellfish reefs remaining.**
- 2. Supporting the resilience of coastal communities who rely on healthy oceans and the many services these threatened ecosystems provide such as water quality and mitigation of coastal erosion.**

Our work in the field

We restore threatened marine ecosystems across Australian Oceans

We lead Australia's largest marine restoration initiative. To date, with the support of our incredible community of donors, partners and local communities, we have restored 21 reefs across the Australian southern seascape. From Noosa to Perth, we have piloted science-backed ecological restoration methods and demonstrated that shellfish reefs can be restored at scale. We are committed to bringing shellfish reefs back from the brink of extinction, and aim to restore 60 shellfish reefs by 2030.

In the past two years, we have partnered with leading experts in Australia to develop state-of-the-art scientific methods to restore Golden Kelp in Victoria and Giant Kelp forests in Tasmania.

Kelp forests form the backbone of the Great Southern Reef, which extends along 8,000 km of coastline from NSW to WA. They are a vital ecosystem for many marine species found nowhere else in the world. Increasingly frequent heatwaves, currents driving warm, nutrient-poor water further south as well as overgrazing due to increased abundance of some urchin species have dramatically impacted kelp across southern Australia's coast.

In Tasmania

In June 2023, we announced a landmark collaboration with the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) at the University of Tasmania, National Resource Management South and the CSIRO, partnering to launch The Tasmanian Giant Kelp Restoration Project, in order to expand the current Giant Kelp restoration efforts into ecologically relevant scales. Sites along the east coast of Tasmania were carefully chosen based on their suitability for kelp restoration, with juvenile Giant Kelp grown in a facility at IMAS. We then outplanted more than 100,000 juvenile kelp at selected locations, to assess the suitability of these sites for restoration work at the scale needed to make a real impact on the recovery of Giant Kelp forests in the state.

The Tasmanian Giant Kelp Restoration Project is made possible by funding from Google.org, the Isabel Sims Endowment managed by the Perpetual Foundation, the Elizabeth Gabler Trust managed by Perpetual Philanthropy, the James Kirby Foundation and the J and M Wright Foundation.



Restored shellfish reef close-up. Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.

In Victoria

After successful trials in 2023, when more than 50,000 baby Golden Kelp were outplanted onto rocky reefs, The Nature Conservancy and our partners, Deakin University, the University of Melbourne and Parks Victoria, were excited to add another few hundred thousand baby Golden Kelp to the Ricketts Point and Jawbone Marine Sanctuaries in Port Phillip Bay, at the beginning of 2024. Grown from microscopic spores on spools of twine and on small rocks at the Deakin University Queenscliff Marine Science Centre, the baby kelp were outplanted by TNC divers and attached to rocky reefs where they are now expected to keep growing, supporting the recovery of the species.

This work is part of a project funded by the Victorian Government's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to trial and develop techniques to address the loss of Golden Kelp and other native macroalgae that form seaweed forest habitats in Port Phillip Bay.

We explored new ways to sustainably finance nature's contribution to our livelihoods

In New South Wales

With the help of partners HSBC, we are also pursuing the development of a replicable framework for an environmental bond 'Blue-themed Bonds for Nature', where proceeds would fund nature-based restoration activities to mitigate climate change and improve biodiversity and coastal livelihoods.



*Sea urchin in a Golden Kelp forest, Victoria.
Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.*

Snapshot: Reef Builder – Australia's largest marine restoration initiative

Reviving lost reefs, from near extinction to resilience

TNC's deep dive into reef restoration began in 2012 when The Thomas Foundation initially granted \$3 million to launch the Great Southern Seascapes program in Australia. The program aimed to spark a revolution in marine conservation and the blue economy by scaling-up restoration of coastal habitats in bays and estuaries across Southern Australia.

A major focus of this work was the restoration of shellfish reefs, which were once a dominant feature of seascapes across southern Australia. By the mid to late 20th century they had virtually disappeared, with 85% lost worldwide, making it the most threatened habitat on earth.

Starting with a pilot study to restore shellfish reefs in Corio Bay in Victoria, this expanded to become TNC's first project for a dedicated Oceans Program in Australia.

The work received support from State Government and the private sector and enjoyed strong community and academic support and involvement, and The Thomas Foundation agreed to fund a further \$1.9 million to the second stage of the program.

