

# CONNECTING COUNTRY



## PROSPECTUS 2020





Photo credits: GK - Gen Kay, GP - Geoff Park, EM - Euan Moore, LE - Leonie van Eyk, TT - Tarrangower Times, JR - Jane Rusden, AB - Asha Bannon, BL - Bonnie Humphreys, FH - Frances Howe, IC - Ivan Carter, JS - Jacqui Slingo, JL - Jess Lawton.

Cover: Main - A Connecting Country restoration site near Taradale Victoria, five years after revegetation works JS; Below - LE, FH, Scarlet Robin by GP, Brush-tailed Phascogale by JL.

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# Priority projects seeking support

Connecting people, doing on-ground actions, protecting habitat, restoring landscape connectivity, monitoring biodiversity, fighting species extinction

The selection of priority projects on the following pages highlight immediate needs. They target vital ongoing projects, core organisational capacity, and new initiatives that build ecosystem and community resilience to climate change. They combat threats such as pest plant and animals, inappropriate burning practices and habitat degradation.

*'It's very gratifying to see Connecting Country paying attention to degraded landscapes...If we want these habitats in the future we must restore them almost from scratch. We need test sites, to trial restoration approaches and monitor speed of recovery. Greenhill, (a Connecting Country funded site) is a model for us all and hugely encouraging. It is an example of what can be done with informed and carefully targeted, funded works.'*

– Dr David Cheal, Federation University and Redesdale resident

You can be assured that any financial support from you will be well spent, with 100% invested into our core work of supporting and implementing landscape restoration in central Victoria. We run a lean operation, and our small team of professional part-time staff attracts voluntary support, so that every dollar goes a long way.

# Connecting Country

## About us

Connecting Country is a community organisation working across the Mount Alexander region of central Victoria. Our mission is to connect people and landscapes in ways that restore the health, resilience and productivity of our natural environment.

Since 2007, we've established a track record of successfully delivering large and small-scale projects. Our experience, strong governance, local knowledge, passionate staff, extensive networks and support from expert advisors ensure high quality projects that consistently deliver and exceed goals, while meeting budget and schedule.

We collaborate with a wide range of people, agencies and organisations providing support, skills and funds to local communities to restore landscapes. Project partners include:



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Industry,  
Innovation and Science**



# Connecting Country

## Our four action areas



ENGAGE COMMUNITY through environmental education events and practical workshops, citizen science, information sharing, an informative website, social media and volunteer networks.



MONITOR BIODIVERSITY our long-term monitoring programs focus on woodland birds and aboreal mammals as indicators of landscape health and restoration success. What we learn is shared with the community and land managers.



SUPPORT LANDCARE we support the active and diverse groups working to protect and restore our local environment. With around 15,000 hours of volunteer work annually, we assist via access to grants, administrative support, hosting and supporting events and an equipment library.



RESTORE LANDSCAPES our private land restoration programs support landholders to improve habitat and restore linkages through protective fencing for remnant habitat, revegetation, nest boxes, and control of pest plants and animals.



## Summary of projects seeking support

Project	Target species	Action areas	Scale	Indicative budget required	Timeframe
FUTURE-PROOF OUR FORESTS	Box-Ironbark Forest and associated woodlands	New initiative Restore habitat now Revegetate	Pilot project	\$100,000	2 years
			Full project, scalable	\$300,000-\$500,000	3-5 years
SECURE OUR BIG TREES	Insects Microbats Hollow-dependent fauna Powerful owl Small mammals and reptiles Birds of prey	Restore habitat now Revegetate	Modest project	\$40,000	1 year
			Large project	\$100,000	1 year
BUILD HEALTHY LANDSCAPES	Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community Brush-tailed Phascogale Silver Banksia	Restore habitat now Revegetate	Modest restoration project	\$100,000	1 year
			Large restoration project	\$350,000-\$800,000	2-4 years
			Landholder support	\$40,000	per year
MOBILISE COMMUNITY	-	Build community capacity	Per event	\$5,000	per event
			Autumn and spring workshop series	\$22,000	per year
MONITOR WOODLAND BIRDS	Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin, Jacky Winter, Brown Treecreeper, Painted Button-quail Swift Parrot	Citizen science Build community capacity Monitor wildlife Protect threatened species	Annual monitoring	\$30,000	per year
UNDERSTAND PHASCOGALES	Brush-tailed Phascogale Sugar glider	Citizen science Monitor wildlife Protect threatened species	Annual monitoring and nest box maintenance	\$20,000	per year, biannually
STOP BUTTERFLY EXTINCTION	Eltham Copper Butterfly	Citizen science Monitor wildlife Restore habitat now Protect threatened species	Annual monitoring and support	\$30,000	per year
			Habitat restoration project	\$100,000	per year
EMPOWER VOLUNTEERS	-	Citizen science Build community capacity	Volunteer training, equipment and support	\$30,000	per year
SUPPORT OUR CORE	-	Secure foundations for ongoing success	Website upgrade, integrated GIS, staff development, marketing plan	\$5,000-\$50,000	ongoing
HEALTH-CHECK RESTORATION	Plants of Box-Ironbark Forests and associated woodlands including: Castlemaine Spider Orchid, Sutton Grange Greenhood	Monitor biodiversity	One round of plant monitoring, data analysis, exclusion plot maintenance	\$30,000	per year, flexible timing



