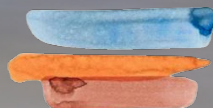


Annual Report 2024

Partnering to advance Australian conservation



Friends of the Australian
Bush Heritage Fund

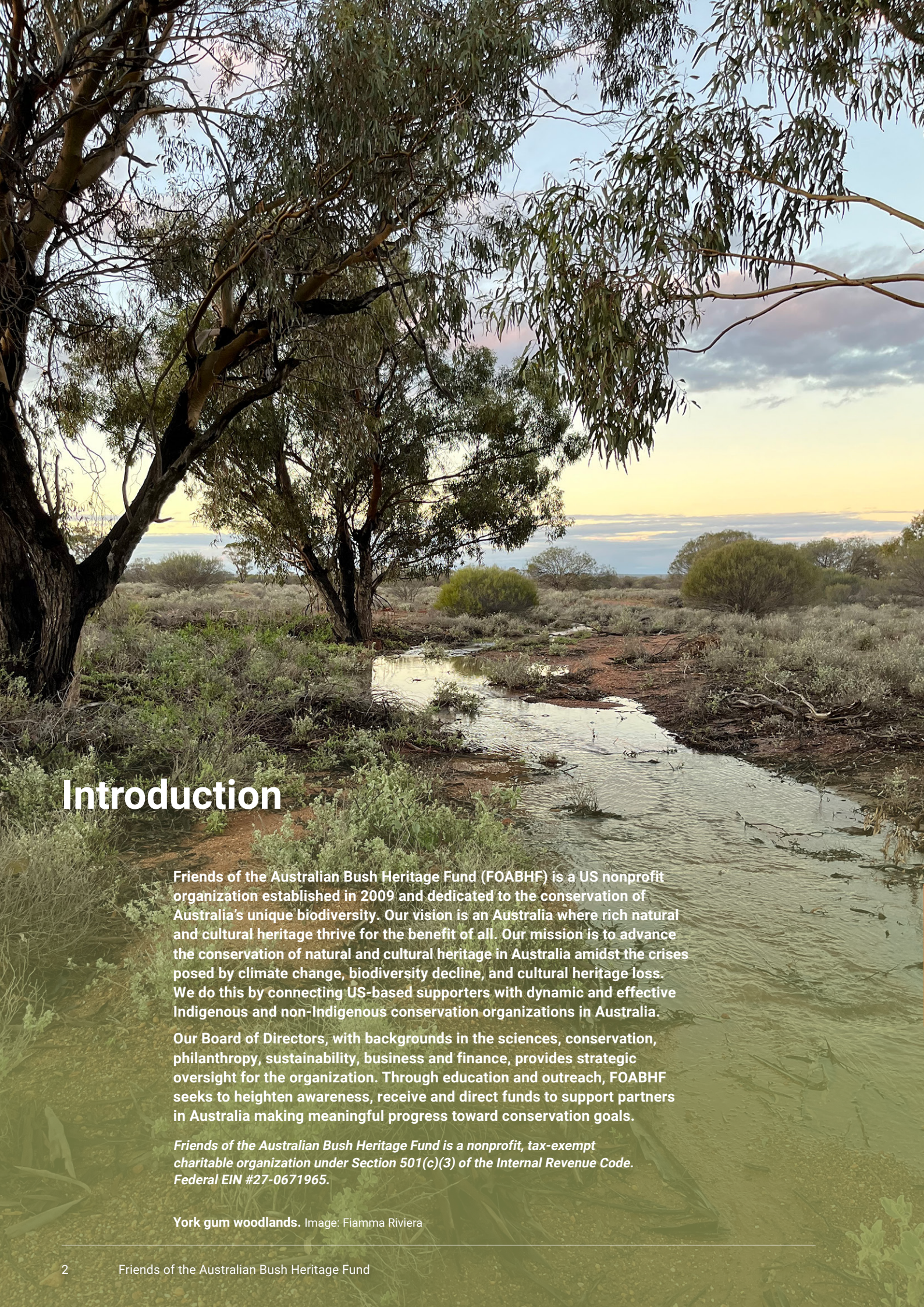
We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the places in which we live, work and play. We recognize and respect the enduring relationship they have with their lands and waters, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Below: Red-tailed phascogale. Image: Robert Dugand
Cover image: Galah on Charles Darwin Reserve. Image: Ben Parkhurst



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Introduction

Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund (FOABHF) is a US nonprofit organization established in 2009 and dedicated to the conservation of Australia's unique biodiversity. Our vision is an Australia where rich natural and cultural heritage thrive for the benefit of all. Our mission is to advance the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in Australia amidst the crises posed by climate change, biodiversity decline, and cultural heritage loss. We do this by connecting US-based supporters with dynamic and effective Indigenous and non-Indigenous conservation organizations in Australia.

Our Board of Directors, with backgrounds in the sciences, conservation, philanthropy, sustainability, business and finance, provides strategic oversight for the organization. Through education and outreach, FOABHF seeks to heighten awareness, receive and direct funds to support partners in Australia making meaningful progress toward conservation goals.

Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Federal EIN #27-0671965.

York gum woodlands. Image: Fiamma Riviera

Welcome and g'day!

By Jennifer Smith Grubb, Executive Director, Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund

Welcome and g'day friends and supporters. We embraced growth as an organization at FOABHF in 2024.

In August, the board asked me to lead the organization as the first Executive Director, and I transitioned from my role as Board President. Sabine Reiser assumed the mantle of Board President and Chris Doherty became Board Secretary/Treasurer. Other members of our board of experts in sustainability, conservation, science and finance include Peggy Brannigan, Doug Humann, Dr. Pamela Reid, Dr. Gary Tabor and Kent Wommack. I am profoundly grateful to each of them for their valuable service to the cause of Australian conservation.

We work closely with our founding partner, Bush Heritage Australia, a leading non-profit organization in Australia which protects and helps manage over 29 million acres through their network of conservation reserves and partnerships with First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) people.

Bush Heritage uses the best science, conservation and Indigenous knowledge to deliver landscape-scale impact for ecosystems and wildlife across the continent.

They work with First Nations people and the agricultural sector to ensure their impact is deep, sustainable, and collaborative.

Visiting Bush Heritage's Charles Darwin Reserve, Eurardy Reserve, and Hamelin Reserve in Western Australia in August gave me a fresh appreciation for the complex nature of protecting land forever. At each property, I was greeted by a Reserve Manager, an expert in bringing the land back to good health, working daily to eradicate foreign plant and animal species. Reserve Managers work closely with a regional Ecologist, a Field Officer, a regional Healthy Landscape Manager, as well as a regional Aboriginal Partnerships Manager and First Nations people to understand more about the local habitat and how to bring it back to its native state.

During my travels in Western Australia, I met with Bush Heritage Mentor Lis McClellan, to understand how the organization is helping early-stage conservationists gain practical work experience through their Seeding the Future program.

(Continued on next page)

"Thanks to you, our efforts to preserve the unique flora and fauna of Australia are growing, and with it, our hope for the future."



White everlasting wildflowers at Charles Darwin Reserve. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb

(Continued from previous page)

Through support from LinkedIn and donors like you, we are laying the groundwork for the future of land conservation in Australia by helping teach students practical field skills and provide sector experience, while at the same time benefiting from the latest innovations science has to offer.

In September of 2024, FOABHF announced our new partnership with Karrkad Kanjdji Trust (KKT) in Arnhem Land in Northern Territory. KKT is a philanthropic trust that was established by Traditional Owners of the Warddeken and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas in 2010, to support their vision for healthy Country. Today, KKT supports the preservation and revitalization of culture, and the conservation of over 12 million acres of land and sea Country.