TNC's Oceans Program work quickly expanded to other states, including South Australia – where the largest reef in the Southern Hemisphere has now been restored at Gulf St Vincent – as well as several sites in Western Australia with the support of both States' peak recreational fishing bodies. An additional \$20m boost was provided by the Federal Government in 2019, and Reef Builder was born, committing to restore 60 reefs around Australia's coast, including Noosa, the heartland of The Thomas Foundation.

A 2015 Barbara Thomas Fellowship awarded to Ruth Thurstan to study historical ecology in the Noosa Estuary was instrumental in researching TNC's first Queensland reef project. Under the auspice of Bring Back the Fish, (a Noosa Parks Association/The Thomas Foundation/Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation initiative) important groundwork and research was completed that led to the Noosa Oyster Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Ruth's early findings found fish catches had declined and oysters were functionally extinct, but it was David Thomas' personal intervention that saw funding secured, with vital roles performed by The Thomas Foundation, Bring Back the Fish and The Noosa Parks Association in providing a cornerstone to the project's now-completed design.

This work was the precursor to one of TNC's most recent large-scale achievements – Reef Builder.

Reef Builder – a world where people and nature thrive

Between 2021 and 2023, a \$20 million partnership between the Australian Government and TNC Australia led to the restoration of over 40 hectares of shellfish reefs across 13 locations spanning Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

A huge achievement, Reef Builder has demonstrated that the restoration of shellfish reefs at a national scale is possible, with considerable flow-on benefits to people and nature.

Shellfish reefs, created when millions of oysters and mussels settle onto each other, are natural solutions to some of our greatest conservation challenges. They improve coastal water quality, boost fish stocks, provide homes for a diverse range of sea life, generate regional employment, and protect Australia's coastal communities and shorelines from coastal erosion.

Delivered in collaboration with government, natural resource management organisations, industry, First Nations groups, community groups, recreational fishers and universities, Reef Builder also supported regional and metropolitan economies impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2019 bushfires.

This restoration work generated 425 new employment opportunities for local communities. We held 185 stakeholder and community events, involving participation from over 5,200 community members, including volunteers, who generously contributed 2,900 hours to activities such as TNC's Shuck Don't Chuck shell recycling initiative, shellfish gardening, and water quality and fish monitoring.



Port Phillip Bay reef construction, Victoria. Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.



Impact to date:
Freshwater



The Darling River, New South Wales. Credit: Andrew Peacock.



Our goal

By 2030, we will contribute to the protection and/or restoration, and subsequent sustained management, of **2.5 million** hectares of lakes and wetlands and 2,500km of rivers.

Other 2030 goals met by this work:



Climate Change



Lands



People

Our progress

163,606 hectares of lakes and wetlands, approximately **6.5%** of target achieved, and **3,154km** of rivers so far.

This is around the size of



91,000

Sydney Opera Houses.

Alligator River, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.
Credit: Peter Keepence/TNC Photo Contest 2019.

How does TNC support freshwater ecosystems?

Our work focuses on:

- 1. Facilitating land acquisitions and establishing protected freshwater areas. Acquisitions of ecologically-significant properties add to the Australian protected area estate through new public or private protected areas with important freshwater ecosystems.**
- 2. Working with First Nations partners in order to establish new Indigenous Protected Areas, including freshwater ecosystems or Sea Country estates, through Healthy Country Planning, direct financial assistance or other tools we've created or adapted.**
- 3. Supporting innovative financing mechanisms through the Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund, which delivers environmental water to wetlands that provide critical habitat for important and threatened species in the Murray-Darling River system.**
- 4. Advising on Protected Area policy: we provide advice to the Australian and state governments to deliver funding and policies to meet Australia's international commitment to protect at least 30% of its lands and freshwaters and 30% of its oceans by 2030 (30x30).**

Our work in the field

We contributed to the creation of 100,000 hectares of adjacent landscape scale protection through private and public protected areas

In July 2023, TNC supported the acquisition of Comeroo Station, a unique property north west of Bourke, by the NSW Government, adding 37,423 hectares of high-conservation value land to the national park estate. More than a quarter of Comeroo Station forms part of the Yantabulla Swamp, one of Australia's most important wetlands and the most important waterbird breeding site in north-west NSW. It consistently supports over 30 waterbird species, numbering around 40,000 individual birds. When in flood, Yantabulla provides breeding sites for ducks and colonial waterbirds, including the Freckled Duck which is listed as vulnerable in NSW, and other waterbird species protected under international treaties. TNC supported the purchase of Comeroo Station by the New South Wales Government with generous contributions from The Wyss Foundation and the Holdfast Collective, Patagonia's non-profit shareholder.