Photo by Gen Kay

# FUTURE-PROOF OUR FORESTS

## Grow plants ready for a changing climate

Our forests have evolved over millennia to thrive in their specific climate. As our landscape becomes hotter and drier, plants are struggling to adapt. Already we see Eucalypts growing on the edge of their range are dying. At the same time, community members are increasingly concerned about the future viability of their revegetation efforts. Using new methods trialed by Australian scientists, this ground-breaking project uses a mix of seed sourced from local, naturally-occurring plants and seed of the same species from warmer, drier places. Mixing of genes produces resilient plants better equipped to handle changes in climate, while adding valuable habitat connections. This provides a critical seed source to sustain future revegetation. Your support enables us to design, establish and monitor these 'forests of the future' and provide a model for future projects.



**DRIVE AN INNOVATIVE  
NEW APPROACH THAT  
RESPONDS TO CLIMATE  
CHANGE AT SCALE**

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**CREATE WILDLIFE  
HABITAT AND  
CONNECTIVITY**

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**ESTABLISH A CLIMATE-  
READY SEED SOURCE  
FOR PLANTING IN A  
WARMER DRIER  
CLIMATE**

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**PROVIDE HOPE AND  
GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL  
COMMUNITY**

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**ADAPT REVEGETATION  
METHODS TO CHANGING  
CLIMATE**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$100,000 for pilot project  
\$300,000 to \$500,000 for full  
project, scalable

2 years to establish plots  
3-5 years for full project



Photo by Geoff Park

# SECURE OUR BIG TREES

## Establish the next generation of paddock trees

Large old trees are iconic in our rural landscapes. Still standing in paddocks, after hundreds of years, they offer farmers valuable shade and shelter for stock. Ecologically, they are 'keystone structures' due to their essential role as habitat, providing nest hollows, stepping-stones for wildlife to move across fragmented landscapes, sources of seed diversity and carbon stores. However, these old trees are quietly disappearing from the landscape through changed environmental conditions, new farming practices and old age. This project will help people value and protect their existing old trees, and establish the next generation of paddock trees. Working with landholders, we will use established tree protection and revegetation methods to maximise both farm productivity and biodiversity.



**ADD VALUE TO OUR  
LANDSCAPE  
RESTORATION WITH  
PROVEN METHODS**

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**PROTECT LARGE OLD  
TREES ACROSS OUR  
LANDSCAPE**

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**ESTABLISH THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
PADDOCK TREES FOR  
FARM PRODUCTIVITY  
AND BIODIVERSITY**

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**EXTEND NETWORK OF  
HABITAT LINKAGES FOR  
WILDLIFE**

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**HELP LANDHOLDERS  
AND COMMUNITY VALUE  
PADDOCK TREES**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$40,000 for modest project  
\$100,000 for full project

1 year for modest project  
2-4 years for full project





Photo by Jacqui Slingo

# BUILD HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

**Mobilise landholders to protect and create habitat for wildlife**

Central Victoria's Box-Ironbark forests have a long history of disturbance from mining, woodcutting, agriculture, and changes in fire and water regimes. Although eucalypts often regenerate, many areas are still heavily degraded and have lost the key understorey plants that provide wildlife with essential food, nesting sites and protection from predators, and drive ecosystem diversity. Through our ten-year history of working with local landholders we've identified a wealth of landowners keen to restore their land. We've shown that with modest investment, we can help them protect remnant vegetation and improve habitat quality. This project works with committed landholders to develop property plans that achieve their land restoration goals. We provide advice and practical support like fencing remnant vegetation, pest plant and animal control, nest boxes and strategic revegetation planting. This process empowers landholders to provide valuable habitat for threatened species and improve landscape connectivity.



