

NCSSA Annual Report 2021-22



Acknowledgement of Country

There have been people in South Australia for over 40,000 years. Every landscape that we work in is a cultural landscape with a rich human history. Our Adelaide office sits on Kurna land, and our work throughout South Australia encompasses the traditional lands of many other nations. NCSSA pay our respects to their elders past and present. We acknowledge the ongoing cultural and spiritual connection that First Nations peoples have with their country, and their commitment to its stewardship for future generations. As we work to conserve nature in South Australia, we aim to get better at listening, learning and working with First Nations People.



Front page photo: Morialta Conservation Park, This page photo: Tothill Ranges remnant vegetation

Within this report

- Our call to action _____2
- Our Vision / mission_____3
- Messages from our Committee
president and CEO _____4
- Our Impact_____5
- Our Work _____6-9
- Our Achievements_____10
- Stories from our friends _____11-15
- Our Committee and staff _____16
- Next Years Program of work_____17

South Australia's Nature is in decline

The scale and speed of change is large and accelerating. Globally, many scientists agree we have entered a new geological era –the Anthropocene – in which human activity has become the dominant influence on the earth's environment and systems.

Globally, species population numbers have plummeted, on average, by 69% since 1970.

For South Australia this is reflected through widespread clearance, high levels of species extinction and an unprecedented loss of habitats.

Our response

The NCSSA's efforts over the past 60 years have resulted in important conservation achievements in South Australia, but more is needed, faster and at a larger scale.

The NCSSA is uniquely placed to make this contribution as a passionate, evidence-based advocate for the conservation of nature.



Our VISION

South Australia's Biodiversity and People Thrive in Resilient Landscapes.

Our MISSION

To inspire all South Australians to value and protect the native species, ecosystems and landscapes of our State.

The NCSSA will work to engage government, partners, members and the South Australian public in the enjoyment, care and protection of South Australia's natural biological diversity and natural systems. We will engage, educate and advocate to connect South Australians to nature and raise awareness of the local impacts and solutions to the global extinction crisis and the local loss of ecosystem services and natural heritage values. We will strive to protect biodiversity and function in every South Australian landscape through protection of a comprehensive, adequate, representative network of natural ecosystems.

Research | Advocacy | Engagement

A Message from our President

Patrick O'Connor

The Society has spent the last year reshaping itself to better tackle the challenges of biodiversity loss in South Australia. The work is not over but has begun very positively and is already producing dividends for our work. The critical steps taken include widening the skills set of the Management Committee, updating the constitution, upgrading financial reporting, appointing the first CEO to run operations, developing a Strategic Plan, consolidating critical roles in conservation science and advocacy, and updating our communications approach and online presence.

All of these changes are focussed Speaking and Acting for Nature and underpin our important work in conservation planning, monitoring, onground action, advocacy and communications. That work is only possible through the dedication of the many volunteers who give their time in many roles, including to the Management Committee, and of the

staff who produce excellent work in the name of conservation. On behalf of the Management Committee, I would like to thank the staff and volunteers for putting us in an excellent position to continue to influence nature conservation in South Australia.



A Message from our CEO

Kirsty Bevan

I feel so privileged to be given the opportunity to run the Nature Conservation Society of SA, having been appointed to the role of CEO in March 2022. The NCSSA has such a proud legacy on which to build our work around research, advocacy and engagement.

2021-22 has been a monumental year in terms of achievements and the staff of NCSSA have proven once again what a small, but dedicated group is capable of achieving.

I am most proud of the projects and programs around private protected areas, campaigning for improved protection of our biodiversity assets in the pastoral region of SA, and our outstanding achievements in Survey and Monitoring throughout SA.

Next year is already shaping up to be just as fulfilling as we engage with state government over a new Biodiversity Act, renewable energy industry impacts and resilient ecosystems in face of climate change and extreme weather events.

