

A koala is the central focus of the image, clinging to a tree trunk. The koala has grey fur, a large black nose, and its eyes are closed. The background is a dense forest of green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Annual Report 2025

# Making the connection for 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.



Kuwarddewardde (Stone Country). Image: David Hancock  
Cover image: Koala, Avocet Reserve. Image: Grassland Films

# Contents

Introduction .....	2
Welcome from our Executive Director .....	3
Partnerships make our work possible .....	5
A message of gratitude and growth from our founding partner .....	6
Conservationists band together for Team Australia: Climate Week in New York City .....	7
California welcomes First Nations Leaders .....	8
Working at scale: The Bush Heritage story .....	10
Discovering the Night Parrot at Pullen Pullen Reserve .....	12
Protecting Queensland's Brigalow Belt: Introducing Avocet Reserve .....	16
Special Wildlife Reserves gain traction in Queensland .....	18
Seeding the Future provides hands-on experience .....	19
Get to know our new partner: Karrkad Kanjdji Trust .....	20
Nawarddeken Academy expands education for teens .....	23
Women rangers strengthen leadership on Country .....	24
Thank you to our 2025 leadership supporters .....	25
Our 2025 Financial Summary.....	26
Meet our Board of Directors .....	27

# Introduction

Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund (FOABHF) is a U.S. 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 U.S.-based supporters with dynamic and effective Indigenous and non-Indigenous conservation organizations in Australia.

Through education and outreach, FOABHF seeks to heighten awareness, receive and direct funds to support partners in Australia making meaningful progress toward conservation goals.

Our Board of Directors, with backgrounds in the sciences, conservation, philanthropy, sustainability, business and finance, provides strategic oversight for the organization.

***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.***



Bustard in flight over Evelyn Downs. Image: Annette Ruzicka

# Welcome from our Executive Director

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

**Hello and g'day friends, welcome to our 2025 Annual Report –  
*Making the Connection for Australian conservation.***

To protect at least 30% of the planet by 2030: the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets a bold, collective mission (the “30X30 target”), with a focus on ensuring that protection is representative across ecosystems. Australia, with its large size, unique biodiversity, political stability, and strong Indigenous culture, can play a key part in achieving these goals.

However, Australia is equally vulnerable to the global crises that are posed by climate change, biodiversity decline, and cultural heritage loss. Over 1,900 plant and animal species are listed as threatened nationally. Australia has the highest mammal extinction rate in the world and has lost over 50% of its temperate woodlands and nearly all of its grasslands in some regions. Australia needs our help.

We at Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund (FOABHF) are proud to support Bush Heritage Australia and Karrkad Kanjdji Trust (KKT) who are working to ensure the rich natural and cultural heritage of Australia continues to thrive. As a non-profit in the US, we can extend their network of support through education and awareness building.

In September we embraced partnership at a whole new level, working with our founding partner Bush Heritage and new partner KKT to join fellow conservationists from Re:Wild, WildArk, and Australian Wildlife Conservancy to bring the message of Australian conservation to Climate Week in New York City.

We hosted KKT, our partner in Arnhem Land, for an autumnal event in the Australian gardens at the University of California at Santa Cruz Arboretum. CEO Stacey Irving, Head of Philanthropy Sharney Bowen, Cultural Education Teacher Michelle Bangarr, and Senior Women’s Ranger Suzannah Nabalwad eloquently shared KKT’s First Nations-led approach to safeguarding vital ecosystems for future generations.

Thanks to you, our supporters, our work in the US is gaining momentum, and our reach is expanding. Together we can protect Australia’s wild places and Indigenous culture for our collective future. Thank you all for joining us.



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

***“Over 1,900 plant and animal species are listed as threatened nationally. Australia has the highest mammal extinction rate in the world and has lost over 50% of its temperate woodlands and nearly all of its grasslands in some regions. Australia needs our help.”***



Bridled nail-tail wallaby and joey. Image: Grassland Films

# Partnerships make our work possible

*By Stacey Irving, Chief Executive Officer, Karrkad Kanjdji Trust*

As we reflect on the past year, I am struck by both the scale of the work ahead and the strength of the partnerships that make this work possible.

Across West and Central Arnhem Land, Traditional Owners, Elders, and rangers continue to lead the protection of one of the most biodiverse and culturally significant regions in the world.

This work is not abstract. It is grounded in daily practice, including fire management, biodiversity monitoring, cultural knowledge, and the steady return of people to their homelands.

Through our partnership with Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, we are seeing growing interest from US-based supporters who recognize both the urgency and the value of Indigenous-led land management. Your support is helping to connect global philanthropy with locally led solutions that are already delivering lasting outcomes.

This year, we have seen important progress across several fronts.

We are supporting the expansion of education on Country through the Nawarddeken Academy, including the introduction of high school pathways that allow young people to complete their education without leaving their homelands. This represents a meaningful shift in the status quo, strengthening both cultural continuity and future leadership.

We are also seeing continued growth in women's ranger programs across the region. First Nations women are stepping into roles that reflect their knowledge, authority, and responsibility for Country. Their work is contributing to stronger conservation outcomes and more balanced land management.

A highlight of the year was attending New York Climate Week, where we had the opportunity to center Indigenous voices within the global environmental movement. Standing alongside Traditional Owners and like-minded organizations, we shared stories of Arnhem Land

on an international stage and demonstrated that Indigenous-led land management is not only locally effective, but globally relevant.

We also spent time with Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund's networks in California, deepening relationships with supporters and sharing first hand the impact of this work. These conversations are an important part of building broader understanding and long-term support for Indigenous stewardship.

What defines Karrkad Kanjdji Trust is not only what we fund, but how we work. Our model of two-way philanthropy is built on respect, listening, and long-term relationships. Traditional Owners determine the priorities. Our role as the bi-cultural bridge is to connect those priorities with the resources needed to bring them to life.

We are grateful to Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund for walking alongside us in this work. Your support helps ensure that Indigenous leadership remains at the helm of conservation in Arnhem Land, and that knowledge systems developed over tens of thousands of years continue to guide the future.

Thank you for your partnership.



Stacey Irving, Chief Executive Officer  
Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

# A message of gratitude and growth from our founding partner

*By Rachel Lowry, Chief Executive Officer, Bush Heritage Australia*

This past year has been one of connection, growth, and renewed momentum—and I am deeply grateful for the role you, our friends in the United States, play in making it all possible.

Your support, through Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, continues to power conservation outcomes across Australia that are grounded in science, shaped by collaboration, and focused on long-term impact.