**EXTEND OUR EXISTING  
NETWORK OF 9,500  
HECTARES OF PRIVATE  
LAND RESTORATION**

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**PROVIDE PRACTICAL  
SKILLS AND ACTIONS  
FOR LANDHOLDERS**

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**BUILD ECOSYSTEM  
CONNECTIVITY AND  
RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE  
CHANGE**

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**FOSTER COMMUNITY  
CONNECTIONS FOR  
INTEGRATED WEED AND  
PEST CONTROL**

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**SECURE HABITAT TO  
COMBAT DECLINE OF  
THREATENED SPECIES**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

Modest restoration project  
\$100,000

Large restoration project  
\$350,000-\$800,000

Landholder network support  
\$40,000 per year



Photo by Gen Kay

# MOBILISE COMMUNITY

## Engage and empower people to value their environment

Engaging community is vital. Informed people have immense power to tackle challenging environmental issues and drive positive change. Since 2010 we've successfully delivered over 200 environmental workshops, walks and events, known for being highly engaging, inspiring, fun, social and educational. Topics target identified knowledge gaps and community needs to increase social capital, strengthen networks and build community capacity to restore landscapes. Our current wish-list includes topics such as: a 'sticky beak' tour of landscape restoration sites, and workshops on microbats, frog monitoring, converting farm dams to wetlands, revegetation techniques, and valuing logs and litter for habitat.



**BUILD ON TEN YEARS OF  
SUCCESSFUL  
COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT**

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**PROVIDE PRACTICAL  
SKILLS AND ACTIONS  
FOR LANDHOLDERS**

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**BUILD COMMUNITY  
CAPACITY IN  
SUSTAINABLE LAND  
MANAGEMENT**

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**STRENGTHEN  
COMMUNITY, PROMOTE  
WELLBEING AND NEW  
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**

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**SHOWCASE  
CONNECTING  
COUNTRY'S WORK**

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## BUDGET AND TIMING

\$5,000 per event  
\$22,000 per year for spring and  
autumn workshop series

flexible timing, ongoing





Photo by Geoff Park

# MONITOR WOODLAND BIRDS

## Track ecosystem health and restoration success with birds

Rigorous, long-term monitoring is essential to determine how our native wildlife are faring, and if our restoration efforts are effective in reversing their decline. With a changing climate, monitoring is now more important than ever. In 2010, we began monitoring birds across our region as indicators of ecosystem health. With help from scientists, we established a program targeting the threatened Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community. We now have an incredibly valuable database of long-term results that tell us how our threatened birds are coping, and if habitat restoration is really helping. However, limited resources put our monitoring program at risk. Your support will allow us to continue to monitor woodland bird and landscape health, and to build, analyse and share this valuable data with the wider community.



**CONTINUE LONG-TERM  
BIRD MONITORING  
PROGRAM SUPPORTED  
BY SCIENCE**

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**BUILD COMMUNITY  
CAPACITY TO COLLECT  
VALUABLE SCIENTIFIC  
DATA**

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**ANALYSE ESSENTIAL  
DATA**

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**RECRUIT AND TRAIN  
NEW BIRD MONITORING  
VOLUNTEERS**

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**ENGAGE PEOPLE IN  
NATURE CONSERVATION  
THROUGH BIRDS**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$30,000 per year

ongoing



Photo by Jess Lawton

# UNDERSTAND PHASCOGALES

## Monitor and protect our threatened native mammal

Brush-tailed Phascogales are carnivorous marsupials distinguished by their bushy tail. Their range and numbers have declined due to habitat loss, introduced predators, and lack of old trees with the hollows needed for breeding and shelter. In 2010-11 we installed 450 nest boxes across the Mount Alexander region, carefully located in a range of environments to allow scientific analysis of phascogale distribution and habitat preferences. With volunteer help and a partnership with La Trobe University, we've monitored nest boxes every two years, creating an incredibly valuable database that helps us understand phascogale status and conservation needs. However, lack of funding threatens our capacity for further monitoring. Your support will help us keep tracking phascogale numbers, study conservation needs and maintain nest boxes into the future.

**CONTINUE LONG-TERM  
MONITORING OF THIS  
THREATENED MAMMAL  
IN A LAST REMAINING  
STRONGHOLD**

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**BUILD VOLUNTEER  
CAPACITY TO SAFELY  
CHECK NEST BOXES**

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**MAINTAIN AND REPAIR  
NEST BOXES FOR THE  
FUTURE**

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**COLLECT RIGOROUS  
SCIENTIFIC DATA ON  
NEST BOX USE**

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**ANALYSE AND SHARE  
DATA FOR INFORMED  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
DECISION-MAKING**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$20,000 every two years

ongoing





Photo by Euan Moore

# STOP BUTTERFLY EXTINCTION

## Protect Castlemaine's endangered butterfly

The largest remaining population of the Eltham Copper Butterfly (*Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*) lies adjacent to the town of Castlemaine in central Victoria. This small colourful butterfly was thought extinct in the 1950s but rediscovered in 1986. There are only four known populations in the world. They have a weird and wonderful interdependent relationship with a *Notoncus* ant and *Sweet Bursaria* plants. However, little is known about this fascinating species, including its current population or distribution. A small band of committed volunteers have been working to protect known butterfly sites, which remain at risk from inappropriate fuel reduction burning and habitat destruction. Your investment will build on the momentum we've raised within the community about the butterfly's status, ecology, and capacity to monitor and protect this iconic local species.