A massive thank you to the staff of NCSSA for their continued and passionate contribution to all our outcomes for 2021-22, to the Management Committee for their expertise and guidance and the countless volunteer hours they continue to contribute to NCSSA. Specifically I'd like to thank the Management Committee for their role in the development of our soon to be released strategic plan.



Our Impact

A snap shot of our impact during **2021-2022** includes building our evidence base through surveys and research, speaking for nature and pressuring for stronger government legislation through submissions and activating community to write letters, all with an aim to protect our biodiversity.

The greatest impact is to have more native vegetation, and greater protection.



820

Supporter letters sent to Members of Parliament calling for nature conservation



9

Submission made



550,000

Social media reach of 'posts seen'



577

Surveys undertaken - building our evidence base



970ha

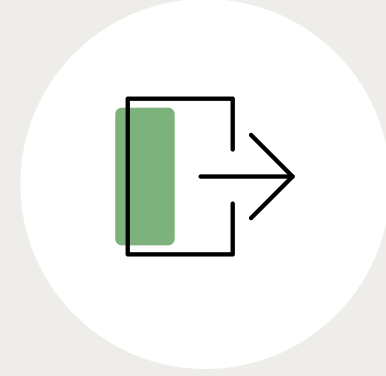
of Additional area under protection



>2,440

Volunteer hours

Our Work 2021- 2022



Research

2021-22 has been a busy and rewarding year, as we undertook projects and programs, designed to collect evidence to support decision making and underpin our advocacy.

NCSSA has continued, for over 20 years, to coordinate, manage and maintain 2 major monitoring programs and 100s of research projects, with the help and dedication of staff, funding partners and teams of volunteers.



Advocacy

Advocacy is an integral component of NCSSA business and something we are very proud of.

We continue to use our evidence-based advocacy for campaigning for nature.

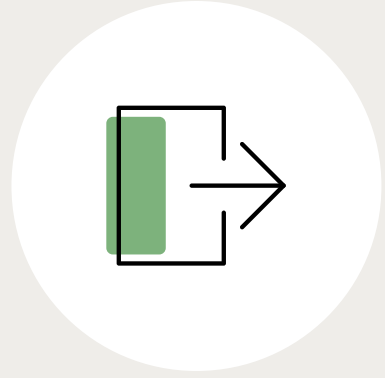
During 2021-2022 we spearheaded two major campaigns: 'Whalers Way' and 'Save Our Outback'.



Engagement

All NCSSA activities are achieved through thoughtful, respectful and genuine engagement.

Through our monitoring programs and major projects we have had some exceptional engagement outcomes so far this year.



Our Research



The Mount Lofty Ranges Woodland Bird Monitoring Program is a long-term program running since 1999. It aims to collect & assess evidence for population declines in woodland birds through repeated surveys of 165 sites throughout the Mount Lofty Ranges. In 2021-22 we coordinated 495 site visits, with 88 bird species from 5,960 individual bird observations recorded.



Superb Fairy-wren, photo by Peter Day

Revitalising private conservation program resulted in 97 new Heritage Agreement applications to protect in perpetuity over 970 additional hectares of high-quality remnant vegetation. The NCSSA were 1 of 5 environmental non-government partners in this program, led by the Nature Foundation, and with the Two million dollars of grant funding received, the program

generated an additional \$4.5 million in in-kind contributions.

Bandicoot superhighway



Bandicoot Superhighway Project

In this multi partnership project we are using innovative machine learning software that automatically detects and identifies the presence of bandicoots (and other species). A number of bandicoot observations have been made, and the cameras also assist with identifying threats such as the presence of foxes and habitat degradation via kangaroo and deer browsing.

The Bushland Condition Monitoring (BCM) program, running since the mid-2000s, provides essential data on the long-term health of native vegetation throughout SA. In 2021-22 the NCSSA coordinated 11 BCM surveys in the Northern and Yorkes region through their

Marna Banggara rewilding project, identifying native &/or threatened, regenerative species as well as grazing pressure.

