

habitat

Australia

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Have hope, and act

Nature needs
you, now.



AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION

Nature
needs us,
now



Sign the pledge for climate and nature

Australia's extraordinary landscapes, once teeming with life, are being pillaged by unchecked climate pollution and habitat destruction.

In early 2025, we will head to the polls for the next federal election. We must ensure our next Parliament is ready to act to protect our climate, communities and wildlife.

Let's call on politicians, parties and candidates to:

Save nature. Stop bulldozing the bush.

Champion renewables. Cut pollution and power everything we can with clean, cheap energy from wind and sun.

Reject nuclear. Ensure Australia's future is renewable, not radioactive

Stop the climate wreckers. No more green lights for big coal and gas polluters.

Scan the QR code and sign the pledge for climate and nature or visit

www.acf.org.au/election-pledge



Nature
needs us,
now





In this **issue**

Welcome to the latest issue of *habitat*.

I recently read a book* about looking out for wildlife that coexist alongside us, and it got me thinking about just how lucky we are to share our lives with such unique critters.

From the blue-tongue lizard trundling around my garden, to the black cockatoos flocking in the gloomy grey of an oncoming storm, to the green tree frog who enjoys making a home in the toilet – these creatures are a reminder of what we are fighting for.

In this issue you'll find plenty of these reminders, and so much more.

You'll hear from a greater glider researcher who took to the treetops to fundraise for nature; a hard yet hopeful message from our nuclear campaigner Dave Sweeney; exciting updates on ACF's campaign about food that's good for people and nature; and an insightful article on disinformation from ACF's Engagement Director Jane Gardner.

You'll also meet ACF's new president Ros Harvey, find a beautiful selection of nature photos from our resident photographer and Policy Advisor Brendan Sydes, and so much more.

In these pages, we can't promise you'll always feel optimistic - the world can be a scary place - but we do promise that you'll feel hopeful and better prepared to take action for climate and nature.

As you'll read from ACF President Ros Harvey, "We can't give up on the planet, and we can't give up on people."

So, settle in, grab yourself a cuppa and enjoy this edition of *habitat*.

👤 Cassie

* *Living with Wildlife: A Guide for Our Homes and Backyards* by Tanya Loos

Above: Dragonflies in flight
Photo: Brendan Sydes

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COVER

A male Superb fairywren taking a fly to his fledglings. Muckleford, central Victoria.
Photo: Brendan Sydes

habitat, our beautiful, bi-annual magazine features stories of our natural world and issues we face as a community. Written by passionate advocates, community members and artists, *habitat* celebrates and speaks out for the most important thing on earth — life itself. Meet the people behind the work we do and be inspired by our community which acts for a world where forests, rivers, people and wildlife thrive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this country and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respect to their elders past and present and acknowledge the pivotal roles Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play in caring for country and wildlife across Australia.

The Australian Conservation Foundation is Australia's national environment organisation. We are more than half a million people who speak out, show up and act for a world where forests, rivers, people and wildlife thrive. We are proudly independent, non-partisan and funded by donations from Australians.

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Letter from the CEO

Kelly O'Shanassy

Hope and optimism are not synonymous. In fact, hope is far more powerful.

I recently read a piece in *The Conversation* from a professor of psychology examining the vision Martin Luther King Jr. painted for justice and the distinct difference between optimism and hope.

“Long-term hope is not about looking on the bright side. It is a mindset that helps people endure challenges, tackle them head-on and keep their eyes on the goal,” says Professor Kendra Thomas.

Often during 2024 I have found it difficult to feel optimism, but I have always managed to feel hope.

I felt hope when the Environment Minister finally rejected Walker Corporation's nature-wrecking plans to destroy Toondah Harbour. I felt hope when Queensland introduced legislation to cut emissions 75% by 2035, and when both Aldi and Woolworths committed to remove deforestation from their shelves.

Each one of these wins is a reason to hold onto hope, and it is also a reason to act.

Walker Corporation's proposal to destroy Toondah should never have made it that far. We urgently need strong new nature laws before we see more of our precious wildlife wiped out.