The protection of Comeroo builds connectivity with Brindigabba, another TNC-supported property. This was purchased by the NSW Government for long-term protection in 2022 and dedicated as a new National Park in 2023, with generous support from the Wyss Foundation as well as from artist Haley Mellin's Art into Acres initiative through Re:wild.

Thirty different ecosystems are found in Brindigabba, including endangered Great Artesian Basin Springs communities, Coolibah-Black Box Woodlands and the Brigalow-Gidgee woodlands and shrublands.

Two nationally important wetlands will now be protected. The vast Yantabulla Swamp which is more than 7,600 hectares lies at the heart of the Murray-Darling Basin's healthiest river system. Lake Wombah is an important freshwater wetland with surveys counting on average 19,253 waterbirds of up to 22 species. These areas form part of the Paroo Floodplain and Currawinya Key Biodiversity Areas. They meet many of the key criteria for future Ramsar listing as a wetland of international importance.

By creating over 100,000 hectares of adjacent landscape scale protection through private and public protected areas, these two additions to the national park estate protect nationally significant wetlands which form part of the last unregulated and ecologically healthy river system within the Murray-Darling Basin. They also enable wide ranging animals and plants to move and adapt to changing environmental conditions, forming a corridor of more than 90,000 hectares.

We supported important ecosystems in the Murray Darling Basin thanks to the delivery of environmental water

The endangered Murray Hardyhead has returned to wetlands in New South Wales for the first time in more than a decade thanks to water provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund, a unique partnership between The Nature Conservancy, the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group and Kilter Rural. The fish reintroduction is a joint project involving the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, the NSW of Primary Industries (Fisheries), Western Local Land Services, the SA Department of Environment and Water, Aquasave - Nature Glenelg Trust, the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group, and Wingillie Station, with support and additional water provided through the Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund.

The Fund invests in permanent water rights in the Southern Murray-Darling Basin. When water is abundant and agricultural demand is lower, the Fund makes more water available to wetlands that support species and habitats in need of special protection. When water is scarce and agricultural demand is higher, the Fund provides more water for irrigation. This unique approach reinstates the natural wetting and drying rhythms of the basin, resulting in a win-win for people and nature.

We brokered the largest funded conservation agreement ever established with a First Nations group in New South Wales

In February 2023, the Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC) and the NSW Government signed a historic agreement which secured the permanent protection and sustainable management of more than 55,000 hectares of lands and wetlands at Gayini under the ownership and stewardship of its Traditional Custodians. With this milestone, the conservation area on Gayini became the largest parcel of land ever protected through a funded conservation agreement with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust. It also represented the largest funded agreement ever established with a First Nations group in New South Wales.

Gayini is 88,000-hectares of internationally significant Lowbidgee floodplain in southern NSW, the largest remaining area of wetlands in the Murrumbidgee Valley in the southern Murray-Darling Basin. It sits within the traditional homelands of the Nari Nari people, who have cared for and been supported by the land and the river for tens of thousands of years.

Extensive wetlands on the property, including lakes and floodplains with large areas of lignum, river and red gum forests, provide habitat for threatened animals and plants such as the Plains-wanderer, Australasian Bittern, Australian Painted-snipe, Southern Bell Frog and Mossgiel Daisy.

Significant cultural features include well preserved burial mounds, scar trees and camp sites, which continue to be cared for by the Nari Nari community.

The agreement established a Conservation Area under the stewardship of NNTC, to protect the natural and cultural values of the property, with the support of a consortium including The Nature Conservancy, the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group and the Centre for Ecosystem Science at the University of NSW.



Gayini, New South Wales. Credit: Annette Ruzicka.



Giant Kelp monitoring, Tasmania. Credit: Paul Tompkins/TNC.

Case Study: Reviving Tasmania's kelp forests

Breathing new life into our underwater sanctuaries.

Scott Ling noticed the effects of climate change on our oceans long before he became a marine biologist. Growing up fishing along Tasmania's rugged east coast, he could see the dramatic transformation happening beneath the waves with his own eyes. First came the warm water fish he used to see on his family trips across NSW and southern Queensland. Then came the sea urchins, devouring the local vegetation and destabilising the region's delicate marine ecosystem.