One of the most exciting milestones this year was the acquisition of Avocet, now an extension of Bush Heritage's Goonderoo Reserve in Queensland's Brigalow Belt. With only 5% of Brigalow woodlands remaining and just 2% formally protected this is one of Australia's most at-risk ecosystems. It is also one of only two known sites where the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby, listed as vulnerable to extinction, persists in the wild. By securing Avocet, we now have an opportunity to help species like the Koala and Bridled Nailtail recover and thrive.

We also celebrated the declaration of Edgbaston as a Special Wildlife Reserve, the highest level of protection available for private land in Australia. This recognition reflects both the ecological importance of the reserve and the strength of our long-term, science-based management. Edgbaston protects a suite of species found nowhere else on Earth, including the Red-finned Blue-eye and several critically endangered spring snails that depend on the precise hydrology of the Great Artesian Basin. Through careful monitoring and adaptive management, we are ensuring these fragile ecosystems are protected.

Looking ahead, I am inspired by the continued success of our Seeding the Future program. In 2025, we reached a milestone of more than 100 participants and transitioned the program from pilot to a fully established initiative. Impressively, 97% of past participants are now employed in conservation or pursuing further study. By combining hands-on fieldwork with scientific research and learning from land managers and First Nations partners, the program is helping build the next generation of conservation leaders.

Finally, it was a privilege to connect with many of you during Climate Week in New York. In partnership with Re:wild and other Australian conservation allies, we brought the story of Australia's landscapes to a global audience. Hosted by our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Manager, Tiahni Adamson, the event fostered meaningful dialogue grounded in science and enriched by culture, art, and storytelling.

Across all of these efforts runs a common thread: the importance of informed, sustained action. Conservation at scale requires not only passion, but data, long-term monitoring, and the ability to adapt. It also requires partnership. Your support enables us to protect places of extraordinary ecological value and invest in the people who will carry this work forward.

Thank you for standing with us. Your commitment gives me great optimism for the future of Australia's landscapes and species. Together, we are making a lasting difference by protecting healthy Country, forever.



Rachel Lowry, Chief Executive Officer  
Bush Heritage Australia

# Conservationists band together for Team Australia: Climate Week in New York City

Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund engaged in a strategic alliance to trumpet the need for conservation in Australia at Climate Week in New York City on September 25, 2025.

Working with our partners, Bush Heritage Australia and Karrkad Kanjdji Trust, we joined forces with Re:wild, Wild Ark, and Australian Wildlife Conservancy to highlight Australia's Living Legacy, a unique evening featuring art, music, photography, and First Nations voices.

Cello and violin music from the Blue Mountain's Bowerbird Collective evoked bird song, coupled with vibrant photos of Australia's iconic bird species, and later accompanied by live painting synesthesia artist Sarah Kraning. Andy Thomas shared his colorful watercolor paintings of Australian nature scenes combined with digital technology.

Hailing from Northern Territory's Arnhem Land, First Nations leaders Michelle Bangarr and Suzannah Nabalwad welcomed the 116 participants. Keynote speaker and Young South Australian of the Year Tiahni Adamson inspired enraptured audience members by sharing the story of her relationship with Country, informed by the teachings of her First Nations ancestors, her wildlife conservation biology education and her work in conservation for Bush Heritage.

To learn more about the artists and guest speaker and view the impact video created by our Australian alliance, please visit: [www.rewild.org/auslivinglegacy](http://www.rewild.org/auslivinglegacy)

Australian conservation alliance planning team members at Australia's Living Legacy event in New York City on September 25.



# California welcomes First Nations Leaders

KKT's team – CEO Stacey Irving; Director of Philanthropy Sharney Bowen; Michelle Bangarr, Cultural Education Teacher; and Suzannah Nabalwad, Senior Warddeken Daluk (Woman) Ranger – flew to California where FOABHF hosted an event on Sunday, September 28, 2025.

Amongst the Australian gardens of the University of California at Santa Cruz Arboretum, guests learned about the work of First Nations people in Arnhem Land, namely:

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

Sitting in the round, participants engaged in meaningful dialogue with First Nations leaders to understand more about their relationship to the land and their role as Traditional Custodians caring for the land. KKT screened a 17-minute documentary telling the story of KKT board Co-Chair Dr. Dean Yibarbuk's family's return to live on Arnhem Land. Called *We Going Home Now*, it debuted at NYC Climate Week 2024.

Michelle Bangarr, KKT; Jennifer Smith Grubb, FOABHF; Suzannah Nabalwad, KKT; Stacey Irving, KKT; Sharney Bowen, KKT in the Australian gardens at University of California at Santa Cruz Arboretum. Image: Hugh Grubb



# Working at scale: The Bush Heritage story

The Bush Heritage story started in 1991 in the Liffey Valley of Tasmania. Thanks to winning the Goldman Environmental Prize, mortgaging his house, and raising money from friends, 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.

As a leading national non-profit organization in Australia, Bush Heritage protects and helps manage 55.7 million acres through their network of conservation reserves and partnerships with First Nations and agricultural landowners. This includes a total of 3.6 million acres that are owned and managed in perpetuity. These landscapes span rainforests to woodlands, savannas to deserts, and are home to more than 9,250 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 for reserves and partnerships through enhanced legal protections for land, cutting-edge research and strengthening their 'right-way' approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

Bush Heritage has the aspirational goal to influence the management of 74 million acres of land in Australia by 2030, which includes critical new property acquisitions that will not be possible without global support.