We need the new Queensland government to stay on course and deliver the promised climate and energy targets and nature protection reforms and reject nuclear.

We need all three major supermarkets and more corporations to commit to removing deforestation from their shelves and then see it through.

With nature-lovers like you beside us, I truly have hope that we can and will see these changes.

Speaking of hope, you'll find plenty within the pages of this edition of *habitat*. As always, we have incredible people, stories and images for you to enjoy.

You may also be wondering what our much-loved *habitat* will look like moving forward. We reached out to you, our dedicated supporters and were pleased to hear that so many of you support a digital only *habitat*.

What can you expect next year? You will find the same stories of hope, nature, climate, and important work from the movement. You'll find research, diverse voices, and community. You'll also find videos, interactive elements, beautiful visuals, an immersive experience, and more. *Habitat* isn't going anywhere, it is only changing shape and growing.

We can't wait to share it with you in 2025, our 60th year.

For now, the need to act is more important than ever. But to act we must have hope. So, I encourage you to keep hold of hope, cling tightly to it, even during times when there is so much suffering.

Hold onto hope, and act. We'll be right there beside you.

📍 Kelly

Introducing ACF President **Ros Harvey**

By Cassie Mutch, *habitat* Editor



ACF's newly appointed president Ros Harvey credits her love of nature to her mum.

"We always used to joke that mum had red dust in her brain because she grew up in Orroroo. She'd pack us kids in the combi, later a 4WD and head out on an adventure," Ros said.

"We all had to learn how to change a tyre on a wheel before she'd take us outback. There would be four girls and my little brother hanging onto the lever of this huge jack."

Once her mum was confident all the kids could change a tyre on their own, Ros and her family had countless adventures all over Australia, walking national parks and camping. She says her mum's

passion for nature just became part of her. She moved from Sydney to Hobart in her 20s to be closer to nature.

That passion, along with a varied career in private, trade union, research, government, and community sectors are both things that Ros is proud to bring to ACF.

"I've had this extraordinarily diverse career and a large part of it has been made up of a kind of activism linked to people and planet," Ros said.

Ros is mainly known for her transformative work as the Founder and former CEO of The Yield, an agriculture technology company that leverages AI to optimise food production with a focus on environmental sustainability.

Prior to The Yield, Ros lived and worked overseas for 15 years. Ros founded the International Labour Organisation's (UN) Better Work program for improving working conditions in apparel supply chains. It was this experience working in sustainable business that Ros was able to translate into The Yield.

"I thought we have the same problem with environmental standards. Not enough money to pay for environmental monitoring," Ros said.

"We can create a digital solution that helps make growers more productive, but also more environmentally sustainable. We can take that data, and with permission give it to government for environmental monitoring, and researchers to create new knowledge."

Ros has come on board as ACF President during a critical time for nature and climate, and she's excited to bring more innovative solutions to the table.

"I think there's this sense in our movement that we're not winning fast enough. ACF is a powerful voice for nature in our community and we've made such an impact over 60 years. We've got big forces against us, but we know what we need to do, and we know we need to do it faster," Ros said.



“People and community are going to continue to be the most important thing that is going to drive change. I want to amplify these voices and working with our community and partners.”

We know that climate and nature damage is harming all of us and for Ros it’s building that connection between climate, nature and everyday concerns that is key to progress.

“People are worried about whether they can put food on the table. We need to respect that, and respect the pressure people are under. The good news is that ACF focuses on solutions. We can move the dial for ordinary people, to put us on a more sustainable pathway for people and the planet,” Ros said.



“I’m excited to campaign on renewable energy because we can make sure that communities and working families can access renewable energy to reduce their power bills at the same time as reducing emissions. We need those wins.”

There is plenty of work to be done, but Ros is confident that ACF can continue its leadership role as a key part of the environment movement going forward.