Threatened flora surveys on Kangaroo Island to assess the post fire response of 16 threatened flora species and implement on-ground work to enhance their recovery and mitigate against population declines. This project weaved together four complementary elements of monitoring, ex-situ conservation, First Nations learnings and identifying and mitigating against threats of Tasmanian Blue Gum.



Volunteers at the KI Rare Plant Garden

This work culminated in the launch of the KI Rare Plant Garden in Cygnet Park. The launch saw 60 volunteers planting >50 species and >1000 plants.

2021/22 NCSSA Partners:
 Trees for Life,
 Livestock SA,
 Conservation Council SA,
 Nature Foundation,
 Hills and Fleurieu, Northern and Yorkes, Murraylands and Riverland, Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and Green Adelaide Landscape Boards, South Australian Government, Australian Government, The South Australian Seed Conservation Centre, private landholders, BioR, Adelaide Hills Council, Forestry SA, The Biology Society of SA, Emu Bay Progress Association, KI Conservation Landholders Association, First Nations groups, Firesticks Alliance, Sturt Upper Reaches Landcare Group, National Parks and Wildlife SA, Resilient Hills and Coast, University of Adelaide, and Friends of Parks groups incl. KI Western District



Our Advocacy



First Dog on the Moon Cartoon

Save Our Outback: The former Marshall Liberal Government released the Pastoral Lands Bill in 2020 which would have seen:

- lease lengths increase to 100 years,
- a reduction in oversight of pastoral management, and
- the stacking of the Pastoral Board with a majority of pastoralists.

The NCSSA, together with several other key conservation groups, launched the **Save Our Outback** campaign in January 2022, highlighting the threat to our Outback posed by the Pastoral Lands Bill. The campaign, through social media and peer-to-peer campaigning, was highly successful.

- Garnering **2,500 followers** on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok
- Catalysing over **750 letters** to Parliamentarians, and
- Volunteers delivering **10,000 flyers** to letterboxes

Following the State Election in March 2022, the Pastoral Lands Bill is thankfully no longer on the table.

Whalers Way: For over two years, the NCSSA has been campaigning against plans to build a private, industrial rocket launching complex inside a wildlife sanctuary on the southerly point of Eyre Peninsula, in a place called Whalers Way.



Whalers Way, photo by Julia Peacock

Whalers Way is recognised as a Conservation Zone under planning law, is protected as a Heritage Agreement under native vegetation law and is habitat for threatened species protected under national environmental law, including the Southern Emu-wren (Eyre Peninsula).



Sthrn Emu Wren, photo Marcus Pickett

Over 2021-22, the campaign included:

- Media coverage, in the lead up to the first 'test' launch from a 'temporary' pad, which failed and caught alight in September 2021,
- Submissions to both State and national approval processes arguing against the proposal,
- a submission supporting the 'uplisting' of the Southern Emu-wren (Eyre Peninsula) from 'vulnerable' to 'endangered' under national law, and
- Letters to the Ministers for Planning and Environment, as appointed following the 2022 election.

Unfortunately, Whalers Way continues to be threatened by this proposal and therefore campaigning will continue into 2022-23 – it's **the wrong place for space!**

State Election: The NCSSA, as a member of the Conservation Council of SA, made a significant contribution to the election commitments achieved through the State Election in March 22. Including a commitment of \$1m toward the recovery of birds in the woodlands of the Mount Lofty

Ranges. The evidence of decline for many species of these birds has been documented by the NCSSA for 20 + years.

Over 2021/22 the NCSSA made **9 strong submissions** in support of nature conservation, including to a review of the Native Vegetation Act 1991, highlighting that our bushland is still being lost at an unacceptable rate - with nearly half a million hectares lost since 1990!

Two campaigns that commenced in 2021/22 that will continue are:

- **Act for Nature:** The Federal Labor Government has committed to reforming national environmental law, which needs to be strengthened to truly protect nature, and
- **30% by 2030:** The Federal Labor Government has committed to protecting 30% of land and 30% of seas by 2030, which needs to translate to true protection of all ecosystem types.



