

MEDIA RELEASE
16 February 2016



Nature Conservation Trust Heralds Big Win for Wildlife in New South Wales

The Nature Conservation Trust of New South Wales (NCT) has announced that at the end of 2015, it reached the remarkable goal of protecting over 50,000 hectares of high-value conservation land on private property in New South Wales.

This is equivalent to 3.5 times the size of Royal National Park south of Sydney. Reaching this target has been achieved through the diligent efforts of NCT's team which works closely with landowners who have taken out a conservation covenant on their private land in order to protect threatened ecosystems and flora and fauna which inhabit that land.

Given that most of the state's land is privately owned, this is an important achievement for a state which is facing significant biodiversity loss. 59% of mammals alone in NSW are listed as being threatened with extinction whilst Australia as a continent has experienced the largest documented decline in biodiversity in any continent over the past 200 years.

The loss of biodiversity matters because species and ecosystems have complex, inter-related relationships which are fundamental to our way of life and economy. These systems play a vital role in industries such as tourism and agriculture which are big contributors to economic growth. The work that NCT is doing in this area is not only important to rural communities but to the state overall.

John V McCarthy AO, Chair of the NCT said, "There is no doubt that over the past five years, interest in private land conservation has increased significantly. We were able to reach our target of 50,000 hectares only through the outstanding efforts of private landowners."

The covenant is a legal, in perpetuity, agreement which provides landowners with certainty that the conservation work they undertake will be maintained into the future. NCT currently works with landowners of properties ranging in size from a few hectares to a 22,000 - hectare property near Griffith, Mawonga Station.

The landholders involved come from varied backgrounds and include farmers and city dwellers who have moved to the country. Louise Freckelton, along with her partner David, made the move to Wagga Wagga where they purchased Highfield, a 300-hectare woodland property.

"Bringing together conservation and farming is definitely a passion-project. We love it and are grateful for the support and advice that NCT has provided," said Freckelton. The couple run a small lamb business selling produce at markets and online and at the same time, protect the threatened box gum grassy woodland on their property.

Fresh from the success of reaching the targeted 50,000 hectares, NCT has launched Yellowbox, a fundraising initiative which will enable it to protect even more private land.

For only \$10, individuals can protect a 10sqm piece of land, enabling them to play their part in conservation protection on private land.

“It’s an easy and yet tangible way for people to get involved in what we do,” said Mr McCarthy.

For further information on NCT: www.nct.org.au; Yellowbox: www.yellowbox.org.au

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