Even when you have setbacks, they are just another opportunity to look again and ask, ‘what do we do differently?’ That’s the only responsible thing to do because we can’t give up on the planet and we can’t give up on people.” 🌍

Left: ACF President Ros Harve
Top: Ros overlooking the desert - 1976 Lake Ayre
Right: Ros’s mum Dr Patricia Harve - Bourke 1978
Photos: Supplied

Food That's Good for People and Nature

By Nathaniel Pelle ACF Business and Biodiversity Campaigner and
Bonnie Graham ACF Corporate Campaigner

Food is integral to life. It's not just something we need, but something we love. Whether it's morning Weet-bix on the porch, fish and chips by the beach, or a backyard BBQ on the weekend, food brings endless joy and connection to our lives.

That's why in 2024 ACF stepped up our campaign called Food That's Good for People and Nature. This campaign focuses on the nature impacts of Australia's food system and the opportunities and benefits for farmers and food companies to be leaders in sustainable production.

Why Food?

Put simply, one of the biggest opportunities we have to reverse the decline in biodiversity in Australia is to protect and restore ecosystems and help wildlife flourish on farms.

Healthy nature is vital for food production in Australia. From clean air and water to a liveable climate, our food system and nature are intrinsically linked. But agriculture is a major contributor to the decline in the health of nature. Deforestation, ecosystem

degradation, soil and water pollution, water overextraction, and climate change are just a few of the issues facing nature in Australia.

But although part of the problem, agriculture can be a part of the solution.

Over half of Australia's landmass is managed by farmers, presenting a huge opportunity for Australia to be a world leader in sustainable food production. There are solutions that exist, and ways of producing food which can help nature and people to thrive. With a rapidly changing climate and growing global population to feed, it has never been more important to address the health of nature and the food system's impact and reliance on nature.

How can farms be good for people and nature?

Although the industrial food system has been bad for the planet, farmers themselves know better than most that Australia's nature, in all its diversity, is pivotal to the functioning of Earth's systems, and that their farms depend on it.

There is very little of the Australian continent that has not been touched by human hands. First Nations people fished, farmed, and managed landscapes with fire for thousands of years before British colonisation. The introduction of European farming practices upended that, with detrimental consequences for nature.

But while a minority are still bulldozing the bush, many farmers are also exceptional land managers – learning lessons from nature, from First Nations people, and from science. In fact, farmers look after some of the most biodiversity-rich ecosystems on the continent.

It's been an immense privilege for our ACF team to spend time with farmers who are producing food while working with nature.

From the dusty arid lands of Southwest Queensland to the open woodlands of the NSW tablelands and cool forests in Victoria - we've seen examples of restored wetlands and rivers that are havens for platypus and birds, devastating erosion being reversed, and endangered ecological communities protected and thriving on farmland.



‘What’s good for the birds is good for the herds’

As Debbie Dowden, a pastoralist from Western Australia told us, “What’s good for the birds is good for the herds,” meaning protecting nature has benefits for farmers as well as wildlife.

We visited multiple sheep and cattle properties on the northern tablelands of New South Wales for this year’s Platy Project. Platypuses are sensitive animals, so if they are thriving in creeks, it’s a good indication of a healthy landscape.

On a stunning farm near Uralla, NSW, Tim Wright has dropped the conventional farming approach of spending money on soil-damaging superphosphate fertilizer to ‘improve’ pasture then suffering through drought by buying in feed. Now, native grasslands have been restored, red gums are regrowing along creeks stabilizing the banks and filtering sediment (which the platypuses love), and during times of low rainfall, Tim has even been able to more than double the number of sheep and cattle on his property.

Sixth-generation wool grower Paul Dettman, from Victoria, reminded us that “Nature does so many things that we take for granted – providing clean water, clean air and the ecological basis for all food and fibre production.”

He adds, “I also think as a society we need to grapple with the fact that we’ve empowered landholders to manage large areas of the country, but we haven’t necessarily given them the resources to do that.”

Fortunately, [projects are underway](#) to help farmers better measure the state of nature on their farms and to understand the benefits, and trade-offs of protecting and restoring biodiversity. They are proving they can reduce carbon emissions and increase sequestration, lower input costs, and improve productivity all while helping nature.