Central to KKT’s healthy Country approach to safeguarding vital ecosystems for future generations are their six foundational pillars:

- Protecting native biodiversity
- Safeguarding Indigenous culture
- Supporting people on Country
- Investing in women rangers
- Educating future custodians
- Managing fire and climate

Members of the leadership of FOABHF and KKT met in New York City for Climate Week 2024, to participate in the premiere of *The Wayfinders* film series, and debut KKT’s partner’s new film about returning to Country in Arnhem Land. Once these films are available for individual viewing, we will share the news. Requests for screenings can be made here: <https://www.wayfinderscircle.org/films>

Thanks to you, our ability to preserve the unique flora and fauna of Australia is growing, and with it, our hope for the future. We envision an Australia where rich natural and cultural heritage thrive for the benefit of all. Together we are making significant strides in our dreams for Australia. Thank you. We appreciate you!



Jennifer Smith Grubb, Executive Director
Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund

Greetings from Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

By Stacey Irving, Chief Executive Officer, Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

On most continents, the main cause of biodiversity loss is urban development. However, in Australia, significant declines in biodiversity have occurred in remote areas, far from large towns and cities.

Here, the most common causes of biodiversity loss are the incursion of invasive plants and feral animals, and lapses in land management. These lapses in land management lead to what is referred to as ‘empty’ or ‘orphaned’ Country: land without its people. Since colonization, this has occurred to varying degrees across Australia.

Fortunately, despite this forced interruption in traditional land stewardship, Arnhem Land in Australia’s Top End has still maintained much of its biodiversity. The defining feature of West and Central Arnhem Land is the vast and breathtaking rocky escarpment of the Arnhem Plateau. The area is also characterized by floodplains, remnant rainforest patches and savanna woodlands. It is home to more than 160 plant species found nowhere else in Australia or the world, and 370 plant species that are found exclusively in the Northern Territory (NT). It is also home to more than 30 at-risk native animal species.

The Karrkad Kanjdji Trust (KKT) was established by Traditional Owners of West and Central Arnhem Land to support and resource their frontline conservation of this globally invaluable tract of biodiversity. Since 2016, KKT has been gradually realizing this purpose by connecting a growing number of philanthropic supporters with the community-owned, place-based work—determined by Traditional Owners and performed by rangers—that is every day actively combating the risks threatening the survival of native ecosystems.

KKT operates on the principles that we all have a part to play in reversing the rapid loss of the earth’s biodiversity; and that supporting and amplifying the knowledge and leadership of the world’s oldest continuous culture is an essential part of the solution to this global issue. This is why KKT was so thrilled when we formalized a working partnership with Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund in September of 2024.

Shortly after, KKT staff, directors and affiliates had the privilege of attending Climate Week in New York City, where we also had the opportunity to meet with Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund’s CEO, Jennifer Smith Grubb, and directors Peggy Brannigan and Kent Wommack. Over time, we hope that this relationship will allow more environment and climate funders to learn about Australia’s burgeoning Indigenous land management movement, and how they can support its future.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I’d like to offer our heartfelt thanks to the Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund’s own board and staff. We are grateful for your belief and support, and we look forward to what we can achieve together.



Stacey Irving, Chief Executive Officer
Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

“Here, the most common causes of biodiversity loss are the incursion of invasive plants and feral animals, and lapses in land management.”

Hello from Bush Heritage Australia

By Rachel Lowry, Chief Executive Officer, Bush Heritage Australia

I recently celebrated my first-year anniversary as CEO of Bush Heritage by making a visit to the US to meet with many of you who are making an impact with your donations for Australian conservation.

Thank you for all you are doing to help us. You are making a vital difference towards our vision of healthy Country*, protected forever.

2024 was a year of wonderful successes, including the declaration of our [Edgbaston Reserve](#) as a "Special Wildlife Reserve"; the second of its kind to receive National Park-level protection in Queensland. This is a remarkable achievement and ensures Edgbaston is recognized for its exceptional natural and cultural values and is protected in perpetuity from any extractive activities.

Our purchase of Dodgey Downs Reserve in Western Australia in the middle of the year was a massive win for habitat connectivity in the Fitz-Stirling region. Bordering our existing reserves, Monjebup to the northwest and Red Moort to the southeast, Dodgey Downs fills a 1,883-acre gap in an otherwise continuous corridor of protected land. Our team can't wait to begin putting seeds in the ground and build on the success of our biodiverse revegetation work on nearby Chereninup, Monjebup and Ediegarrup Reserves.

In addition, late last year we were successful in the purchase of Nil Desperandum, a very special property bordering our Naree Reserve and the Yantabulla Swamp in northwestern New South Wales, thereby protecting a section of the Murray-Darling Basin. As Australia's largest river basin, spanning New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, the

Murray-Darling Basin provides critical habitat for native species and sustains our food and water systems. The acquisition of Nil Desperandum extends our work in the Paroo-Warrego Rivers and helps increase protection of this vital inland freshwater system, a nationally important wetland and breeding site for a wide range of waterbirds.

The name 'Nil Desperandum' means 'nothing to be despaired of'; a name I find apt in these challenging times. We are now over 20% of the way towards our target of doubling the amount of land we own and manage by 2030. These conservation wins bring immense hope. However, the environmental threats facing Australia remain significant. Deforestation in Queensland, a biodiversity hotspot, is occurring at an alarming rate. In 2024, there were 42 new additions to the national list of threatened species. We cannot allow this to continue. Now more than ever, we need boots on the ground, hands in the soil, and more land protected for conservation to safeguard Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

I take inspiration from your support for our work at Bush Heritage. Knowing that our community in the US is cheering for us from across the sea motivates me every day. Thank you. These wins are yours too; we could not do it without you. With your help, we can continue to return the Australian bush to good health.



Rachel Lowry, Chief Executive Officer
Bush Heritage Australia

**Bush Heritage assesses what 'healthy Country' looks like for each individual landscape by identifying the species, habitats, and cultural values that need to be managed and protected, as well as the threats that they face. The best knowledge available is used to create plans by relying on a team of scientists, field staff, data specialists, conservation planners, partnership managers, and First Nations people, as well as other stakeholders.*

Our Founding Partner works across Australia

About Bush Heritage

The Bush Heritage story started in 1991, in the Liffey Valley of Tasmania. Thanks to winning the Goldman Environmental Prize, Australian Environmentalist Bob Brown purchased two forest blocks to protect them from logging, and a passionate community was born.

From those first few hundred acres of land, Bush Heritage has grown into a leading national organization.

Now, Bush Heritage protects and helps manage over 29 million acres through their network of conservation reserves (3.6 million acres of permanently protected land) and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These landscapes span rainforests to woodlands, savannas to deserts, and everything in between. Combined with their partners' lands, these reserves are home to more than 9,300 native species, many of which are considered vulnerable or at risk of extinction.

In 2021, Bush Heritage launched a 2030 Strategy which sets out their ambition to deepen and double their impact by the end of this crucial decade. This means doubling the amount of land which they own and manage (from 3 million acres to 6 million acres) and increasing impact on existing reserves and partnerships through enhanced legal protections, best-practice restoration and cutting-edge research.

Bush Heritage buys and manages land in areas of high conservation value that are home to nationally significant ecosystems. Reserves are chosen based on their capacity to help protect them in the face of emerging threats, and the degree to which they are already protected through Australia's National Reserve System – a combined network of public and privately protected lands.

Acknowledging and supporting First Nations people on their lands, Bush Heritage works on behalf of nature to protect precious shared ecosystems. Their people are on the ground, immersed in the land. They control feral animal populations and weeds and manage Country for fire and flood. Their expert scientists, volunteers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Custodians collect data, utilize cutting-edge research, and look for new and innovative ways to drive the right-way approach. They work with leading research institutions to ensure their approach is long-term, strategic, and based on the best, most relevant data.

"From those first few hundred acres of land, Bush Heritage has grown into a leading national organization."