SUPPORT GRASSROOTS  
CONSERVATION  
FIGHTING TO PROTECT A  
LITTLE-KNOWN SPECIES  
FROM EXTINCTION

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RECORD ESSENTIAL  
INFORMATION ABOUT  
BUTTERFLY STATUS  
AND DISTRIBUTION

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EDUCATE COMMUNITY  
ABOUT A THREATENED  
SPECIES ON THEIR  
DOORSTEP

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SEARCH FOR NEW  
BUTTERFLY  
POPULATIONS

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RECRUIT, TRAIN AND  
SUPPORT COMMUNITY  
BUTTERFLY MONITORS

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## BUDGET AND TIMING

\$30,000 per year  
habitat restoration  
\$100,000 per year

ongoing



Photo by Jess Lawton

# EMPOWER VOLUNTEERS

## Empower our dedicated team of citizen scientists

Ongoing monitoring is essential to determine if our threatened plants and animals are still declining, and if management actions are helping. With funding tight, we now rely on an army of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer citizen scientists. However, they need direction and support to be effective, safe and sustainable. With help, we can mobilise our volunteers to collect scientifically rigorous data that allows informed decision-making for environmental conservation. The safety and wellbeing of our volunteers is essential. Our volunteers need training and equipment to keep them safe and allow quality data collection. We recognise the need to acknowledge, support and celebrate our dedicated volunteers and their achievements.



**BUILD AND MAINTAIN  
CAPACITY OF OUR  
SKILLED CITIZEN  
SCIENTISTS AND  
SKILLED VOLUNTEERS**

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**KEEP VOLUNTEERS  
EFFECTIVE, SAFE AND  
HEALTHY WITH  
TRAINING AND  
EQUIPMENT**

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**REIMBURSE  
VOLUNTEERS FOR  
TRAVEL EXPENSES**

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**CELEBRATE  
VOLUNTEERS TO KEEP  
THEM ENGAGED AND  
MOTIVATED**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$30,000 per year

ongoing





Photo by Heather Barrett

# SUPPORT OUR CORE

## Help us thrive in 2020 and beyond

Project funding is great, but it's not enough to keep our organisation healthy. We also need core support to keep us thriving and focused on long-term plans that go well beyond short-term funding opportunities. Your financial support will help sustain the strong foundations essential to our success as a community-driven organisation. A comprehensive geographic information system (GIS) would greatly increase the efficiency of our work combining our historical, current and future project activities within one system and improve our support to community groups. Good governance and effective administration systems are essential. Professional help with developing a marketing plan, website upgrade and funding for promotional videos helps us better engage with supporters and the wider community.

**FILL CORE  
ORGANISATIONAL  
NEEDS TO SUPPORT  
OUR PROJECTS,  
VOLUNTEERS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

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**ESTABLISH AN  
EFFECTIVE INTEGRATED  
GIS**

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**UPGRADE AND REVAMP  
CONNECTING COUNTRY  
WEBSITE**

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**SUPPORT EFFICIENT  
ADMINISTRATION AND  
GOOD GOVERNANCE**

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**FACILITATE STAFF  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

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## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$5,000 to \$50,000 depending on  
scope

ongoing



Photo by Gen Kay

# HEALTH CHECK RESTORATION

## Monitor landscape health

Connecting Country has worked with local landholders to restore over 9,500 ha of landscape in central Victoria. By monitoring these sites we learn about the effects of our restoration actions and the health of local ecosystems. Without monitoring, we don't know if our restoration efforts are effective, or what revegetation methods work best. With your support, we will use established techniques to monitor plant survival, growth, species richness and diversity through time. Together with our bird and nest box monitoring programs, this data forms a valuable foundation to inform our future restoration programs and build community capacity to restore landscapes in a changing climate.



**REVIEW IMPACT OF TEN  
YEARS OF  
RESTORATION ACTION  
ON LANDSCAPE HEALTH**

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**MEASURE EFFECT OF  
GRAZING PRESSURE ON  
PLANT REGENERATION  
USING EXCLUSION  
PLOTS**

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**REVIEW SUCCESS OF  
REVEGETATION  
TECHNIQUES**

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**CHECK LANDSCAPE  
HEALTH IN A CHANGING  
CLIMATE**

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**USE FEEDBACK TO  
ADAPT RESTORATION  
METHODS TO MAXIMISE  
FUTURE SUCCESS**

## **BUDGET AND TIMING**

\$30,000 to 40,000 per year

flexible timing, ongoing



# GET INVOLVED



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watch our short film

[www.rememberthewild.org.au/connecting-country](http://www.rememberthewild.org.au/connecting-country)



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