We know what needs to happen and we know it can be good for farmers. But transformative change takes time, and powerful forces would like to maintain business-as-usual, undervaluing nature and relying on expensive inputs.

Our broken food system is largely driven by the profit needs of supermarkets, commodity traders, big processors and chemical

companies. They set the conditions under which farmers operate, and consumers consume, while influencing politics to protect business-as-usual. That’s what ACF’s campaign is here to change. We need a system that supports farmers, to ensure that what Paul and Tim and so many other nature-aware farmers are doing becomes the new ‘business-as-usual’.

ACF’s Food Campaign in Review: 2024 Highlights

This year, after starting with a focus on banks and investors, we increased our engagement and public pressure on food companies.

We quickly heard from low-cost supermarket Aldi, that it had agreed to stop sourcing beef from properties linked to the destruction of forests or natural ecosystems by 2025 – [matching our demands](#). That’s good news, because sustainable food should not only be available to people who can shop in expensive organic markets.

Top left: Sixth generation wool grower Paul Dettman.

Photo: Thomas Kinsman / ACF

Top right: ACF staff members delivering open letter to Woolworths. From left to right Audrey van Herwaarden Analyst - Corporate Environmental Performance, Bonnie Graham Corporate Campaigner and Daniel Scaysbrook National Organising Manager.



This announcement came after convincing Westpac to become the first bank to set a zero-deforestation target for its agricultural lending, this time last year.

In July we released our inaugural benchmark report, [The Future of Food](#). The report assessed and compared 20 of Australia's largest and most loved food companies on whether they are helping or hindering the mission to halt and reverse nature destruction in Australia through their agricultural supply chains. With sobering findings showing most companies are yet to substantially address nature degradation, the report received national media coverage and positive engagement from food companies.

Following the report's release, our team headed to Canberra to brief members of parliament on the findings of [The Future of Food](#) and ACF's food and agriculture policy asks. There was a broad range of representatives from across the political divide openly engaged in the discussion co-hosted by Senator David Pocock and the Parliamentary Friends

of Conservation. The report is continuing to be used as a tool for ongoing engagement with political leaders coming into the 2025 election.

In August, we went public with the findings of an investigation which uncovered 50 cases of deforestation across Australia likely linked to domestic beef supply, again garnering substantial national media attention. We showed that a small number of irresponsible producers who continue to bulldoze the bush can cause an enormous amount of harm in a short time. Not only that, but the supermarkets are doing very little about it and Australian consumers could be unwittingly supporting it when they fill up their trolleys.

We also launched an open letter to Coles and Woolworths, calling on them to commit to selling deforestation-free beef and to support farmers protecting nature. The letter was enthusiastically signed by over 10,000 supporters, and hand-delivered by ACF's campaigners to representatives at Coles' and Woolworths' headquarters.

The biggest campaign win of the year came in late August, with Woolworths announcing a new commitment to only source deforestation-free beef by the end of 2025, joining Aldi, and leaving Coles as the only remaining major supermarket without a deforestation-free beef commitment. After congratulating Woolworths, we focused our efforts onto Coles. In partnership with Greenpeace and The Wilderness Society, ACF planned a colourful

action outside the Coles AGM. With a great turn out of supporters armed with placards, dressed in koala costumes, and singing chants, we sent our message loud and clear that there is no room on Coles' shelves for beef linked to deforestation. But the message didn't stop outside the building. We sent our team inside the AGM to pose targeted questions to the company board, elevating the issue of nature destruction and requiring them to provide responses on-record.

What's next?

We have big plans for 2025 and beyond! ACF has a bold vision for a thriving, sustainable and adaptive Australian agriculture industry that nurtures landscapes, supports communities and rewards farmers engaging in best practice stewardship.

We'll be pushing for a parliament that is ready to halt and reverse the biodiversity crisis and deliver a food system that works for people and nature. That means holding big business accountable for the harm they do, delivering a national plan to end forest destruction, and supporting farmers who protect and restore nature on their farms.