From Perth to Shark Bay

A personal introduction to the Reserves of Western Australia

By Jennifer Smith Grubb

Charles Darwin Reserve (CDR) and the Wabari-Malleefowl mounds

Cascading bursts of bloom in flamingo pink, luminescent white and yellow mustard rolled out the welcome mat for us in Western Australia. We arrived in Perth in mid-August, which is late winter, in alternating days of sun and rain, and drove north to Shark Bay, visiting three Bush Heritage conservation reserves along the way. Greeting us at each site were the passionate, dedicated Reserve Managers who live onsite and care for the properties, implementing plans to restore the land and revitalize the native plant and animal species. The regional Ecologist and Landscape Manager who oversee the three reserves joined us as well, ensuring we understood how Bush Heritage Australia works at scale to maximize their impact in the country.

Traveling with my brother-in-law Chris Grubb and his wife Gina Grubb, both ardent conservationists and he the former Chair of the Board for Bush Heritage, my husband Hugh and I began our weeklong tour at Charles Darwin Reserve (CDR), a 170,000-acre biodiversity hotspot approximately 225 miles northeast of Perth.

Traditional home of the Badimia people, we visited the “gabi dhaa” or freshwater holes in granite rock which helped provide safe passage across the landscape for Aboriginal people over millennia.

We examined enormous Wabari-Malleefowl mounds, the diameter of the nest as wide as we are tall, where the birds incubate their eggs, maintaining a constant temperature by working with their environment, adding eucalyptus leaves and rainwater and covering with sand to ensure decomposition, then uncovering the mixture to keep the eggs at a constant temperature of 91.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

We followed Red-tailed Black Cockatoos across the property, watching as they landed in the Gimlet woodlands. Home to rare eucalypts, the York gums, mixed Salmon gums and Gimlet woodlands are protected on a large scale at CDR. Only six percent of these vegetation types remain in nature, and less than three percent are protected in conservation reserves.

Chris, Gina, Jennifer and Hugh Grubb at Charles Darwin Reserve. Image: Ben Parkhurst



Above: Hugh Grubb, Chris Grubb, Ben Parkhurst and Dr. Jessica Stingemore at freshwater granite hole or “gabi dhaa”. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb

Left: Abandoned Wabari-Malleefowl Mound, Charles Darwin Reserve. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb

Far left: York gum tree on Charles Darwin Reserve. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb

Hamelin Station Reserve and three-billion-year-old stromatolites

Bidding farewell to our capable guides, CDR Reserve Manager Dr. Jessica Stingemore and Healthy Landscape Manager Ben Parkhurst, we journeyed north to Hamelin Station Reserve (Hamelin) near Shark Bay, approximately 450 miles north of Perth on Malgana land, the name for the Traditional Custodians in the region. Bordering

Hamelin Pool and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area, Hamelin is a former sheep station of exceptional conservation value, approximately 500,000 acres in size.

Eager to welcome us to Hamelin Station Reserve was the effervescent Reserve Manager Sarah “Gilly” Gilleland. Joining her was Thorny Devil crusader and Philanthropy Executive Dr. Jaclyn Smith. Enroute from Perth, Jacki had rescued three Thorny Devils from the highway, apparently oblivious to their impending doom. These hand-sized Stegosaurus-looking reptiles each froze as she picked them up and carried them off the road to safety.

Birds are plentiful in the reserve, and we spied nesting Wedgetail Eagles, Nankeen Kestrels, Bustards and Cockatiels. Three to four foot high Common Wallaroos known as Euros radiated across the landscape, alert crimson marsupials embedded in clouds of wildflowers in snow white and sunshine yellow.

Golden wattle at Hamelin Reserve Station. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb



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Gilly shared the location of the fascinating colony of Dawson's Burrowing Bees with us, each large, furry pollinator wearing a safety vest band of yellow cautiously emerging from nickel-sized mounds in the rust-colored ground, popping in and out, looking for the right mate before spreading its wings and sailing off.

We ventured down to the sea at Hamelin Pool, adjacent to Hamelin Reserve Station, to visit the famed stromatolites, living examples of Earth's oldest reefs that are extremely rare in modern oceans. Located at the water's edge in a hypersaline environment, stromatolites are formed by colonies of oxygen-producing

cyanobacteria. Bubbling away in the tide just as their ancestors did for billions of years, stromatolites are the original source of oxygen that allowed complex life to develop and emerge from the oceans on to the land. Stromatolites are revered by the Malgana people as part of their ancestral heritage.

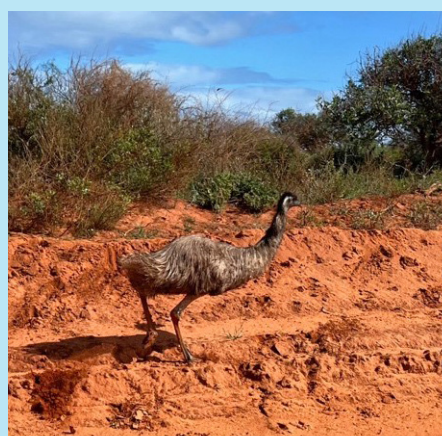
We joined Aboriginal expert Darren "Capes" Capewell of Malgana and Nanda descent for a unique day-long experience with the Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Tour in nearby Francois Peron National Park, kayaking across Shark Bay, singing Aboriginal names for native flora and fauna, and learning how to find fresh water deep in the rich red sand, drinking from a pearlized shell. We spotted an emu drinking water and called to it in the Malgana and Nanda languages as it ran alongside us and off into the landscape. We climbed the rich rusty red sand hills, finding echidna tracks in the sand and an abandoned Aboriginal shell midden. We spotted a small shovel-nosed shark hiding in the shallows, and moments later a full-grown shark further out, hunting.

Throughout the day, Capes shared the Aboriginal values of caring for Country and reminded us that it is our collective responsibility to care for the earth. After dining on freshly grilled fish and vegetables, we gathered at sunset for a welcome soak in water from an artisanal hot spring.

Clockwise from top right:
Injured Euro who had befriended Sarah "Gilly" Gilleland. Image: Gina Grubb

Red sand hills rising above Shark Bay. Image: Darren "Capes" Capewell

Following images all by Jennifer Smith Grubb:
Darren "Capes" Capewell explaining Aboriginal cultural values at Francois Peron National Park.
Emu at Francois Peron National Park.
Cormorants and stromatolites at Hamelin Pool.
Emerging Dawson's Burrowing Bee.

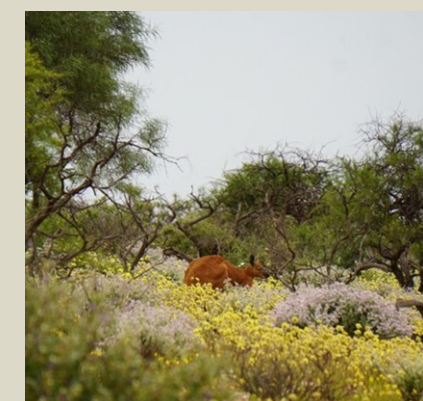


Eurardy Reserve and the "Million Trees" restoration project

The next morning, we headed south to Eurardy Reserve, 85 miles to the south, to meet Healthy Landscape Manager and Ecologist Ben Parkhurst and Reserve Manager Sam Fisher along with Jacki to view the ambitious "Million Trees" restoration project. Eurardy Reserve is on Nanda Aboriginal land and is approximately 115 square miles in size. It is the largest revegetation project in Bush Heritage's history – to date more than 700,000 eucalyptus tree seedlings grown from hand-collected reserve

seed have been planted. Emus kept an eye on us from among the trees as we toured the property in four-wheel drive trucks. We picnicked on a vista overlooking the vast heathlands, vibrant with honey gold grevillea.

Renewed and inspired, the four of us returned to Perth the next day. Together we are working enthusiastically with partners like Bush Heritage to preserve the Australian landscape and its unique species of plant and animal life for generations to come.