But it was the disappearance of Tasmania's Giant Kelp forests that had the most profound impact on the seascape he knew as a child.

Standing up to 40 metres tall, these sprawling thickets were once so immense that swimming through them felt like navigating dense, underwater jungles. "When we'd go out fishing, the kelp would be so thick you wouldn't have to set anchor," Scott remembers. "You could just tie off to the kelp." The forests, preferred habitats for countless marine species, were as ubiquitous as the trees in the surrounding national parks. And then they started to disappear.

"We had a really big dieback of Giant Kelp in 2001," explains Scott, now an associate professor at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. The culprit was a potent combination of warmer water and invasive species, leading to rapid and devastating effects. The once-vibrant forests he swam in as a child were suddenly reduced to barren seascapes. Since then, the situation has only worsened. Twenty-three years later, 95% of Tasmania's kelp forests have vanished.

But peek under Tasmania's coastal waters today and you just might see new life miraculously taking root. Scott now leads the research arm of the Tasmanian Giant Kelp Restoration Project, a collaboration between The Nature Conservancy and other partners focused on reviving these underwater forests. To do this, Scott's team employs a technique called kelp outplanting, where young kelp is grown in a laboratory before being attached to twine and transplanted into the ocean.

While kelp outplanting had been attempted before by attaching the twine to bricks, those plants would often get swept away by strong currents. Scott's particular solution secures the twine to existing reefs, ensuring the kelp's stability. "It's exhilarating work," Scott says, "in part because you can see the positive effects occurring almost in real-time." He likens the process to a real-life Jack and the Beanstalk. "You have these magic beans, and they just grow so fast." Scott can return 12 months after planting the near-microscopic seeds to find them towering over 10 metres tall and bustling with marine life.

Following a successful 2023 trial that identified the best conditions for outplanting, Scott is excited to take the project further. "The challenge now is, how do we scale up? How do we make it self-sustainable, and pull these levers to get these ecosystems to come back?"

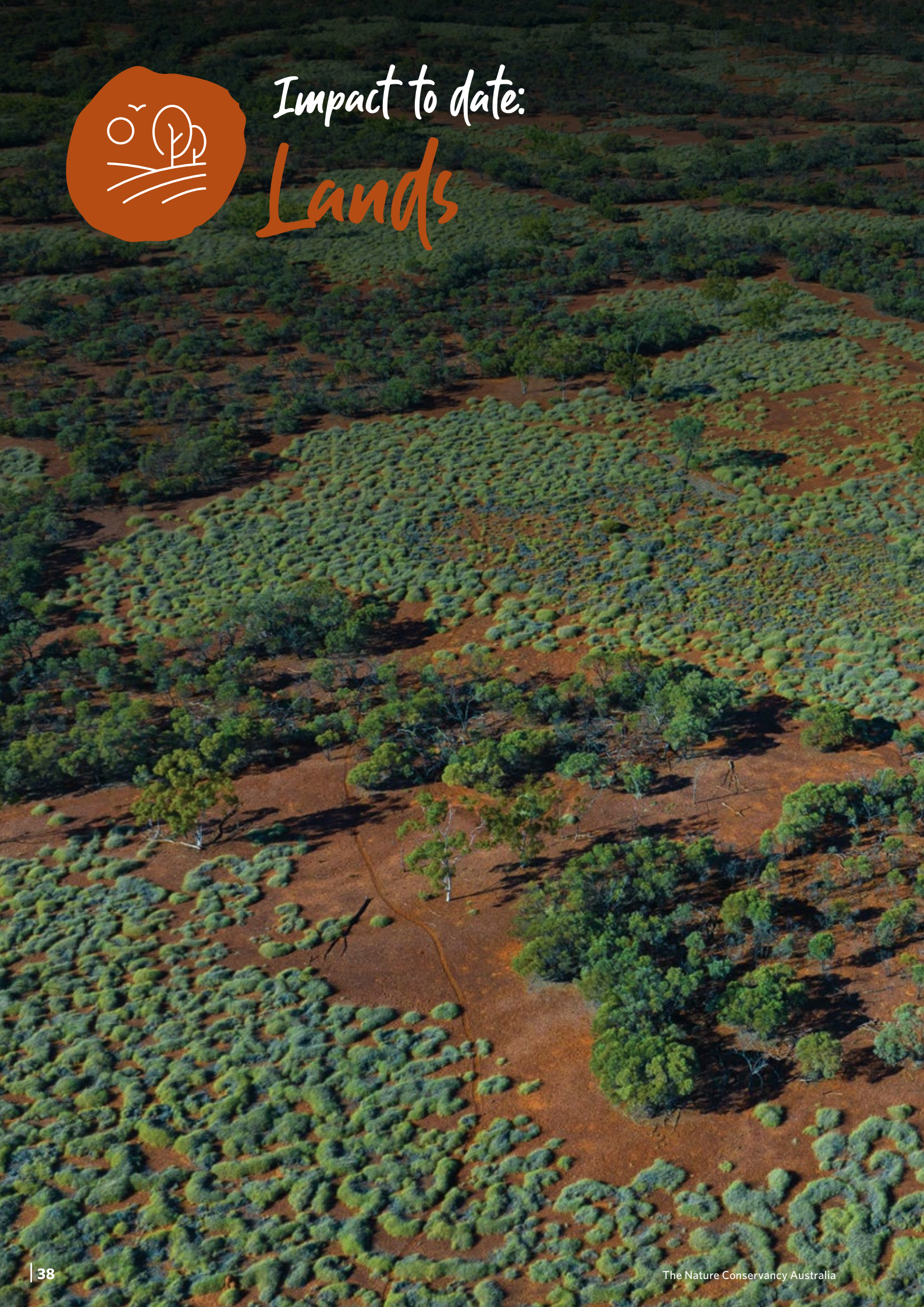
Success will rely on the collaboration of all the project's partners, which include The University of Tasmania, Natural Resource Management South and the CSIRO. However, Scott emphasises that this next phase is where The Nature Conservancy's support will become even more vital. "The Nature Conservancy really helped us put together the kelp restoration handbook. And now they're helping us move from replanting trees to replanting whole forests."