Our Engagement



Artist in Residence: The wonderfully creative Amber Cronin joined us this year as our Artist in Residence. Her focus was to celebrate the Mount Lofty Ranges Woodland Birds Monitoring program and Amber did an exceptional job at raising awareness, understanding the ecological significance and delivering a creative output with enduring value. The somewhat meditative audio works of Amber are worth listening to in the quiet of your own home. To listen to Ambers audio work, scan this QR code:



To purchase one of her limited edition water colour prints head to our website: www.ncssa.asn.au

Workshops: During 2021-22 we have held workshops for community and landholders on Kangaroo Island to showcase the Island's threatened flora and discuss ways community can get involved. For our Bandicoot Superhighway Partnership project we held 2 community workshops to educate people on bandicoots. We also coordinated and ran a successful

4-day workshop on KI that brought together 27 representatives from three First Nations groups to talk about ways to improve the health and resilience of country.



Nature Festival: We were so excited to be a part of the wonderful Nature Festival team again this year, where we celebrated nature through several events including: three nature walks, listening to birds, with our own Ali Ben Kahn at Little Mount Crawford Native Forest Reserve (Jenkin's Reserve), old Kersbrook Forest, and Altona CSR Landcare Reserve, along with a wonderful event showcasing our artist in residence work, Dawn Chorus, held at the Schomburk Pavilion in the beautiful Botanic Gardens of Adelaide.

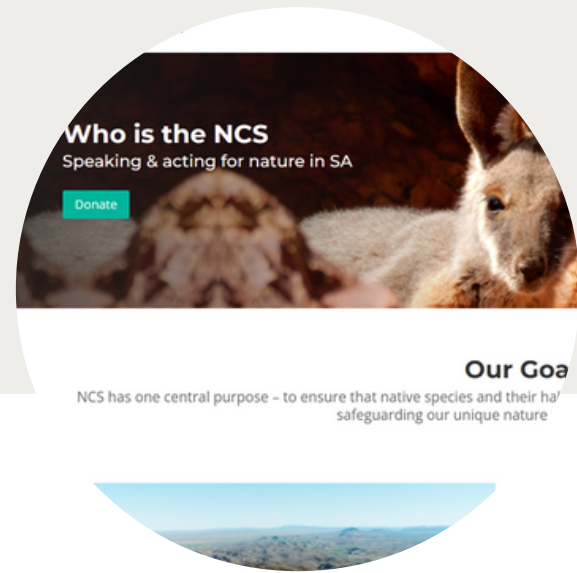


Stuart Collard, Peter Day, Amber Cronin and Ali Ben Kahn at the Nature Festivals Dawn Chorus

We engage people in many ways, including:

- Workshops, bird walks and activities which provide opportunities for people to celebrate South Australia's unique nature & how lucky we are!
- Upskilling and knowledge transfer about specific species and habitats through our workshops, citizen science opportunities, training and field days
- Listening to community aspirations and challenges and working with them to develop solutions
- Offering volunteer opportunities where people can take part in our research and monitoring work.

2021-22 Major Achievements



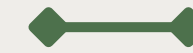
New NCSSA Website:
 It was so exciting this year to work with Elliot at Wildlife Plus to upgrade our website. All staff at the NCSSA worked on content and loved the opportunity to showcase our expertise and skills. If you haven't already do check it out, and sign up or become a member to receive up to date information
www.ncssa.asn.au



Rare Plant Garden:
 Our project partners and NCSSA had the Hon. Susan Close MP join us on Kangaroo Island to launch the Rare Plant Garden in Cygnet Park. This garden is a living research facility, a long term living seed bank, and a conservation education facility. A massive thank you to the SA Seed Conservation Centre, Bio-R and the KI Community for making this a reality.