Clockwise from above:
Jennifer Smith Grubb with Gold Grevillia at Eurardy Reserve. Image: Gina Grubb
Vibrant pink wildflowers among eucalyptus trees at Eurardy. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb
Red kangaroo at Eurardy Reserve. Image: Jennifer Smith Grubb

Seeding the Future program takes root

About the program

Seeding the Future is an initiative designed by Bush Heritage to empower the next generation of conservationists by providing hands-on experiences, mentorship and skill development opportunities. This program equips new conservationists with the practical tools and knowledge needed to secure meaningful, long-term careers dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural environment.

Bush Heritage bases their projects for participants on conservation priorities and organizational needs. Participants provide real value to Bush Heritage in office- and field-based roles, both in science and conservation management capacities, but also within broader business functions. Every participant is immersed in Bush Heritage with an induction, access to guidance and peer support, and ongoing opportunities to give and receive feedback.



Scholars implement innovative conservation strategies

In addition to undergraduates, Bush Heritage hosts candidates that are completing relevant research at an honors, masters, doctorate or post-doctorate level that address Bush Heritage knowledge gaps or tackle an issue common to the broader conservation sector.

Examples of conservation research studies include:

- Comparing outcomes and impacts of different management strategies for rabbits, foxes and feral cats on native species and examining the potential of restoring native species to reserves in Western Australia;
- Investigating the impact of removing cattle from Pullen Pullen Reserve on native wildlife, such as the Plains-wanderer;
- Undertaking bird observations using acoustic monitoring devices across Bush Heritage reserves and other reference sites to develop an algorithm to monitor bird and broader ecosystem health; and
- Examining the heat and drought tolerance of experimental plantings of different Eucalypt provenances on Nardoo Hills Reserve to determine their suitability for inclusion within an intentional climate-resilient landscape.

These researchers come from universities across Australia and are partially supported through their institutions. Bush Heritage often augments support to each researcher in the form of a student stipend and by covering operational costs.



Far left: PhD candidate Tenaya Duncan with a Hairy-footed Dunnart on Eurardy Reserve, Western Australia. Image: Sarah "Gilly" Gilleland
Left: An artificial refuge made from a pallet on Eurardy Reserve, Western Australia. Image: Tenaya Duncan

"Having an association with Bush Heritage has made my PhD an enjoyable experience through the consistent support from the staff as well as the ability to work on Country and help make a difference. The biggest highlight was Sarah Gilleland, Reserve Manager, Hamelin Reserve, allowing me to spend a 3-week thesis-writing retreat at Hamelin. I am very proud to call myself a Bushie!"
– Tenaya Duncan

Postgrad designs mammal and reptile shelters

Throughout Tenaya Duncan's childhood, she wanted to be a zookeeper and look after elephants. This all changed when she volunteered at a wildlife park in Perth and worked with dingoes.

This sparked her interest in Australia's predators and changed her entire career trajectory. Tenaya decided to pursue an academic career path to better help native species and was the first in her family to attend university.

Tenaya is a PhD candidate at Murdoch University. She has a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Conservation and Zoology. Tenaya returned to dingoes with her honors research project focusing on the impact of linear land clearing on their diet in the Kimberley.

Tenaya's PhD research investigates techniques to provide artificial shelters for small mammals and reptiles to keep them safe from feral cats in disturbed landscapes.

She is conducting her research on Bush Heritage's Hamelin and Eurardy Reserves in Western Australia. Both sites have revegetation efforts such as tree planting underway, but it may take years before the canopy and understory are established enough to provide sufficient habitat for native wildlife.

Using salvaged pallets, fence posts and corrugated iron sheets as experimental variables, Tenaya has created refuges for the threatened species that call Hamelin Reserve and Eurardy Reserve home, such as the Hamelin Skink and Hairy-footed Dunnart. Tenaya hopes that this low-cost approach will be easily replicable for anyone wanting to protect wildlife in regional areas.

Intern innovates to manage controlled burns

Tom’s love for conservation started young. At just five years old, his parents took him on a caravan trip across Australia, sparking his awe for the natural world.

His passion for frogs led him, at age seven, to create a “frog sanctuary” in his backyard – a small pond with lilies and a sign welcoming frogs.

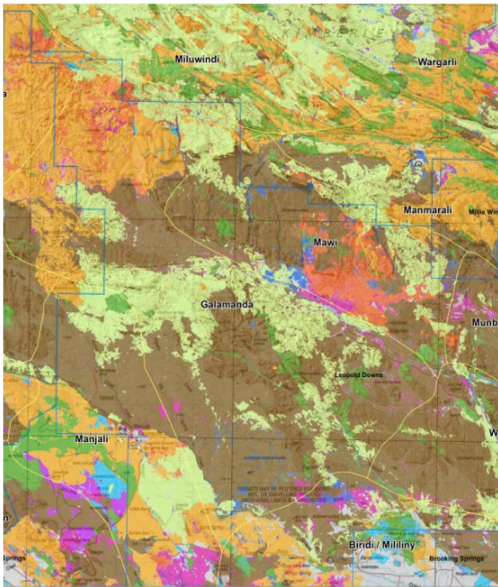
In his twenties, Tom became deeply inspired by the connection between people, fire and land, particularly through learning about First Nations histories and cultures. Reading *Fire Country* by Victor Steffensen further cemented his fascination with the interplay of fire, ecosystems, and human stewardship.

This newfound interest led Tom to a Master’s in Environmental Management in 2023. While attending lectures, he found a job posting for a Fire Spatial Data Intern at Bush Heritage – a perfect fit for his interests.

Tom’s internship focused on creating a reporting and decision-analysis tool for Bush Heritage’s National Fire Team. Using Python scripts and GIS software, the dashboard aggregates key metrics to inform planning, monitoring, and reporting. This helps the team to make decisions that ensure that fire regimes align with ecological values and conservation targets across Australia.

Notably, Sam McAuley – a former intern himself – served as Tom’s direct supervisor, overseeing the completion of a project he initiated himself in 2021.

“Working across two teams gave me a deep appreciation for the collaborative nature of conservation. Rhys Swain, National Fire Program Manager and the fire team’s excitement over my progress was incredibly motivating. The Systems and Data team pushed me to develop new technical skills, particularly in coding, which was a key personal goal for this internship. It was wonderful to feel so supported and to know my work will have a lasting impact on Bush Heritage’s conservation efforts.”
– Tom Jordan



Birds flock to Nil Desperandum

- Reserve location:**
Approximately 80 miles northwest of Bourke
- Reserve size:**
Approximately 9,976 acres
- Reserve established:** 2025
- Traditional Custodians:**
Budjiti people
- Key conservation targets:**
- Yantabulla Swamp Important Bird Area
 - Coolabah and Black Box Woodland
- Key threats:**
- Invasive herbivores
 - Human intervention into natural hydrology
 - Non-native grasses such as African Lovegrass and Buffel Grass
- Key conservation activities:**
- Invasive weed control
 - Feral animal control
 - Building and maintaining livestock exclusion fencing along waterways

Nil Desperandum lies in the state of New South Wales, close to the Queensland border, in the Cuttaburra Basin that connects the Paroo and Warrego rivers. It is semi-arid ‘boom and bust’ country; with long dry periods interspersed with extraordinary floods that transform the parched environment into a thriving landscape bursting with life.

By recently purchasing Nil Desperandum and joining it together with neighboring Yantabulla Station and Naree Reserves, Bush Heritage now manages both banks of the Cuttaburra Creek – the key inflow point for Yantabulla Swamp.

When Yantabulla Swamp floods, it can provide the right conditions for one of Australia’s largest waterbird breeding events. By controlling threats like pigs, goats and weeds around the swamp, Bush Heritage will be able to provide greater protection and support for the transformative natural cycles of this special landscape.

“Nil Desperandum means nothing to be despaired of. I think that’s a really great thing because it gives us hope for the future, especially in a landscape such as this which sits within the Murray Darling Basin – something that is really degraded and facing a lot of threats,” reflected Bridget Roberts, Ecologist for Paroo Warrego, Bush Heritage.