For Scott, the project's impact extends far beyond ecological restoration; it offers a beacon of hope. "Outplanting Giant Kelp is the best therapy for eco grief," Scott says. "You have these beans in your hand, and you're doing something tangible to regrow a forest that's been lost."

By restoring these underwater forests, the project demonstrates that hard work can bring about real change – one seed at a time.



Impact to date:
Lands





Our goal

By 2030, we will protect, restore and improve the management of **90 million** hectares of land, including large landscape management with First Nations communities.

Other 2030 goals met by this work:



Our progress

29,007,715 hectares, approximately **32%** of target achieved so far.

This is around



262 times

the size of Hong Kong.



Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies. Credit: Lyn Brydon.

How does TNC protect, restore and improve the management of lands?

Our work focuses on:

- 1. Land acquisitions and establishing protected areas. Acquisitions of ecological significance add to the Australian protected area estate through new public or private protected areas.**
- 2. Creating working partnerships with First Nations groups to support their efforts to establish new Indigenous Protected Areas of land or sea Country, through Healthy Country Planning, direct financial assistance or other mechanisms that support First Nations communities in building their capacity to manage Country.**
- 3. Advising on Protected Area policy: we provide advice to the Australian and state governments to deliver funding and policies to meet Australia's international commitment to protect at least 30% of its lands and freshwaters and 30% of its oceans by 2030 (30x30).**

Our work in the field

We contributed to the creation of four new national parks, and to the protection of more than 400,000 hectares of adjacent landscape scale protection through private and protected areas

Purchased with contributions from TNC through generous support from our donors, Brindingabba and Comeroo represent more than 71,000 hectares of ecologically significant lands in New South Wales. Connected with a number of private protected areas in the region, the protection of these two properties enables wide ranging species to move and adapt to changing environmental conditions, forming a corridor of more than 90,000 hectares.

In July 2024, The Lakes became one of Queensland's newest national parks, a fantastic achievement for the protection and preservation of more than 43,000 hectares of significant conservation value to Queensland's protected area estate. This includes four hyper saline lakes classified as wetlands of High Ecological Significance.

In May 2024, TNC brokered the single largest donation to buy land for conservation in Australian history. The \$21 million anonymous donation supported the purchase of Vergemont, protecting more than 300,000 hectares of Channel Country in western Queensland for the national park estate. Larger than the Yosemite National Park in the USA, the acquisition will create a conservation corridor of about 1.4 million hectares, including key habitat for the endangered Night Parrot and highly restricted Opalton Grasswren. It also protects the headwaters of the Lake Eyre Basin, the source of one of the last remaining free-flowing arid river systems in the world.



The Lakes, Queensland. Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.