'Save Our Outback' Campaign:
 We were a critical driver in preventing retrograde changes to the management of our pastoral lands. We are very proud of the efforts of all our partners and the engagement we achieved. We will continue to keep you informed in relation to Pastoral Board appointments and the improved protection of our arid lands.



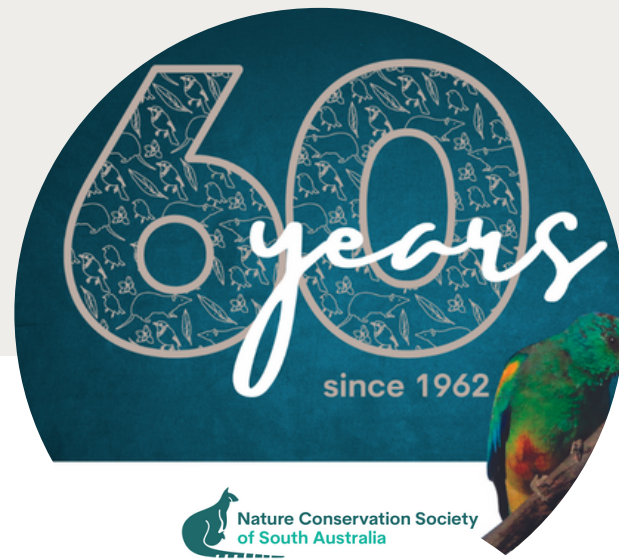
Conservation Biology Grants:
 In partnership with the Biological Society of SA we were so excited to award grants to 3 new early career researchers:
Saskia Gerhardy
Lachlan McLeod
Tessa Paris Manning
 We were also presented with presentations from our previous grant recipients.

Our Supporters

Here at the NCSSA we are supported by a rich legacy of founding members, volunteer committee members and staff. The expanse of work we have achieved over our 60 years is owed in part to them, but also to our supporting members, project partners and hundreds of volunteers.

We would like to take this opportunity to hear from some of these inspirational people who are still a part of the NCSSA in 2021-22, who continue to dedicate their time and hearts into nature conservation in South Australia.

- **Anne and Peter Reeves** - Two of our Founding Members and proud supporters of NCSSA for 60 years.
- **The Seed Conservation Centre** - One of our major project partners in 2021-22, delivering threatened species post bush fire recovery efforts on Kangaroo Island.
- **Rhys Abbott / NCS nature campaigner** - One of our dedicated staff who has spent countless hours paid and unpaid to deliver meaningful campaigns in the protection of nature, and reached 100,000s of people.



A message from two of our Founding Members

Anne and Peter Reeves

The Nature Conservation Society is as relevant and needed today and for the future as when it was first established.

The ongoing program of activity, building on the solid earlier work of the biological snapshot surveys and ongoing strategic input into land and protected area management, has contributed much to better outcomes for nature. We have come a long way since the early 1960s when the then chief bureaucrat responsible for fauna and flora could comment that for him 'to conserve' all about making jam!

As two of the small group of natural historians and academics who came together sixty years ago to launch what is now South Australia's premier voice for nature, we were delighted to have been able recently to join in celebrating the sixtieth anniversary celebration. A lovely positive, informal and yet informative event; a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues from long ago and meet some of the new people of diverse age and background involved, learn of new Dawn Chorus initiative, and share with Uncle Tamaru about the importance of caring for country.



A message from one of our partners

The Seed Conservation Centre of SA

The SA Seed Conservation Centre has undertaken threatened flora conservation projects on Kangaroo Island as part of the bushfire recovery program. One of the key projects was a partnership with the NCSSA for the conservation of nationally endangered plant species endemic to island. The success of the partnership in safeguarding these endangered species was demonstrated by the long-term storage of significant population collections, the development of effective germination protocols and successful reintroductions.

The expertise in project coordination, advocacy, and the extensive community networks of the NCSSA was instrumental for project delivery and was demonstrated by the strong community participation in two initial KI threatened flora workshops. This led to further collaboration with NCSSA and BioR on the KI Rare Plant Garden (KIRPG) based at Cygnet Park. The concept - to grow threatened plants using seeds collected from different populations in a garden setting to be used for restoration programs and to display the unique flora of KI.