Top: Sunset over wetlands.
Above: Royal spoonbill. Images: Annette Ruzicka



Indigenous film featuring KKT’s partner premieres at Climate Week

Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund team joined Karrkad Kanjdji Trust at the preview screening of ‘Ngarridurndeng Kured’ (We Going Home Now), hosted by the Wayfinders Circle (supported by Nia Tero) at the American Museum of Natural History during New York City’s Climate Week 2024.

The screening of this powerful collection of short documentaries brought audiences closer to Indigenous communities worldwide, showcasing their leadership in sustaining our planet during a time of global climate change. One of three Indigenous stories featured Dean Yibarbuk, KKT Board of Directors Co-Chair, and his family’s journey of returning to live on their ancestral lands in very remote Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.



From left to right: Kent Wommack – FOABHF Board Director, Stacey Irving – KKT CEO, Rosemary Maralngurra – KKT Board Director, Peggy Brannigan – FOABHF Board Director, Conrad Maralngurra – KKT Board Director, Jennifer Smith Grubb – FOABHF Executive Director, Justin Punch – KKT Co-Chair of the Board. Image: Michele Anderson

A strong foundation underpins our new partner in Northern Territory

About Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

The Karrkad Kanjdji Trust (KKT) is a philanthropic trust that was established in 2010 by Traditional Owners of the Warddeken and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas, to support their vision for healthy Country.

As custodians of much of West and Central Arnhem Land—one of the largest Indigenous estates in Australia—they innovatively recognized the potential strength and increased freedom and flexibility of alternative funding sources.

Karrkad Kanjdji (pronounced ‘gada-gut guny-jee’) are Kunwinjku words from the Bininj (Indigineous) Kunwok language that refer to Arnhem Land’s Stone Country highlands – karrkad and savanna lowlands – kanjdji.

Today, KKT is a shared resource to eight First Nations community-controlled organizations in Arnhem Land. Their work spans more than 12 million acres of land and sea Country and is generally more holistic than most Western understandings of conservation.

“KKT is a shared resource to eight First Nations community-controlled organizations in Arnhem Land. Their work spans more than 12 million acres of land and sea Country and is generally more holistic than most Western understandings of conservation.”

Six Key Funding Pillars

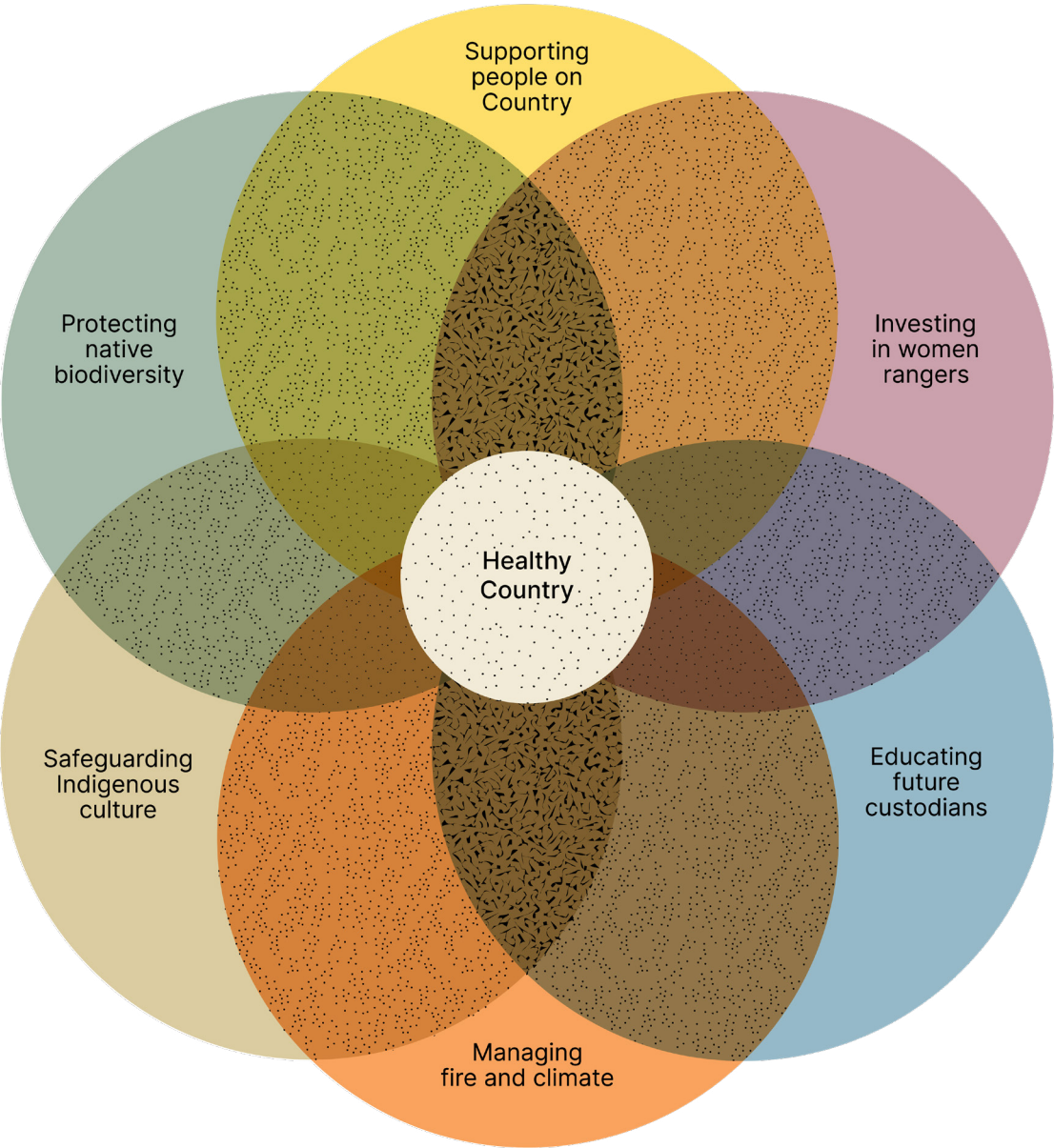
Equal to the protection of the region’s precious biodiversity levels, management of Country also involves the practice of culture and ceremony; the critical intergenerational transfer of Bininj (Indigenous) knowledge; and supporting people to return to and thrive on their homelands.

This has laid the foundation for KKT’s First Nations-led approach to safeguarding vital ecosystems for future generations, which consists of six key funding pillars:

- 1 **Protecting native biodiversity** for thriving native ecosystems, protected by Indigenous rangers. KKT supports ranger organizations blending Indigenous ecological knowledge and Western science to control threats and help native species to thrive in their natural environment.
- 2 **Investing in women rangers** for strong First Nations women, equitably engaged in caring for Country. KKT provides core funds for establishing and growing women’s ranger programs and the frameworks required to strengthen the women’s ranger movement.
- 3 **Safeguarding Indigenous culture** for Country rich in traditional ecological knowledge, languages, art and cultural practices. KKT funds vital community-led projects aimed at preserving Indigenous cultural heritage and actively passing down ecological and landscape knowledge to the next generation.

- 4 **Managing fire and climate** by using fire to minimize carbon emissions, practice culture and conserve habitat. KKT supports both individual ranger groups and regional carbon industry organizations to continue customary fire practices and secure an ongoing sustainable source of income.
- 5 **Educating future custodians** for future generations connected to their Country with access to education ‘both-ways’. KKT recognizes the implicit link between cultural heritage, community strength and conservation outcomes, and therefore supports bi-cultural education projects that raise up the next generation of rangers and custodians.

- 6 **Supporting people on Country** so that Traditional Owners are equipped to live and work on their ancestral lands. KKT funds critical infrastructure, service provision and workforce development projects to ensure that Traditional Owners can continue to undertake critical conservation and cultural work as safely and effectively as possible.
- Overall, this breadth of focus reflects the most holistic and sustainable approach to land management and conservation, wherein each part strengthens the whole.