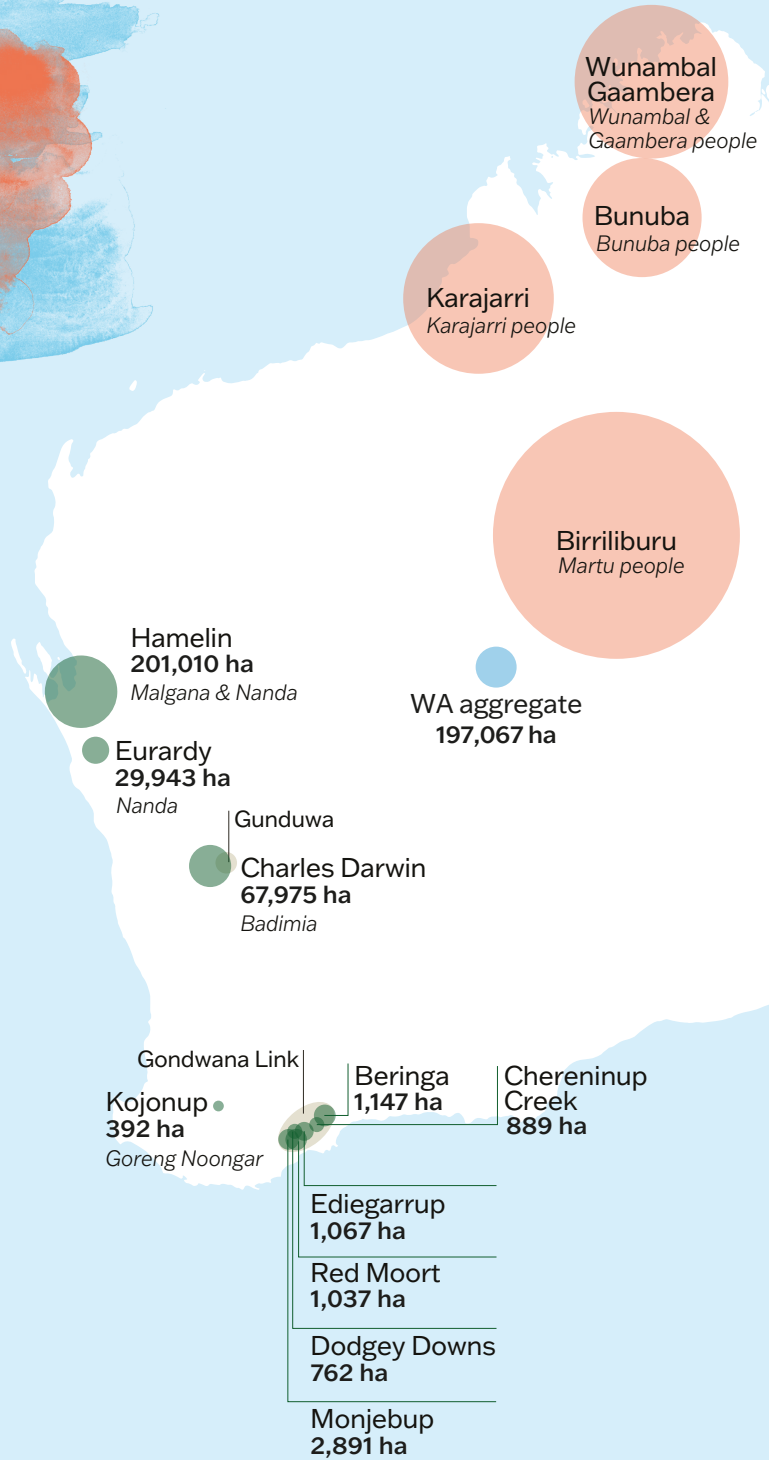
Bush Heritage buys and manages land in areas of high conservation value that are home to nationally significant ecosystems. Reserves are chosen based on their capacity to help protect them in the face of emerging threats, and the degree to which they are already protected through Australia's National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



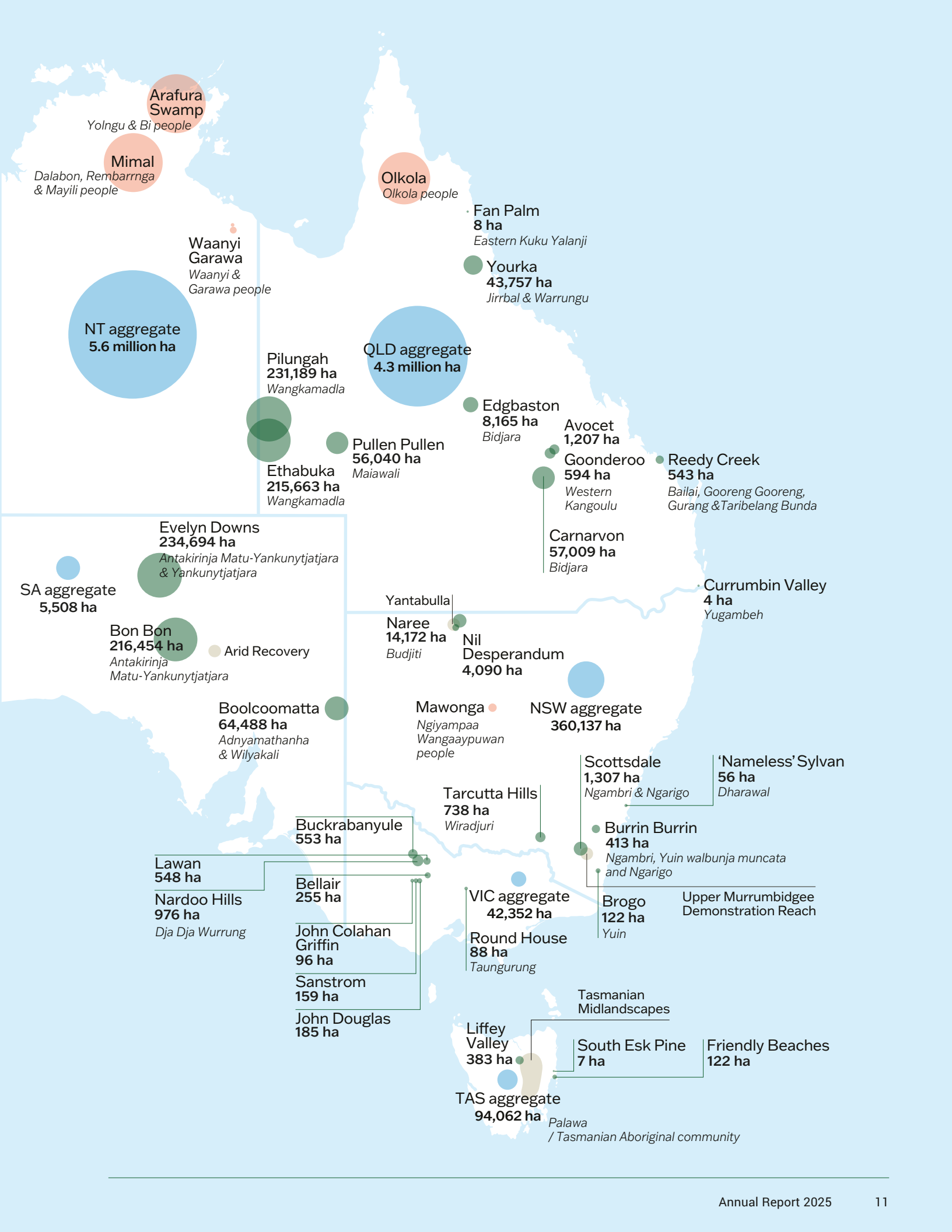
Evelyn Downs. Image: Annette Ruzicka

*Bush Heritage protects and helps manage 55.7 million acres through their network of conservation reserves and partnerships with First Nations and agricultural landowners.*



### Reserves and Partnerships

- Bush Heritage Reserves
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships
- Agricultural partnerships



# Discovering the Night Parrot at Pullen Pullen Reserve

*Contributed by Chris Grubb – Former President and lifetime supporter, Bush Heritage Australia*

If you were a parrot, looking for the easy life, why would you choose to live in the semi-arid hinterland of Australia with its intense heat, massive but infrequent rain events that bring plagues of mosquitoes and native rats?