Next year, you can expect to see more big food corporates being held to account, more exposés on deforestation, and more people-powered food campaigns.

We hope you'll join us. 🌱

Above: Regenerative farmer Tim Wright.
Photo: Tessa Stevens / ACF

Gliding through the treetops with Dr. Ana Gracanin

By Cassie Mutch, *habitat* Editor

While most people choose to camp on solid ground, we first met Dr. Ana Gracanin when she signed up to fundraise from her treetop hammock for ACF's Night Out For Nature.

Ana kindly agreed to share more about her job studying greater gliders, and how that night in the treetops went.

Can you tell us a little bit about your job?

My job as a Research Fellow at the Australian National University involves studying various aspects of greater glider conservation. I'm interested in understanding what methods and management practices we can use to best improve greater glider habitat and restore landscapes. Monitoring population recovery following bushfires is another research interest of mine, as well as understanding their fine-scale movements and interesting behaviours.

There is also very little known about genetic and population health of greater gliders, so I'm interested in understanding this further so we can identify stronghold populations.



What does an average day look like?

An average day might have me in the office, analysing data, writing papers or grant applications. Other days I will be in the field, climbing trees to study and measure hollows or to catch greater gliders for health, genetics or behaviour studies. Other days I would be sound asleep, after working all night doing long surveys, spotlighting to detect and monitor greater glider populations.



Top: Ana inspecting a tree hollow as part of endangered species research.

Photo: David Gallan.

Above: Ana in position waiting to catch an emerging greater glider.

Photo: Ana Gracanin





What are some cool facts about greater gliders?

Greater gliders are the largest gliding marsupial in Australia. They can glide up to 100 meters in a single leap, using their long tails and outstretched limbs to soar down through the forest - kind of like a flying carpet! They only eat eucalyptus leaves for food and they sleep inside tree hollows, meaning they could almost spend their entire lives up in the canopy and never walk on the ground. Greater gliders are generally black furred with a white belly, but the super rare white morphs do exist. They can be mottled with bits of white, grey and black, and the super rare ones are pure white. Absolute magic!

Why is this research so important?

Greater gliders are endangered due to habitat loss, logging, and climate change, and without intervention their populations will continue to decline. Their reliance on old-growth forests makes them excellent indicators of forest health, and protecting their habitat benefits

countless other threatened species. We're not only learning how to conserve this species but also gaining insights into broader forest management practices.

You spent a night in the treetops for Night Out For Nature - how was it sleeping like a greater glider?

It was an incredible experience! Camping high in the canopy in hammocks was something I'd always dreamed of doing, so when this opportunity arose, it was perfect—a chance to have fun while raising funds for vital conservation work. Myself and another climber, Maaike, chose a large tree with smooth white bark (to avoid the mess of shedding bark from rough-barked trees), ensuring it had no hollows and was close to the main campsite.

Maaike and I joked about how amazing it would be if a greater glider joined us in the tree, but we never thought it would actually happen. Then, at midnight, to our utter amazement, not one but two greater gliders moved into the

tree to forage. They perched just above our hammocks. We brushed our teeth, put our harnesses on and climbed up to get into our hammock beds. The gliders at this point were just munching away on eucalyptus leaves as if we weren't even there. The night was so still and peaceful, with barely a whisper of wind. It was so quiet we could hear the soft munching of leaves as the gliders foraged. The full moon illuminated the canopy, allowing us to see the gliders clearly without needing head torches. They stayed with us all night, utterly unbothered by our company. It was surreal and sublime—an experience I'll never forget.

Ana was the top individual fundraiser and part of the top group for Night Out for Nature.' You can follow Ana's adventures and see some incredibly cute photos and videos of greater gliders over on her instagram @ana_gracaniin 📸

Top: Ana collects health data from a female greater glider that was carrying a baby.

Photo: Alex Ellinghausen

Left: In the canopy for Night Out for Nature.