*"I wanted women to join because we identified, many of us shared the same experiences, often facing issues in the workplace while caring for Country."
– Annette Miller*

KKT's partners' women's ranger programs thrive

Across the world, research has shown that greater involvement of women in local decision-making leads to better land management and conservation outcomes. In Australia, the presence of First Nations women in ranger workforces has proven to be integral to the holistic protection and regeneration of Country and culture.

In Arnhem Land, Karrkad Kanjdji Trust (KKT) works with eight First Nations community-controlled organizations, supporting the preservation and revitalization of culture, and the conservation of more than 19,000 square miles of land and sea Country in the Northern Territory.

Prior to the last decade, ranger programs within Arnhem Land consisted primarily of men, who managed the impacts of feral animals and re-established controlled burns to counter the risk of wildfires. KKT's founding partner organizations knew that greater involvement from women (daluk) was key to achieving better outcomes for Country. Recognizing that healthy Country relies on the customary care and knowledge of both men and women, investing in women rangers became one of KKT's six funding pillars.

Warddeken daluk women rangers.
Image: Kane Chenoweth

Warddeken and Mimal – among the first to create women's ranger programs

Warddeken Land Management became one of the first Aboriginal organizations to create a dedicated daluk or women's ranger program in 2016. A current highlight of the successful program is a freshwater monitoring initiative that evaluates the impact of the removal of feral animals from ecologically and culturally significant places. Today, the program generates an average of 15,000 hours of meaningful, on-Country employment every year.

Mimal Land Management started their own women's ranger program in 2018 and currently facilitates multiple professional development opportunities for women in the region to advance land management knowledge and skills as well as gain leadership opportunities.

Day to day work of women rangers includes savanna burning; native species monitoring; feral species management; and cultural heritage protection. Three women rangers recently completed certificates in legally operating remotely piloted aircraft, which is now being incorporated into landscape-wide monitoring strategies.

Together, the Warddeken Land Management and Mimal Land Management programs support First Nations women in West and Central Arnhem Land to work alongside male rangers, while also guaranteeing a flexible and culturally appropriate workplace. Women rangers are imperative in the intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge, ensuring that young women can identify with strong female role models within their communities.

Florence Birdjala, ASRAC ranger. Image: Stacey Irving



(Continued from previous page)

Strong Women for Healthy Country Network supports rangers

The Strong Women for Healthy Country Network was established six years ago by a group of senior women associated with Mimal, with the aim of uniting and providing further support for rangers and other First Nations women caring for Country in the Northern Territory. The most recent 2024 Strong Women for Healthy Country Forum brought together over 250 First Nations women and girls, to stand united.

“I wanted women to join because we identified, many of us shared the same experiences, often facing issues in the workplace while caring for Country.”
– Annette Miller, Rembarrnga and Dalbon Elder and founding member of the Strong Women for Healthy Country Network.

KKT provides core funding for both the Warddeken and Mimal women’s ranger programs, as well as for the Strong Women for Healthy Country Network. At FOABHF, we support KKT and their commitment to uplifting the strength of First Nations women.

What’s next for KKT?

Goal #1: Building a new home for Bininj art and histories in the Djelk IPA

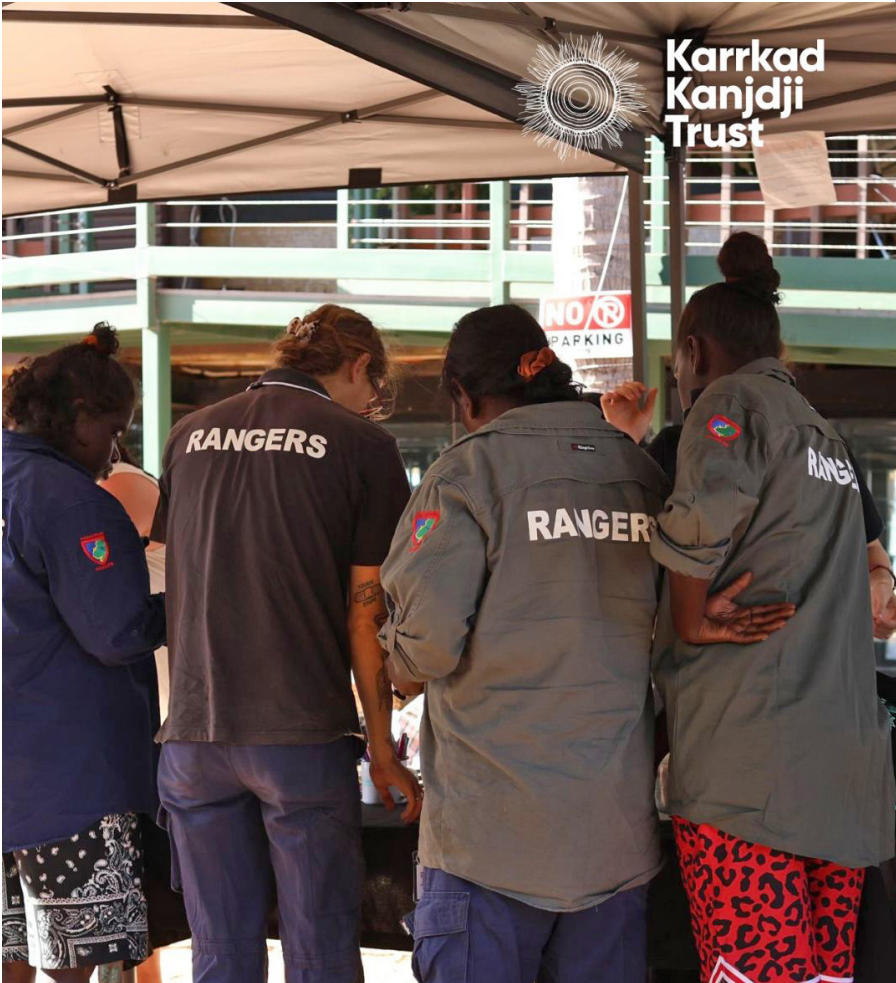
The Djómi Museum, located in Maningrida in the Djelk Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), is home to a nationally significant archive comprising over 700 cultural artifacts and artworks, as well as a host of historical documents. Unfortunately, this invaluable collection of art, cultural knowledge and history is at serious risk at the current premises where the poor storage conditions are outdated and ill-equipped for the region’s climate, rendering the collection greatly susceptible to flooding. It has been a long-standing ambition of many in the Maningrida community to relocate the contents of the Djómi Museum to a new precinct that will safeguard the future of the existing collection and finally enable Traditional Owners and families to receive repatriated artifacts and works.

Goal #2: Partnering with the Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre

The Bininj (Indigenous) Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre (BKRLCC) is an Aboriginal-owned entity that was established to promote and maintain the languages and cultures of Kakadu and West Arnhem Land. The organization responds to requests for assistance from communities and other Aboriginal-owned organizations within the region—many of whom are existing partners of KKT. This often involves either creating or translating important public or educational resources into various dialects.

Goal #3: Engaging the next generations of Bininj leaders in KKT’s governance

Across the Northern Territory, succession planning remains the number one priority concern for Aboriginal community-controlled organizations, yet it is often the first initiative to be deprioritized. In 2025, KKT intends to address this organizational risk by establishing both a board observer program and a traineeship—each intended to further the engagement of Bininj youth in KKT’s work and governance. The KKT traineeship will provide flexible opportunities for young people to gain further skills and abilities to bridge the divide between Arnhem Land-based caring for Country work and the necessary task of securing funding.