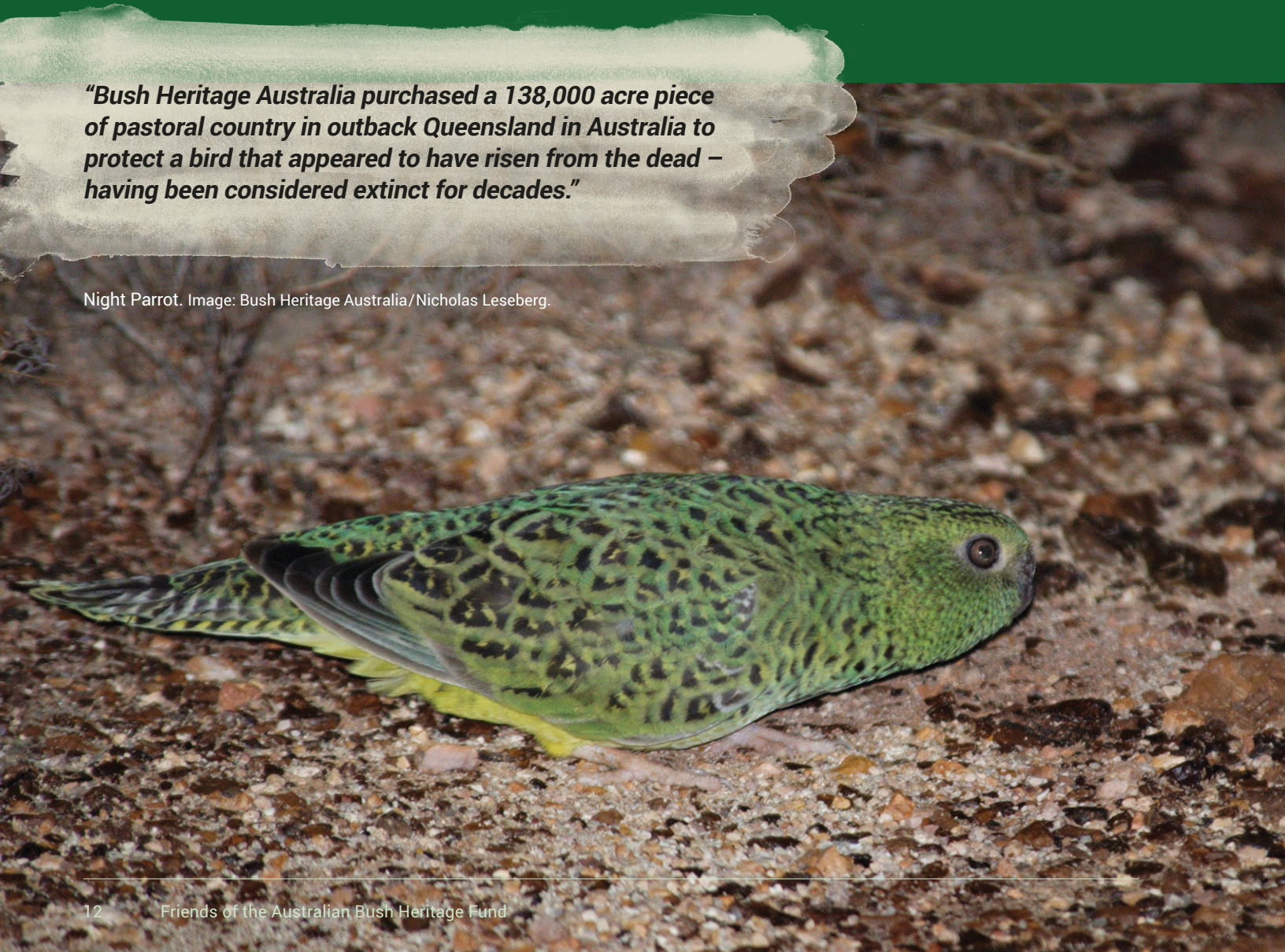
A place where humans have to wear fly nets over their heads to keep the flies out of their eyes and mouths?

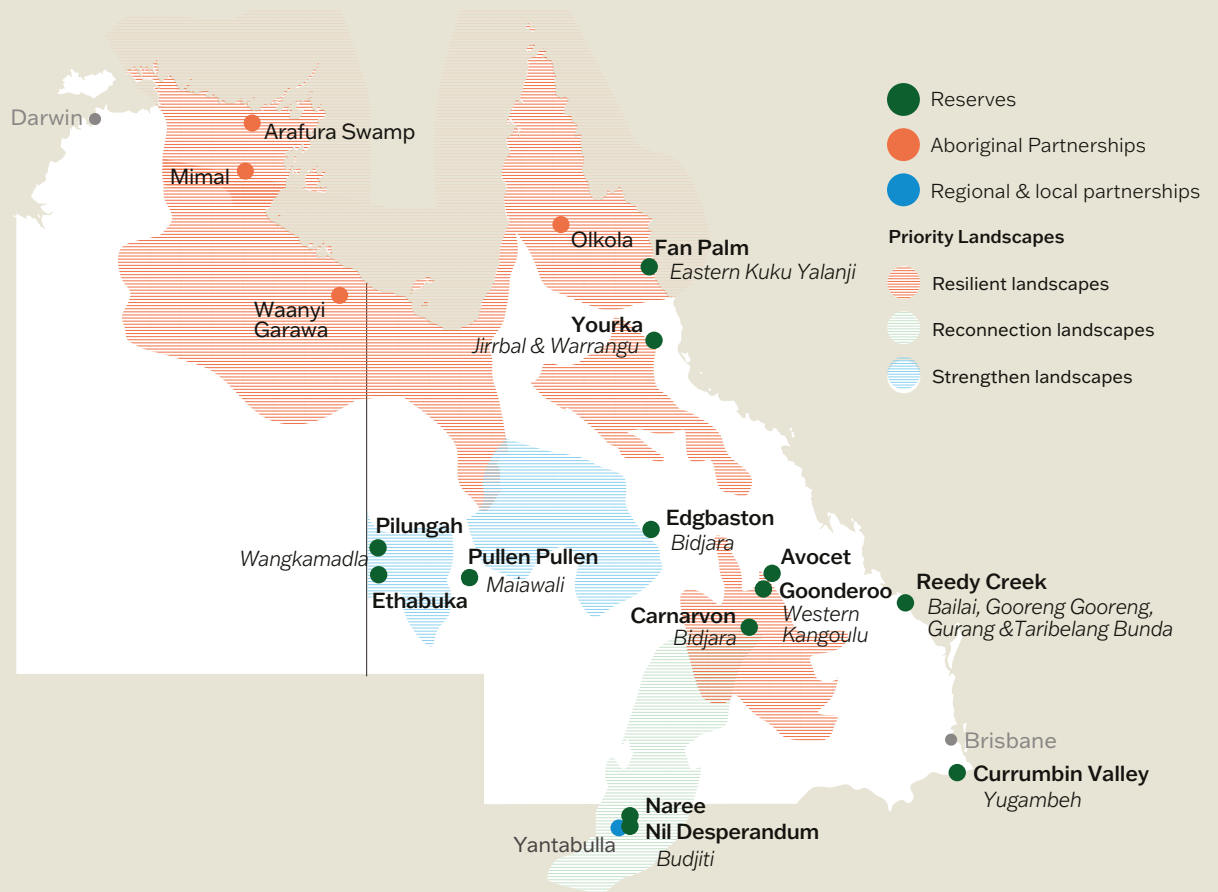
Add in the challenge of being a nocturnal, ground dwelling bird whose main food source is tiny grass seeds, which you have to locate in the dark. Especially difficult when introduced, hard-hoofed cattle are eating all the grasses before they can set seed. Then there are feral cats stalking you at night looking for a tasty parrot supper.