The launch of the KIRPG in July 2022 was a remarkable success and only possible due to the significant support of NCSSA staff and volunteers. The presence of NCSSA staff and volunteers planning and organising the launch, project promotion through media outlets, helping to set-up, coordinating volunteers and VIPs, and numerous other activities was a testament to the organisations' capacity, work ethic and amazing passion. The ongoing support from the NCSSA as a key partner in this project has helped to establish a volunteer group, obtain grant funding support and promoted the project to other partners within the community.

The SA Seed Conservation Centre is indebted to the NCSSA for their significant support and commitment as a partner and we look forward to further collaboration on conservation projects with NCSSA in the future.



A message from one of our staff

Rhys Abbott – Nature Campaigner

Every so often, I am overcome with a feeling of astonishment that I work for the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia. This time last year, I was merely an undergraduate student, and today I now work at the heart of biodiversity conservation. The NCS has been around for 60 years but the energy and passion of everyone involved fills me with the hope that one day we may not need to be concerned with the decline of our living world. As a campaigner, I feel well-placed to speak truth to power and play my role in protecting and restoring nature because the NCS bases its priorities on the best available evidence and nothing else.

As the year comes to an end and my colleagues plan for the upcoming year, I am reminded of the massive amount of work that is needed to be done, but I couldn't imagine a better place or people to do it with.

NCS Staff

Kirsty Bevan - CEO

Julia Peacock - Nature Advocate

Rhys Abbott - Nature Campaigner

Bec Duffield - Senior Partnerships and Projects Manager

Ali Ben Kahn - MLR Bird Survey Coordinator

Elen Shute - BCM Coordinator

Brittany Norris - Biodiversity Project Coordinator

Rhys Morgan - Biodiversity Project Coordinator

Tessa Roberts - Technical support

Amanda Stewart - Administrative Manager

Lesley Parton - CMS Database and Website Officer

NCS Management Committee

Patrick O'Connor (President)

Doug Bickerton (Vice President)

Melissa Feller (Treasurer)

Nick Lawry (Secretary)

Anthelia Bond

Meredith Hennessey

Josh Usher

Michael Benell




Andrew Allanson

NCSSA Total Full Time Employment (FTE) = Core funded: 2.6 FTE, Project funded: 2 FTE

The NCSSA Management Committee is 100% volunteers

Next Year 2022-23

- Operating under the new Constitution from 1st July 2022
- Strategic Plan launched November 2022
- 60th Birthday celebration November 2022
- Campaign focus: Whalers Way; Kangaroo Management; the State of the Environment Report will be released; increasing protected areas to 30% by 2030; a new state Biodiversity Act and reformed national environmental laws; Renewables and biodiversity protection.
- Research priorities: landscape resilience & climate change; Biodiversity conservation; MLR birds in decline.
- Engagement importance: NCSSA members, South Australian Nature Alliance, the conservation sector, and our Aboriginal partners.



**Speak up for the
Southern Emu-wren &
Save Whalers Way!**

Write to Key Decision Makers to ask to protect the habitat of the precious Southern Emu-wren (Eyre Peninsula).

This tiny, timid bird is threatened by a plan to build a permanent, experimental rocket launching facility right on top of precious habitat.

The risk is real - a 'test' launch from a 'temporary' launching facility is planned for some time in November, even though the Fire Danger season starts on 15 November in this region and a bushfire would be catastrophic for this bird.

The damage from the proposal for a permanent launching facility will be so significant that it **requires the approval of Tanya Plibersek**, Federal Environment Minister, and **Susan Close**, the State Environment Minister.



Thank you!

for supporting NCSSA to Speak and Act for nature
2021-22.

Contact Us

www.ncssa.asn.au
(08) 7127 4630

ncssa@ncssa.ans.au