Above: Warddeken daluk woman ranger. Image: Stacey Irving
Above right: Rangers at 2024 Strong Women for Healthy Country Forum. Image: Milly Hooper



Donor Spotlight: Dr. Melanie Spriggs plans for a legacy of love

By Jennifer Smith Grubb

Thirty years ago, Dr. Melanie Spriggs was introduced to Australia via a love interest. She vividly recalls her first trip, arriving in Brisbane, driving into the nearby hinterland, and waking up the next morning to a cacophony of bird songs.

A quick glance through binoculars revealed a forest full of brightly colored, vociferous avian companions. She was instantly smitten.

Over the years, continued exploration of the wild places of the continent has led Melanie to well and truly fall in love with the Land Down Under. The power of the Australian landscape, so varied in its manifestations, never ceases to inspire in her awe of its unique geology, flora and fauna. More recently, she has come to strongly appreciate the nascent efforts of land managers throughout Australia to embrace practices and knowledge held by the Traditional Owners of the land.

She is firm in her belief that the best land management practices will include both modern scientific and long-term observational knowledge.

Many places are near and dear to her heart: Daintree National Park, protecting what remains of the world's oldest continuous rainforest; Kakadu in the Northern Territory, where she first experienced the "dawn chorus", when vibrantly colored birds give a full-throated welcome to the morning sun; and perhaps her favorite is the ancient landscape of boab trees and vast escarpments which define the Kimberley, where one magical morning she saw an entire flock of Gouldian finches in all their multicolored glory.

"Over the years, continued exploration of the wild places of the continent has led Melanie to well and truly fall in love with the Land Down Under."

Born in Livermore, California into a military family, Melanie spent her teenage years in Japan on an Air Force Base. She returned to the US to attend college, discovering her passion for molecular genetics through an inspirational professor at the University of California, Davis. She pursued graduate and post graduate degrees in virology, and once established, was given the precious opportunity to mentor postdoctoral students throughout her career.

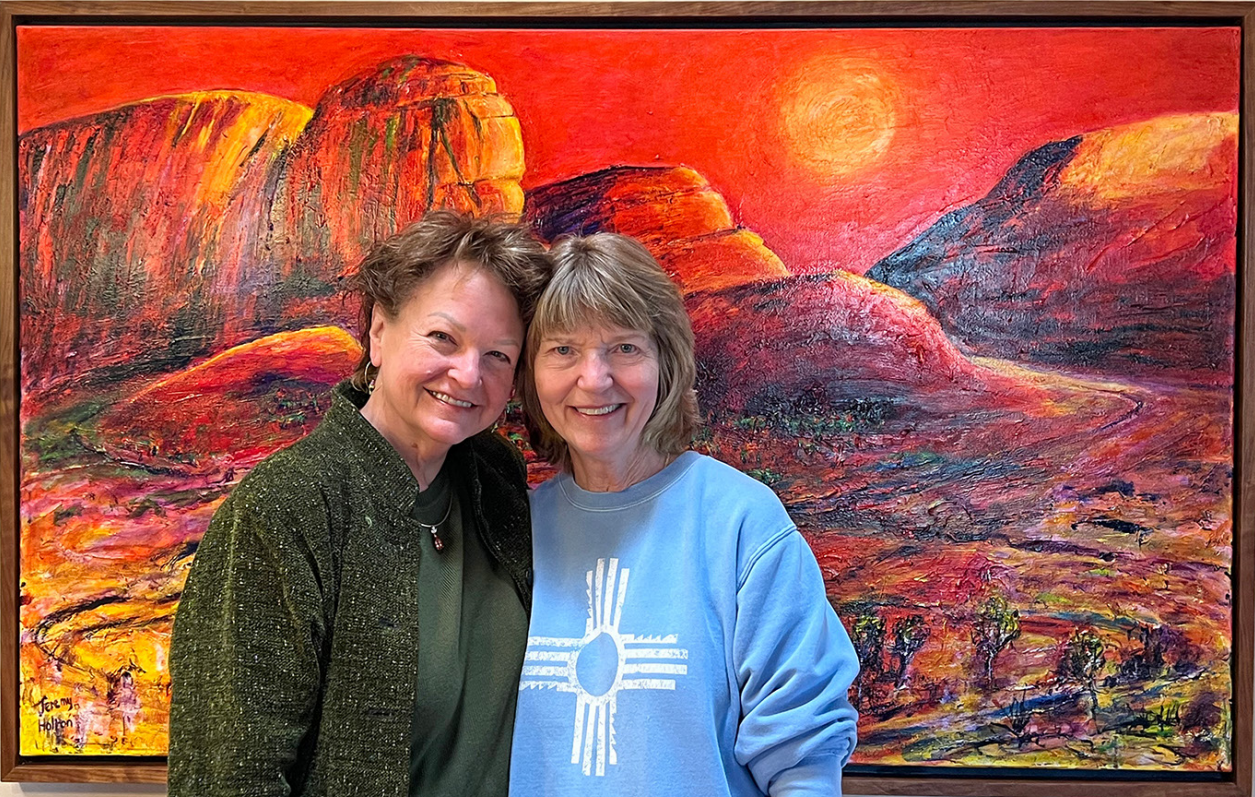
During our time together, Melanie showed the same curiosity and fascination about the conservation work happening in the land she loves, asking probing questions and thoughtfully weaving together the threads of our wide-ranging conversation. After contemplation, she concluded that she would like to help early-career conservationists gain valuable work experience through Bush Heritage Australia's Seeding the Future program.

Planning her next trip to Australia is top of mind for Melanie right now. At some point in her future travels, she intends to connect with descendants of Australia's original caretakers of the land to learn more about the Aboriginal way of looking at life.

She is eager to share her favorite Aussie haunts with the new love of her life, an old friend from her teenage years in Japan. They recently discovered they lived within a few miles of one another in the Southwest region of the US.

Melanie is a source of inspiration to us here at Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, as she has chosen to bequest her entire estate to FOABHF for the benefit of Bush Heritage Australia. She would like her gift to help preserve this fragile ecosystem for future generations, saying: "Australia is something altogether different, something incredibly special. To be part of the effort to preserve it is a privilege."

Jennifer Smith Grubb, FOABHF ED and Dr. Melanie Spriggs stand in front of a painting of Melanie's beloved Kimberley region. Image: Carolyn Jones



Thank you to our 2024 supporters

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Thank you as well to our many 2024 donors who prefer to have their acknowledgement remain anonymous – we are grateful for you!

Our 2024 Financial Summary

The below metrics represent the financial standing of FOABHF year over year from fiscal year 2021 (FY2021) to FY2024, following the January 1 to December 31 fiscal calendar.

Category	FY2024	FY2023	FY2022	FY2021
Revenue				
Donations	\$46,474	\$71,211	\$76,008	\$168,027
Grants	\$184,100	\$60,000	\$900,000	\$0
Interest	\$640	\$8,731	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue	\$231,214	\$139,942	\$976,008	\$168,027
Expenses				
Disbursements/Donations	\$205,521	\$885,990	\$0	\$190,000
Staff Costs	\$71,339	\$68,276	\$0	\$0
General and Admin	\$13,604	\$42,449	\$4,024	\$0
Fees	\$565	\$2,818	\$754	\$2,292
Total Expenses	\$291,029	\$999,533	\$4,778	\$192,292
Net Income	(\$59,815)	(\$859,590)	\$971,230	(\$24,265)

FOABHF received a large multi-year gift in late FY2022, distributed in FY2023. In addition, the board made a strategic decision to use previously accumulated reserves to invest in FOABHF fundraising and engagement capacity, resulting in a deficit in FY2023 and FY2024. Distributions were made to our primary partner, Bush Heritage, bringing our full disbursements to nearly \$1.3 million over the last four years.