What a life!

***“Bush Heritage Australia purchased a 138,000 acre piece of pastoral country in outback Queensland in Australia to protect a bird that appeared to have risen from the dead – having been considered extinct for decades.”***

Night Parrot. Image: Bush Heritage Australia/Nicholas Leseberg.





Well, it's the Night Parrot (*Pezoporos occidentalis*) that has chosen this lifestyle and Bush Heritage Australia who purchased a 138,000 acre piece of pastoral country in outback Queensland in Australia to protect a bird that appeared to have risen from the dead – having been considered extinct for decades – but rediscovered in 2013 by naturalist John Young.

Pullen Pullen Reserve is on Maiawali country, with Pullen Pullen being the Maiawali name for Night Parrot. It protects the only known (at the time) population of perhaps a few dozen individual birds. Our visit to Pullen Pullen this August was a follow-up to a previous visit at the time of purchase in 2016. We wanted to observe progress and learn more from Dr. Nick Leseberg who did his Ph.D. on the Night Parrot and is an acknowledged world expert. Bush Heritage has a permanent Reserve Manager on site, and we were also accompanied by Judith Harrison, a Maiawali Traditional Owner who talked of her connections to the land and how Bush Heritage was helping her people restore those cultural connections. The property has a cave with extensive rock art now well documented and a fascinating stone circle on a small mesa which was used for special indigenous ceremonies. Many artifacts such as grinding stones, ax heads, and stone knives continue to be found.

The Night Parrot is a smallish member of the parrot family, about 7 inches long, with a hunched-up posture, sporting the national Australian colors of green and gold. By day these birds roost deep inside a clump of spinifex grass for protection -a very spiny grass that grows in clumps on soft sandy soils across much of inland Australia. It is very unfriendly to humans, its spikes are painful and since it grows in interconnecting clumps it must be walked around rather than through. For the ground dwelling Night Parrot on the other hand, it is critical habitat and the birds are found only where there is spinifex. And not just any spinifex, it must be old growth, unburnt spinifex that has formed large clumps. Apart from offering predator protection during the day, the Night Parrot nest is built deep inside a spinifex clump with access via a perfectly rounded narrow tunnel some 15–20 inches deep with up to 4 eggs laid on a platform of sticks on or near the ground. How a small beak on a small bird manages to create this tunnel never ceases to amaze me as spinifex spines are up to a few inches long and very hard!



Above: Unburnt spinifex grass forms large clumps within which Night Parrots can make tunnels for daytime roosting and nesting. Image: Rebecca Spindler

Inset: Judith Harrison, Maiawali Elder, at one of the many overhangs and caves found on Pullen Pullen. Image: Annette Ruzicka

As dusk comes, we head out some 30 minutes from the newly installed ecologist and guest cabins at the Arid Zone Conservation Center, which is the only physical infrastructure on this conservation reserve. We drive along a track badly eroded by the recent flooding of the Diamantina River. We notice the boundary fence has white reflective tape strung along the top wire and are told by Nick that Night Parrot vision is probably not good enough to pick up fence wires at night. He tells us that it was the discovery of a bird found impaled on a fence in this area some 20 years ago that initiated the search for a local population, having been unobserved for decades and presumed extinct.

As the light fades we stand silently, tuning our ears to the natural sounds as the day shift of birds and insects settle in for the night and the night shift begins to wake. Being wintertime, it is cooling down rapidly, and we are looking out over a low-rise mesa with the all important spinifex growing along its flanks.

We hear the occasional sound of other birds finding a tree or bush in which to roost. No one speaks. Darkness comes slowly and then we hear it to our left – the distinctive call which Nick has recorded and identified as that of a Night Parrot. The excitement is palpable as we all smile at this rarely heard event. Nick silently raises his finger, so we all continue to listen intently. Nothing for a few minutes, then a response from our right, but a slightly different call. Definitely another bird. Then nothing for another several minutes.

Now it's pitch dark and then a third call is heard clearly through the quiet night air. Was it an earlier bird changing position or a third bird? We didn't know. However, Nick has been able to identify several distinctive calls that are particular to certain individuals and may inform further learning.

As we turn to the vehicles to head home, there is a swish and a parrot shaped blur flies past at about 20 feet elevation and quickly disappears. Was that a Night Parrot? We can't be sure! Not for nothing did the Smithsonian Institute call this 'one of planet's most elusive birds.'



Above: Sunset on Pullen Pullen reserve – waiting for night to fall and Night Parrots to call. Image: Rebecca Spindler  
Inset: Dr Nick Leseberg Ph.D., authority of Night Parrot ecology. Image: Lachlan Gardiner



It took 10 years of active searching by John Young to discover the tiny population of Night Parrots at Pullen Pullen. The big question then was “Are there any others out there?” It took several further years of fieldwork and research by Dr. Nick Leseberg and his predecessor Dr. Steve Murphy to identify a suite of diagnostic calls that are the only ‘easy’ way of locating these birds.

Working with Aboriginal ranger groups across the Night Parrot’s vast former range eventually yielded results. A handful of other populations of Night Parrot have now been located in spinifex country in remote parts of inland Western Australia. We also now know that the bird flies out at night from its spinifex hideaway for up to 5 or 6 miles to feed on various grass seeds and seek water, returning before dawn.

The bird numbers are precariously few at each location, but greater protections now exist and companies are now obliged to survey for Night Parrots when seeking new mining approvals across inland Australia.