Photo: Ana Gracaniin

A new kind of virus: disinformation and the threat to democracy

By Jane Gardner, ACF Director of Engagement

At the start of this year, I came across something that made me do a double-take. For the first time ever, the [World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report](#) ranked disinformation as the #1 short-term threat to global security.

In a world where public confidence in mainstream news is at an all-time low and audiences are literally switching off, we now have a much bigger problem than the influence and agenda of the Murdoch media on our hands.

Generative AI tools are astonishingly easy to use. Anyone with a laptop and the internet can create and disseminate fake pictures and videos in seconds. It's become impossible to decipher real from not.

The 2024 US election campaign was rife with organised efforts to sway voters and make people believe even the most outlandish lies about the democratic candidates.

What fascinates and horrifies me about the difference between this US election and the last is that back in 2020 Trump was speaking about fake news and acknowledging it as an issue (even as he was the one spreading it).

Now it's far more sinister. This time there was absolutely no attempt from the Trump camp to even try and disguise the false information as fact.

Disinformation is a runaway train and it's leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

One example was the AI generated image shared by Donald Trump's camp on X of Taylor Swift [endorsing his campaign](#). It was refuted within 24 hours. Taylor Swift was put in a position where she had to come out and endorse Kamala Harris. This correction of fact, coming from one of the most followed celebrities in history, made no difference.

This is disinformation theory in action. It doesn't matter if it's wrong – our brains are wired to simply accept and believe the first thing they see. And the more times we see it, the more ingrained it becomes.

There's a famous quote from Mark Twain that says- "How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard it is to undo that work again!"

Almost every piece of content published on Trump's socials fits the description of disinformation of some kind. There are countless examples but here are a few of the most widely spread ones:

- The infamous stories about immigrants eating cats and dogs.
- Hurricane disaster relief funding going to undocumented immigrants.
- Kamala Harris in a swimsuit hugging convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.
- The supposed case of Tim Walz abusing a young man 30 years ago.

Disinformation is a virus.

[About 73% of Americans reported](#) seeing misleading election news, and about half struggle to discern what is true or false. Concerns about misinformation are widely held, with a recent UN survey suggesting that 85% of people worldwide are worried about it.

When it comes to disinformation, "going viral" appears to be more than a simple catchphrase.



Cambridge University epidemiologists released fascinating research in November his year using the same mathematical models that track how viruses spread on disinformation and guess what: it spreads the same way!

So, what do we do with viruses? We vaccinate. We give a small dose of the dead virus allowing the body to produce an immune response and prepare for the real thing. This is precisely the theory behind inoculation which shows compelling results for tackling disinformation. The unfortunate reality is telling the truth isn't working anymore.

What we need to do instead is train people to identify what's real and what's not using critical thinking.

So, what are our big threats as we head into our own election here?

1. The far right have been emboldened to spread disinformation of the most hateful kind as far and wide as they can through their social media filter bubbles. We've seen this with a tweet recently that got many many thousands of likes with the phrase 'your body, my choice'.

2. Elon Musk's X platform is a disinformation juggernaut. The disinformation Musk shared personally reached more than 2 billion people in the run up to the election. His posts have also led to real life violence and complications of disaster relief efforts.

3. Spreaders of disinformation are very well funded; they know what they're doing and they have a plan.

The type of disinformation we need to watch out for over this election and that ACF has a plan to fight includes:

- **Renewables wrecking nature** e.g. offshore wind is killing whales.
- **Nuclear being cheap**, quick to build and somehow a magic bullet for climate change in Australia.
- **Climate change being non-urgent and overblown and some sort of UN agenda.** We saw this with hurricane Milton and the conspiracy theories around Black Summer and arson - which can be tracked back to Eric Trump Jr.

The bottom line is ACF is well placed as a credible voice - among many others in the climate and environment sector.

We have a plan, we're swapping notes and we're teaming up to make sure we are all on message, that we're ahead of disinformation and we're tracking the spread and can respond in an agile way.