We work with Indigenous partners and continue to support communities to build their capacity to manage Country

TNC is dedicated to supporting community-based conservation on Country, with a sharp focus on mitigating biodiversity loss. We work closely with First Nations peoples to support land and seascape management. Where these communities are empowered and in control, the greatest results are seen.

We know that by amplifying the voices of First Nations communities, large-scale conservation success can be achieved. We approach challenges holistically and work under the two-way knowledge transfer framework of Voice, Choice, and Action (VCA), a TNC driven charter that recognises the rights, aspirations, challenges, knowledge and capacity of First Nations communities. This framework supports self-determination, community-led conservation and development initiatives on each communities' aspirations for the health of people and Country.

TNC facilitates the resources and relationships to enable sustainable models of protection at scale. We have developed and continue to hone a range of tools that we share on invitation with First Nations groups, tools such as the Healthy Country Planning (HCP) and Development by Design (DbD) approaches, which work to amplify First Nations voices and recognise aspirations.

Across Australia's outback, we have worked with 45 Indigenous partner groups throughout this reporting period. We have built on HCP strategies as an Indigenous, community-driven method to develop management plans for caring for natural and cultural values and have worked on the successful delivery of ten complete HCPs across this timeframe. These plans support Indigenous people to manage their Country in a way that respects their values, perspectives and community aspirations to improving community wellbeing and livelihoods.

We continue to use community-based Development by Design methodology to spatially assess future development options with reference to the vision and values articulated by communities across remote locations

Controlled burns to restore the health and diversity of nature is a big part of our work in the fight against climate change, offering huge benefits for people and nature through biodiversity outcomes and climate change mitigation. Our work supporting First Nations communities in their efforts to manage the landscapes through 'right way fire' extends across northern Australia. In what is one of the most naturally fire-prone landscapes in the world, Indigenous-led fire management protects wildlife, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases sequestered carbon in the landscape and strengthens Indigenous culture. TNC supports our Indigenous partners to combine their traditional ecological knowledge and cultural practice with cutting-edge fire science to manage their Country with fire. This results in a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from savanna fire, which can be quantified and can enable groups to earn carbon credits.

Since TNC helped establish one of the first savanna-burning carbon projects in 2012, Indigenous fire carbon enterprises have expanded significantly. Registered Indigenous-led savanna-burning carbon projects now cover 23 million hectares of Indigenous land and achieve more than 1.3 million tonnes of emissions reduction each year.

Over the last few years we have worked with communities on seven Indigenous Carbon Projects. The team has directly worked with Indigenous groups to support 12 fire management and carbon projects on Cape York and in the Kimberley region. We've also continued to support the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network's launch as a Limited Company, as it grows its role as a leader in fostering sustainability of the Indigenous savanna-burning carbon industry.

Supported by TNC, the Strong Women for Healthy Country network is advocating for gender equality in ranger programs all over Australia so that women's unique and distinct cultural and biodiversity knowledge is safeguarded and contributes to a stronger, healthier Country.

Designed as a two-way learning program, Bush Universities provide opportunities for remote Indigenous students to access tertiary education and afford opportunities for Elders to share traditional knowledge with their community. TNC supported Bush Universities in Wuyagiba, Garrthalala/Laynhapuy and expanded trials in south east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and Cape York in Far North Queensland. We were delighted to congratulate Wuyagiba Bush University's first graduate, Melissa, in 2023. Melissa was the first full Bachelor degree graduate from the remote community of Ngukurr in the Northern Territory, in 36 years.

Cool season burning. Credit: Mark Godfrey/TNC.



Case Study: A new dawn for the Night Parrot

Turning a cattle station into a wildlife sanctuary.

For dedicated twitchers, few dreams are more tantalising than the chance of spotting a Night Parrot in the wild. Believed extinct, with no confirmed sightings for 67 years, the elusive bird was miraculously photographed in western Queensland in 2013. Since then, the rediscovered Night Parrot has achieved cult-like status among birders. Yet even today, sightings are extremely rare; the nocturnal, ground-dwelling bird, which may number only 15 in Queensland, has only been spotted in a handful of remote locations.

Now, thanks to a \$21 million donation to The Nature Conservancy, the Night Parrot's future – and that of countless other rare and significant plants and animals – looks brighter than ever. Donated anonymously, the funds were used by The Nature Conservancy to assist the Queensland Government to purchase Vergemont Station, a cattle property the size of Yosemite National Park. This has secured more than 300,000 hectares of prime habitat in Queensland's Channel Country, creating a safe haven for wildlife, preserving vital water catchments and increasing the ecological connectivity of this globally significant landscape.