In 2020, Pullen Pullen achieved another win for conservation when the Government of the state of Queensland designated it the first “Special Wildlife Reserve.” This transformative status means that no mining, forestry or farming activities are permissible – in perpetuity. In return, Bush Heritage has regular reporting and management requirements to show it is a responsible land manager. For areas of high conservation value this is a welcome recognition that the natural environment can coexist with the resources and farming industries.

The Night Parrot’s habitat once stretched right across the Australian inland before land clearing and introduced species such as camels, pigs, goats, foxes, and especially feral cats forced it into ever shrinking pockets of land. So genetic diversity is a key concern today, but at least this enigmatic bird, once thought to be extinct, continues to survive in outback Australia, thanks to organizations like Bush Heritage, scientists, and the many Aboriginal ranger groups and others searching for more populations.

It has found a way to survive, even if it has had to choose a very inhospitable environment to do so.

# Protecting Queensland's Brigalow Belt: Introducing Avocet Reserve

## Avocet in the Central Highlands Region

**Reserve location:** About 20 miles south of Emerald in Queensland.

**Size:** Approximately 3,000 acres

**Reserve established:** 2025

**Traditional Custodians:** Western Kangoulu

**Key conservation targets:**

- Bridled Nailtail Wallaby & Koala Habitat
- Brigalow Woodland and Alluvial Woodland

**Key threats:**

- Fire sensitive vegetation – Belah, Vine Scrub and Lancewood (and Brigalow)
- Habitat loss for the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby (and Koala)

**Key conservation activities:**

- Feral animal control
- Feral weed management – Buffel Grass



Located about 20 miles south of Emerald on the lands of the Western Kangoulu people, Avocet Nature Refuge is in the Brigalow Belt bioregion – one of Australia's most heavily cleared national biodiversity hotspots. The nearly 3,000 acre nature reserve adjoins Bush Heritage's existing 1,500 acre Goonderoo Reserve.

Bush Heritage CEO Rachel Lowry said the acquisition was a critical step to permanently protect precious remaining nature.

"Only 5% of Brigalow woodlands remain in the whole country and less than half of this is currently protected," she explained. "With the addition of Avocet Nature Refuge, we've tripled the area under our management in this region to over 1,800 hectares (approximately 4,500 acres) and created a rare, connected stronghold of habitat for wildlife."

Above: Avocet landscape.

Left: Walking in Avocet Reserve. Images: Grassland Films



“Avocet Nature Refuge protects a patch of remnant Brigalow and is home to a number of other threatened ecological communities, including Poplar Box woodland and Eucalypt-dominated communities along drainage lines,” says Dr. Stephen Kearney, an ecologist for Bush Heritage. “To begin with, a lot of work will go into monitoring the flora and fauna on Avocet Nature Refuge. This will include mapping and monitoring all vegetation communities and setting motion-sensing wildlife cameras to understand the species that are here and how we can best conserve them.”

Protecting, understanding, and restoring this biome will take decades – but this long-term work is possible because of our supporters. Species that live here such as the endangered Bridled Naitail Wallaby (*Onychogalea fraenata*), Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), Squatter Pigeon (*Geophaps scripta*) and Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*), now have a more resilient future.

“Protecting nature doesn’t end with buying the land. Best practice conservation takes thousands of hours of work every year to deliver strategic, science-based and collaborative outcomes,” says Rachel Lowry. “With the combined scale of Avocet Nature Refuge and Goonderoo Reserve, we also have a chance to apply for Special Wildlife Reserve status – the highest level of protection available for private land in Queensland.”



## Bridled Naitail Wallaby

A small wallaby, weighing 9 to 13 pounds, the Naitail is gray to light tan in color with a distinct white line forming a ‘bridle’ from the back of the neck to behind the forelimbs. Its other distinctive markings are the white stripes along the sides of the face, a black stripe down the length of the back, characteristic ‘naitail’, a small horny nail-like spur about 1/8 to 1/4 inch long at the tip of the tail.

The Bridled Naitail Wallaby is listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species as ‘vulnerable to extinction’. Bridled Naitail Wallaby populations have plummeted over the last 200 years to only a few hundred individuals.

The dramatic decline is due to widespread loss of Brigalow habitat and feral predation. While the wallabies can breed all year round, their defense strategy is to hide, making them easy prey for feral cats and foxes.

## Koala

Bush Heritage has Koalas on its Carnarvon Station Reserve, and Goonderoo Reserve. Koalas have also been recorded at Currumbin Valley and Yourka Reserves. Koalas are at home in the tree canopy and only come down to move trees or to another habitat patch. Of Australia’s more than 700 types of Eucalypt tree, only 50 have leaves suitable for a Koala to digest and perhaps only 12 of these make up their staple diet. Koalas require a lot of space and a lot of trees; approximately 100 trees per individual.

Research has shown that Koalas in the far north, including on Yourka, move up to 2 miles in one night during the breeding season, across an extensive range. These findings suggest that they are well adapted to their hotter, drier and scarce predicament.

# Special Wildlife Reserves gain traction in Queensland

Special Wildlife Reserves are a relatively new conservation status in Queensland that grant private land the same level of statutory protection as National Parks, when they protect areas of exceptional natural and cultural significance.

“Queensland has a long history of mining and timber harvesting and currently has the lowest level of protected areas (approximately 8.2%) in the country,” says Felicity Shapland, Bush Heritage Special Wildlife Reserve Project Officer. “Special Wildlife Reserves are an amazing opportunity, providing a far greater level of protection than conservation covenants such as Nature Refuges.”

Bush Heritage’s Pullen Pullen Reserve was declared Queensland’s first ever Special Wildlife Reserve in 2020, giving its population of Night Parrots the maximum protection possible. In June last year Edgbaston Reserve became Queensland’s second Special Wildlife Reserve. This status means that Bush Heritage will be able to protect the cultural and ecological values of Edgbaston, which include the only known populations of the critically endangered Red-finned Blue-eye and Edgbaston Goby fish species.

Bush Heritage worked closely with Bidjara Traditional Custodians on the application for Special Wildlife Reserve status. Bidjara people will undertake cultural heritage surveys of the property to increase knowledge of the cultural significance of this important property.

“Edgbaston Reserve is part of Bidjara culture, connection to Country, place, storylines, language, social practices, rituals and historical events,” said Bidjara Elder Trevor Robinson. “Working with Bush Heritage at Edgbaston Reserve has facilitated greater connection to Country, connecting living Bidjara people to our ancestors who lived on Country for tens of thousands of years.”

Together with Traditional Custodians, Bush Heritage has submitted Special Wildlife Reserve applications for five other reserves: Carnarvon Station Reserve in the Brigalow Belt, Yourka Reserve in the Einsleigh Uplands, Ethabuka and Pilungah Reserves in western Queensland, and Reedy Creek Reserve, near Agnes Water.