Meet our Board of Directors



Peggy Brannigan
Director

Peggy Brannigan is a sustainability leader and advisor, currently chair of the board for the Business Council on Climate Change and a board member at Acterra. As Director of Global Environmental Sustainability at LinkedIn, she advanced the company’s 2030 climate goals and supported green innovations in workplaces and data centers. She also collaborated on LinkedIn products that connect users to green jobs and skills while guiding grantmaking for environmental equity. Prior to LinkedIn, Peggy worked in Europe on sustainability initiatives and held leadership roles at Apple and Wells Fargo. She holds an MBA from Stanford and lives in Silicon Valley.



Chris Doherty
Secretary and Acting Treasurer

Chris is a Senior Director of Business Operations for an international legal services and consulting firm. He also has over 15 years of experience in climate change, conservation, and sustainability through prior work spanning forest restoration and community development in Southeast Asia, carbon sequestration initiatives in Western Australia, and consulting on sustainability, climate change & risk management for global companies. Chris holds a Masters in Sustainable Development and though based in Portland, Oregon, hails from Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, Australia – Wiradjuri country.



Doug Humann
Director

Doug has over 30 years of leadership experience in the nongovernmental organization or NGO sector, including serving as Bush Heritage’s inaugural CEO and working with First Nations communities and natural resource management authorities. He runs his own consulting business and serves as Chairman of Landcare Australia and a Board Member of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance. In 2014, Doug was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his significant contributions to conservation and the environment.



Dr. R. Pamela Reid

Director

Pam is Professor Emerita of Marine Geosciences at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, specializing in tropical marine sediments and reefs. She has published over 100 scientific articles and focuses on microbialites, Earth's earliest reefs built by microbes. Pam conducts microbialite research in Hamelin Pool, the Bahamas, and Chile's Atacama Desert. She is also the founder and Executive Director of the nonprofit organization Bahamas Marine EcoCentre.



Sabine Reiser

Acting President

Sabine graduated from UC Berkeley with a BS in Environmental Economics and Policy and has worked in the environment and climate change sectors in both the US and China. After moving to Australia in 2013, she focused on preserving its biodiversity, working with Bush Heritage in major gifts and philanthropy until 2020. She completed a Master of Liberal Arts in Sustainability Studies at Harvard University in 2020 and has been Head of Philanthropic Partnerships at Oxfam Australia since October 2021.



Jennifer Smith Grubb

Executive Director and Ex-Officio Director

Jennifer is a champion for the conservation of Australia's natural and cultural heritage. She invited Australian conservation scientists and Indigenous leaders to the US to share both innovative and traditional approaches to protect the continent's precious biodiversity, manage risks due to fire and climate change, and nurture plant and animal species for future generations. Through her work on the Ecology Action Board, as founding Executive Director of Sustainable Silicon Valley, Founder of the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability, and in her career at California Environmental Protection Agency, Jennifer has been recognized for her environmental leadership.



Dr. Gary Tabor

Director

Gary is the Founder and CEO of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation. His achievements include establishing Kibale National Park in Uganda and cofounding key initiatives such as the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative and the Western Governors' Association Wildlife Corridors Initiative. Gary is an Australian-American Fulbright Scholar in Climate Change. His academic affiliations include being named an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Queensland and a Professor of Conservation Practice at Cornell University. Gary is a co-founder of the Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network.

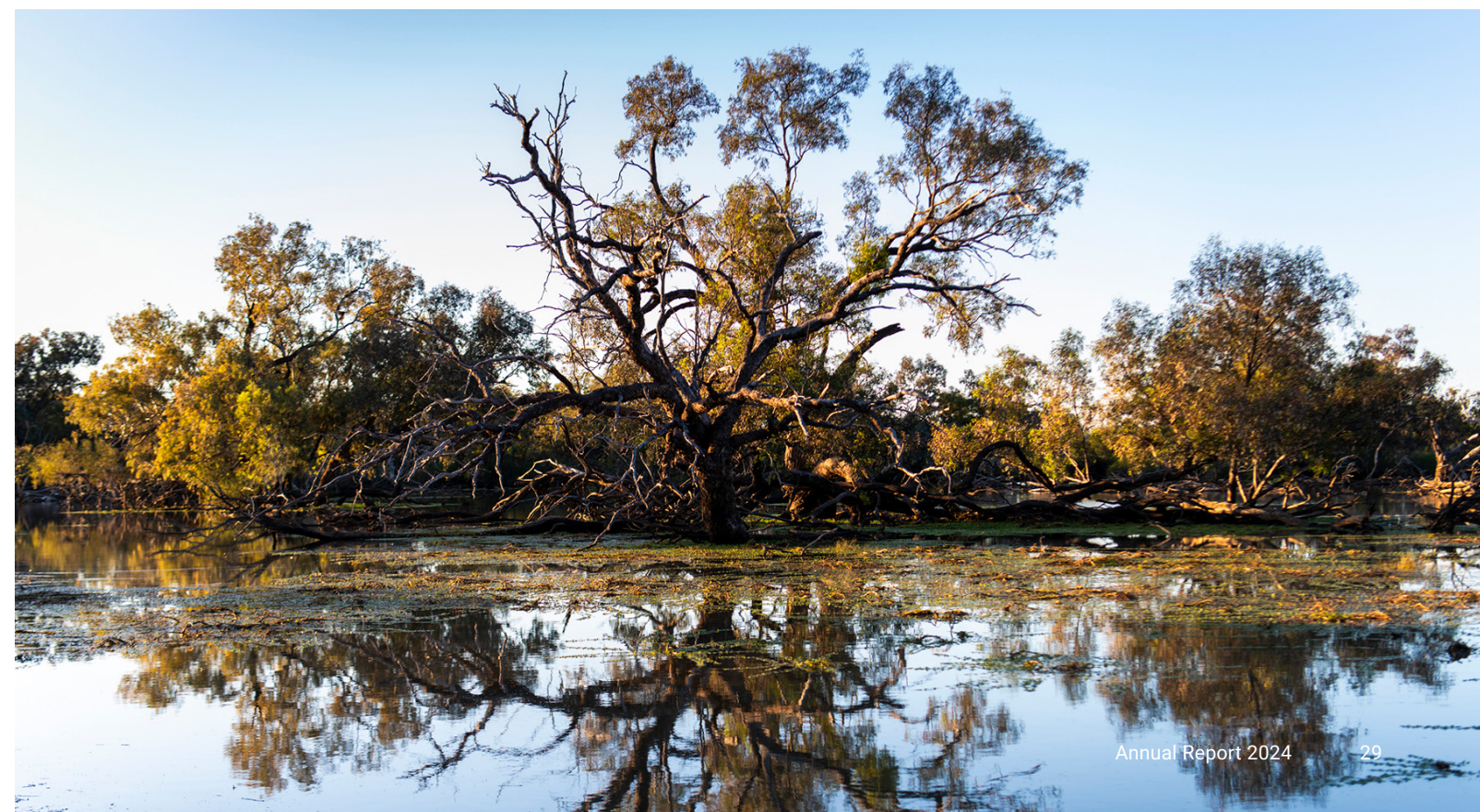


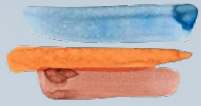
Kent Wommack

Director

Kent is the Executive Director of the Liz Claiborne & Art Ortenberg Foundation, which supports wildlife and community-based conservation initiatives around the world. Before joining the Foundation in 2016, Kent spent 34 years with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), where he led programs in Maine, Australia, and Canada and served as Managing Director of TNC's Global Lands Program. His connection to Australia began during a sabbatical spent with Bush Heritage Australia, and he later returned as TNC's first in-country Australia Director.

Nil Desperandum. Image: Annette Ruzicka





**Friends of the Australian
Bush Heritage Fund**



Our Vision

An Australia where rich natural and cultural heritage thrive for the benefit of all.

Our Mission

To advance the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in Australia amidst the crises posed by climate change, biodiversity decline, and cultural heritage loss. We do this by connecting US-based supporters with dynamic and effective Indigenous and non-Indigenous conservation organizations in Australia.

Contact us

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Monjebup planting. Image: Krysta Guille