For Dr James Fitzsimons, Senior Advisor with The Nature Conservancy and a keen birder, the project is especially exciting. "Vergemont Station is literally a couple of properties away from where the Night Parrot was rediscovered," he says. "So the chances of finding it there are very high, which means we can learn much more about them." While we'll have to wait for confirmation of its existence on the property, James says the prevalence of spinifex, the preferred habitat of the Night Parrot, and the known presence of Night Parrots on nearby properties, is a promising sign.

The purchase isn't just good news for birdwatchers, either. Containing an astonishing 34 different ecosystems, Vergemont is a veritable Noah's Ark of biodiversity. "The area is home to other threatened species like the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby," says James, who is also an adjunct professor at Deakin University. But as a scientist, what excites him most about the site is what we don't know about it. "For a property of this size, the likelihood of finding new species is very high."

Now poised to become a vital wildlife sanctuary, the former cattle station is a testament to the tangible benefits of donating to conservation efforts. But the true impact of the purchase extends well beyond the station's 300,000 hectares. Vergemont adjoins other existing and recently acquired reserves, creating a protected area corridor that conserves nearly 1.5 million hectares of the precious Channel Country bioregion. "It's part of a much larger connected system, which was also attractive to the donor," James says.

He adds that the acquisition is also a significant step towards Australia's goal of protecting 30% of its lands and oceans by 2030, a global conservation initiative known as 30x30.

"Vergemont is a prime example of how public and private partnerships can significantly shift the dial," he says. "Purchasing important properties for conservation is one of a number of different protection strategies we know work."

"By pairing large donations with government purchasing power, we can achieve amazing conservation outcomes that neither could accomplish alone."





How The Nature Conservancy works to support First Nations Communities

In June 2024, Heather McLean-Thomson joined TNC's Indigenous Landscapes team to visit some of our partners across Cape York, Queensland. Heather was so profoundly moved by the trip, that she shared her thoughts, and has kindly allowed us to now share with you.

I had the privilege of joining a TNC visit to Cape York as a Trustee of the McLean Foundation, which has been a long-time supporter and champion of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Australia.

I knew it was a unique opportunity, but I was completely unprepared for the profound bonds, depth of learning and extent to which my worldview would be turned on its head.

The field trip was not a typical “donor visit” showing us a curated success story. We didn't just observe but became part of the process of this work. It has fundamentally changed me and how I understand justice, land rights and the critical importance of being on Country to heal and protect the environment in remote First Nations communities.

The national narrative around remote Aboriginal communities in Australia is not usually associated with power, passion and purpose, but that is exactly what we experienced in meeting the exceptional First Nations Traditional Owners, Elders and community advocates who are fighting to heal and protect their Countries in remote North-West Cape York.

The context of TNC's work in the Wenlock River Catchment and NW Cape York is one of horrific injustice and dispossession from Country, ineffective Native Title and complex land rights.

In this complex space of protecting, restoring and saving the biodiversity of the Wenlock Catchment and NW Cape York, TNC is the connective tissue that holds the key partnerships and stakeholders together, allowing for collaboration when politics and diverging vested interests have traditionally been a barrier.

TNC lives out their principles of this work being First Nations determined and led, and therefore has an all-encompassing approach to conservation in this context. An Aboriginal view of conservation means “culture first” and everything else will flow from that. It means taking time to build relationships, holding space for the “time in-between”, bringing TNC's expertise of Healthy Country Plans and other tools that enable communities to advocate for their own Country and upholding the importance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' place on “being on Country” to heal themselves, their communities and their land and waterways.

As a feminist and someone who deeply believes in the unique role women play in conservation, spending time on Country with the female leaders in NW Cape York who are stepping into power to save, protect and heal their Country so that, in turn, their people can be healed, has been one of the most profound experiences of my life.

Auntie Di has worked tirelessly to record and protect Tjungundji cultural heritage sites including burial grounds.

Reignited by the transformative power of being on Country, Tjungundji Elder Auntie Bev's quiet determination to protect the land and rehabilitate it from old wounds has deeply inspired me.