Special Wildlife Reserve Pullen Pullen. Image: Lachlan Gardiner



*“Special Wildlife Reserves are an amazing opportunity, providing a far greater level of protection than conservation covenants such as Nature Refuges.”*

## Seeding the Future provides hands-on experience

Blink and you’ll likely miss the Eyrean Grasswren (*Amytornis goyderi*) as it flitters between the shrubs of Ethabuka Reserve’s sweeping sand dunes.

In fact, this small, shy bird went undetected for almost a century. Its cryptic nature and remote range – endemic to the Simpson and Strzelecki deserts – have meant little interest in monitoring or researching the species. Traditionally considered a specialist of Sandhill Canegrass dunes, recent records from areas without canegrass suggest a potentially broader habitat range. Incorrect habitat assumptions can misdirect conservation priorities.

Thankfully, in 2025, University of Queensland Honors student Lucy Coleman arrived at Ethabuka to carry out habitat, population and behavioral research on the bird. From a young age, Lucy has had a deep passion for birds, which has significantly shaped her career to date. Through volunteering with Queensland Wader Study Group and Queensland Bird Research and Banding Group, she gained invaluable field work experience and a deep drive for conservation.

After completing her degree in Ecology and Computer Science, she decided to continue with an Honors degree. Supported by the Paul Hackett Memorial Scholarship and Bush Heritage’s Seeding the Future program, Lucy spent six weeks studying the Eyrean Grasswren on the edge of both the bird’s range and that of Sandhill Canegrass.

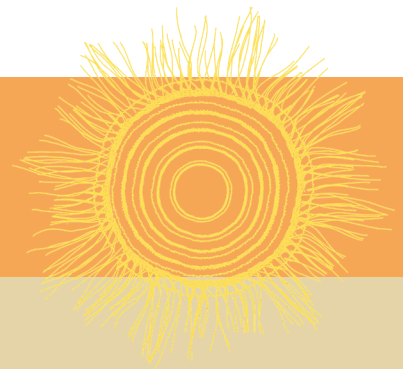
Lucy’s research found that the birds prefer dunes with diverse vegetation and large, spaced-out canegrass tussocks instead of small dense stands. She also found that they are highly sensitive to fire – not found on burnt dunes due to lower vegetation diversity and denser canegrass. These findings will be pivotal to informing management of Ethabuka.

“The arid interior has always been my favorite part of Australia. We emigrated from the UK and would go on road trips through Western Queensland. We’d see birds and feel we were the only ones who had seen that individual bird. In my research, it’s fascinating to think that the grasswren you’re looking at may not have ever seen a person before.”

Seeding the Future is a transformative initiative designed to empower the next generation of conservationists by providing hands-on experiences, mentorship and skill development opportunities to secure meaningful, long-term careers dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural environment.

Above: Eyrean Grasswren. Image: Lucy A. Coleman

# Get to know our new partner: Karrkad Kanjdji Trust



## Welcome to Arnhem Land

Stretching from the East Alligator River to the Gulf of Carpentaria, Arnhem Land covers over 36,000 square miles of very remote and biodiverse Country in the Top End of Australia.

Since time immemorial, this area has been home to Bininj and Yolju peoples who have managed and protected the land and passed down important ecological knowledge from generation to generation.

Arnhem Land is also one of the most biodiverse regions in Australia. There are more than 160 plant species found nowhere else, as well as a high number of threatened native animal species. It has one of the largest rock art collections in the world with tens of thousands of sites documenting thousands of years of Aboriginal culture, history, and spiritual belief.



Above left:  
Kuwarddewardde.

Above right: Warddeken  
daluk (women) rangers  
documenting kuwarddebim  
(rock art) in the Warddeken  
Indigenous Protected Area,  
West Arnhem Land.

Images: Rebecca Parker

Right: Ranger and  
Nawarddeken Academy  
Limited student.

Image: Cody Thomas





# Karrkad Kanjdji Trust



Karrkad Kanjdji Trust (KKT) connects philanthropy with First Nations-led solutions for thriving livelihoods and Indigenous land stewardship across West and Central Arnhem Land in northern Australia. Established in 2010 by Traditional Owners, KKT supports Indigenous ranger organisations protecting a globally significant ecological landscape while preserving the world's oldest living culture and strengthening communities living on their ancestral homelands.

8

First Nations partner organisations

50,000

square kilometers of land and sea Country managed

25+

community-led projects currently supported

4.5x

growth in philanthropic funding since 2019

KKT strengthens Indigenous land management through six key areas:

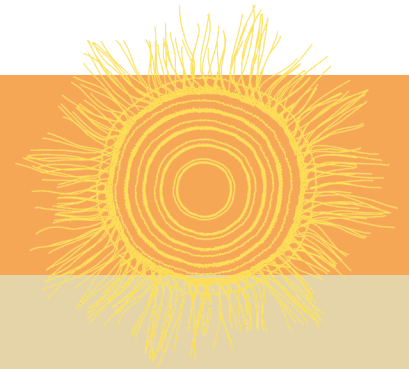


KKT is governed by a majority First Nations Board representing partner organisations across Arnhem Land, ensuring all funded projects are community-owned from concept to long-term impact. Together with philanthropic partners, KKT is strengthening the Indigenous ranger movement by supporting communities to care for Country, culture and community across Arnhem Land.

Donations may be made through our US based 501(c)(3) non-profit partner:

[Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund](#)

***“Today, KKT is a shared resource to eight First Nations community-controlled organizations in Arnhem Land.”***



## Meet Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

A philanthropic trust, KKT was established in 2010 by Traditional Owners from West and Central Arnhem Land to support their vision for healthy Country.

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

Today, KKT is a shared resource to eight First Nations community-controlled organizations in Arnhem Land. These organizations support the continuation of Indigenous land stewardship of over 20,000 square miles of land through ranger programs and other vital on-Country opportunities. Every project supported by KKT is designed, owned, and led by the people who have cared for the region for tens of thousands of years.

Ultimately, KKT’s role is to connect each partner organization with the strength of philanthropy, further resourcing their vital efforts to care for Country, culture and community.

FOABHF announced our partnership with KKT in the US in September of 2024, and joined KKT leadership for the screening of ‘Ngarridurndeng Kured’ or ‘We Going Home Now’ at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. The film tells the story of the return of Dr. Dean Yibarbuk, KKT Board of Directors Co-Chair, and his family to live on their ancestral lands in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.



Clockwise from above: Learning on Country program. Image: Nawarddeken Academy staff member

Learning on Country lesson. Image: Mimal Program staff member  
Nawarddeken Academy Limited student. Image: Cody Thomas



# Nawarddeken Academy expands education for teens

For many years, young people growing up on homelands in West Arnhem Land have faced a difficult choice: leave Country to access secondary education or remain on Country without a clear pathway to complete schooling.

In 2025, this began to change. With philanthropic support, the Nawarddeken Academy has expanded into formal high school delivery, enabling students in the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area to complete their education on Country for the first time.

This milestone represents more than improved access to education. It reflects a model shaped and led by Traditional Owners, where learning is grounded in both Indigenous knowledge systems and mainstream curriculum.

Students learn in “two-way” environments, combining classroom-based education with time on Country alongside Elders and rangers. This includes participating in activities such as cultural knowledge sharing, fire management, biodiversity monitoring, and rock art surveys.

The impact is already visible. Young people are staying connected to their families, language, and culture, while building the skills and confidence to pursue future pathways. At the same time, communities are strengthening the next generation of leaders, rangers, and knowledge holders.

This work is part of KKT’s broader commitment to recognizing that strong cultural identity, community wellbeing, and conservation outcomes are deeply interconnected.

By supporting education on Country, donors are helping to create long-term change, ensuring that young people can learn, grow, and lead without leaving the places that shape who they are.

Opening of the Nawarddeken Academy Kunmayali (Knowledge) Secondary School at Mamardawerre, Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area.



# Women rangers strengthen leadership on Country

Across Australia, First Nations women have always played a central role in caring for Country. In recent years, dedicated women's ranger programs have created new pathways for that leadership to grow and be recognized in contemporary land management. Today, these programs are thriving.

Within two of Arnhem Land's largest Indigenous Protected Areas, women are playing an increasingly significant role in land management. Within Warddeken Land Management, the Daluk (Women's) Ranger Program now engages over 120 women, representing nearly half of the ranger workforce. And within Mimal Land Management, women make up more than 40% of rangers, with increasing participation in both land management and leadership roles.

Women rangers are actively involved in a wide range of activities, including cultural burning, invasive species management, biodiversity monitoring, and the protection of sacred sites and community infrastructure. Their work combines deep cultural knowledge with practical conservation skills, contributing to healthier landscapes and stronger communities.

Equally important is the broader impact of these programs. Women's ranger initiatives create culturally safe employment opportunities,

support intergenerational knowledge transfer, and provide visible role models for younger women and girls.

This momentum is also being strengthened at a regional level through the Strong Women for Healthy Country Network. On its way to becoming an independent Aboriginal-led organization, the Network connects women across Arnhem Land and beyond, creating space to share knowledge, build skills, and advocate for more inclusive and effective land management.

Research and experience alike show that when women are actively involved in decision-making, conservation outcomes improve. In Arnhem Land, this is being realized through programs designed by communities themselves, ensuring that women's knowledge, authority, and leadership are embedded in the future of land management.

Through this work, donors are not only supporting conservation, but helping to build a more balanced, resilient, and community-led approach to caring for Country.



***“Research and experience alike show that when women are actively involved in decision-making, conservation outcomes improve.”***

Mimal rangers. Image: Warren Lee

# Thank you to our 2025 leadership supporters

## Organization Support

Airbnb Community Foundation  
PayPal Giving Fund  
Pledgling Foundation  
Wyss Foundation

## Individual Support

Ann Pace  
Anne Krumme  
Anondo Fund  
Brendon Anderson  
Christian Brutzer  
Christopher Doherty  
Daniel Zucker  
Doug Humann, AM

Elizabeth and Chris Vaden  
Dr. Gary Tabor  
Geraldine Brooks, AO  
Jennifer Smith Grubb and Hugh Grubb  
Julie and Darryl Chagi  
Kathy Musial  
Kent Wommack and Gro Flatebo  
Laura and David Leroy  
Mary M. Yang, Ph.D. in honor of Bill Kuni  
Dr. Melanie Spriggs  
Peggy M. Brannigan  
Dr. R. Pamela Reid  
Sabine Johnson-Reiser  
Scott Hassler  
The Heinze Vaughn Fund  
Virginia Andrew

*Thank you to our many other 2025 supporters as well, including those who prefer to remain anonymous – we are grateful for you all!*

*“Gaining Special Wildlife Reserve status at Bush Heritage Reserves in Queensland has been a game-changer for Australian conservation. We at Wyss Foundation are delighted to partner with Friends of the Australian Bush Heritage Fund and Bush Heritage Australia to further your conservation goals.”*

Molly McUsic, Wyss Foundation President

Echidna. Image: Rowan Mott

# Our 2025 Financial Summary

The below metrics represent the financial standing of FOABHF year over year from fiscal year 2023 (FY2023) to FY2025, following the January 1 to December 31 fiscal calendar.

Category	FY2025	FY2024	FY2023
<b>Revenue</b>			
Donations	\$105,598	\$46,474	\$71,211
Grants	\$225,000	\$184,100	\$60,000
Interest	\$788	\$640	\$8,731
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$331,386</b>	<b>\$231,214</b>	<b>\$139,942</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Disbursements/ Donations	\$241,176	\$205,521	\$885,990
Staff Costs	\$94,916	\$71,339	\$68,276
General and Admin	\$26,613	\$13,604	\$42,449
Fees	\$0	\$565	\$2,818
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$362,705</b>	<b>\$291,029</b>	<b>\$999,533</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$(31,319)</b>	<b>\$(59,815)</b>	<b>\$(859,591)</b>

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 FY 2023 to FY 2025. Distributions brought full disbursements to more than \$1.3 million over the past three years.

# Meet our Board of Directors



## Sabine Johnson-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 Australia 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.



## Chris Doherty

### Secretary

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 Master's in Sustainable Development and, though based in Portland, Oregon, hails from Wagga Wagga in NSW, Australia – Wiradjuri country.



## Jennifer Smith Grubb

### Executive Director and Ex-Officio Director

Throughout her life, Jennifer has dedicated herself to the care and healing of our planet. Inspired by the unique treasures of the Australian bush, Jennifer has become a champion for the conservation of Australia's natural and cultural heritage. She has 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 and as Founder of the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability, 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 co-founding 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.



## Doug Humann

### Director

Doug has nearly 40 years of leadership experience in the NGO sector, including serving as Bush Heritage Australia's inaugural CEO, Chair of Landcare Australia, and as a founding director of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance. Doug works with First Nation communities and with many NGOs and their leadership. He is currently Chair of Our Common Place. 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 Bahamas Marine EcoCentre.



## Kent Wommack

### Director

Kent is the Executive Director of the Liz Claiborne & Art Ortenberg Foundation, which supports wildlife and community-based conservation initiatives globally. 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 with Bush Heritage Australia, where he later returned as TNC's first in-country Executive Director.



## 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 datacenters. 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. Peggy joined our Board of Directors in 2024.

Avocet Reserve brigalow. Image: Grassland Films





**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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