A powerhouse of knowledge, passion and purpose, Temaleti, Teppethiggi woman and Coordinator of the Wenlock Catchment Management Group, is dedicating her life to save the lands and waterways in the Wenlock River catchment area - nothing will stand in her way!

Yarning with Yupungathi woman Sarah, Angkamuthi Elder and Traditional Owner Auntie Sandra and the Rangers (Custodians), I came to understand that local cultural knowledge is paramount for effective fire management and plays a vital role in employment, conservation and culture.

We spent time camping on Angkamuthi Country at Vrilya Point (a few hours 4-wheel drive through the bush away from the township of Bamaga) with Auntie Sandra and her granddaughter Iliya.

Iliya knows all too well the challenges the children of Bamaga face, being constantly suspended from school and ending up in the justice system from boredom and disconnection from Country and culture. She has a vision to take young people out on Country, so they can connect with culture and land. Her grandmother shares the same vision and is seeking support to build Iliya's capability to take this initiative forward and ensure that there are employment opportunities available for young people in healing their people and Country.

Thank you to the TNC team on the ground, particularly the wonderful Luke and Avril, who embody TNC's values and tirelessly back the exceptional local leaders we met on the Cape York visit.

“We will treasure this visit for the rest of our lives.”

Ways of giving to The Nature Conservancy

Your support matters – when you support The Nature Conservancy, you help achieve lasting results for both people and nature. From the tropical savannas in our north, to bays and estuaries in our south, all of our successes start with the dedication and passion of people like you.

Keen to make a difference?

- Make an annual gift to help tackle critical conservation issues right here in Australia
- Become a Conservation Champion and your monthly gifts will sustain a healthy Australian environment today and for generations to come.
- Invest in creating a positive impact by becoming a philanthropic or corporate partner in our work across Australia.
- Workplace Giving is a simple and highly-effective way for companies to engage their employees and build relationships with organisations with shared goals and values, while helping protect nature through charitable giving. Workplace Giving is a multi-beneficial approach for you, your staff and The Nature Conservancy.

- Find out more about making a lasting legacy to conservation in your will by contacting sarah.kimball@tnc.org or simon.habel@tnc.org in complete confidence.
- Tell your friends about TNC – follow and like us on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube
- Scan the QR code to sign up for our email updates



For more information on the different ways of giving to The Nature Conservancy, to ask us any questions or for more information, please either email us at ausdevelopment@tnc.org or call us on 03 8346 8600.

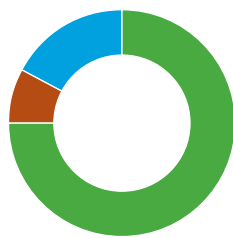


*Collecting seeds for mine rehabilitation.
Credit: Ella Colley/Gum Tree Foundation.*

Finance: Expenditure and Revenue overview

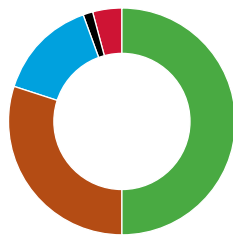
Reporting period: January 2022 – June 2024.

Expenses



- Conservation programs **75%**
- General administration **8%**
- Fundraising and marketing **17%**

Revenue



- Donor support **47%**
- Grants & contracts **42%**
- Investment income **3%**
- Other income **1%**
- Other Intra-Co support **7%**

Revenue stream

Donor support	\$26,070,558
Grants & contracts	\$23,236,540
Investment income	\$1,466,452
Other income	\$403,537
Other Intra-Co support	\$ 4,196,222
Total Revenue	\$55,373,309

Board Members and Acknowledgements

Mr Robert McLean AM

Chairman, TNC Australia
Director, Paul Ramsay Foundation
Trustee, McLean Foundation

Ms Leah Armstrong

Regional Manager (Australia)
International Funders for
Indigenous Peoples IFIP

Mr Charles Carnegie

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Director, Tipperary Station Group

Board Observer - Ms Kirsty Ha

Principal Legal Advisor
Victorian Department of
Treasury and Finance

Thank you



Starfish. Credit: Jarrod Boord/Streamline Media/TNC.



Lake Gairdner, South Australia. Credit: Christian Spencer/TNC Photo Contest 2017.

With your help, we are protecting Australia's natural heritage for generations to come.

*Together,
we find a way*

The Nature Conservancy Australia

Director of Philanthropy & Engagement: Lara Gallagher lara.gallagher@tnc.org

Director of Development: Simon Habel simon.habel@tnc.org

www.natureaustralia.org.au

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