It has been a tough year, no doubt. And the future is looking uncertain. However, I'm buoyed and encouraged by knowing that nature-lovers like you are ready to continue fighting for progressive action on nature and climate!

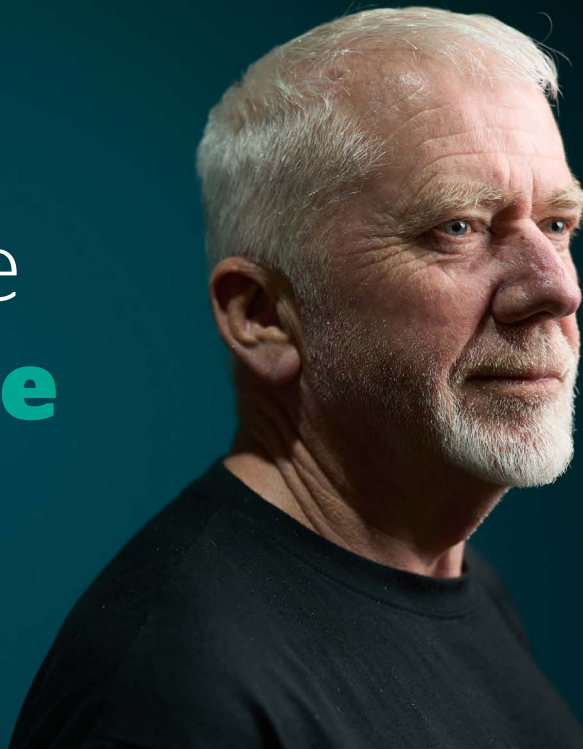
So please don't stop learning and being interested in disinformation and how to tackle it, because knowledge is power! 🙌

Find out how to spot disinformation on page 46!

Above: Jane speaking on disinformation
Photo: Supplied

Fighting the **atomic tide**

By Dave Sweeney
ACF Nuclear Free Campaigner



In the landscape of environmental and global issues nuclear concerns are tidal. They wax and wane but remain a constant presence with strong undercurrents.

Currently, both at home and around the world the atomic tide is high.

Between the federal Coalition's enthusiastic embrace of domestic nuclear power and escalating global tensions with two nuclear weapons states involved in hot wars, nuclear issues are once again generating headlines and heartache.

As a long-time nuclear watcher and watchdog one thing I have learned is that apart from fallout and risk, nothing about nuclear is quick.

Reactors take decades to construct as costs escalate and plans are delayed. Bright industry predictions are routinely released and rarely delivered. New terms, technologies and programs have a moment in the sun only to be outperformed by their renewable rivals and quietly shuffled off stage.

And the ultimate slow and dangerous aspect of nuclear – radioactive waste – remains. Always.

A nuclear fuel rod provides predictable energy for a reactor for around three years. After this it degrades and becomes spent nuclear fuel or high-level radioactive waste. A cancer-causing, gene-changing hazard that needs to be isolated from people and the planet for periods of up to 100,000 years is a very steep price for all species to pay forever for a cold drink and a hot shower today.

Efforts to put the nuclear genie back in the bottle and de-escalate nuclear risks also take time. But this vital work is a pre-condition to a habitable planet and future and is steadily making a difference.

It is now eight decades since we unlocked the destructive power of nuclear weapons and our fragile planet has been living under this existential shadow ever since.

Every one of these years has seen people of good heart and head taking personal and collective action to abolish nuclear weapons.

We are clearly still not there, but the Australian-born ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) initiative has given new impetus and hope and provided our best way to get rid of our worst weapons - the global Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

On the energy front, people power has contested nuclear power for decades in struggles against uranium mining, nuclear reactors and radioactive waste dumps across Australia and around the world. These hard-fought campaigns haven't always won, but very often they have. And it's been said that if you are fighting for country and the future, you never really lose.

This sustained nuclear free contest has provided a shield wall that has bought valuable time and enabled the growth of energy efficiency and renewable energy options.

Renewables are now the fastest growing and cheapest form of new energy in Australia and globally. On scale, cost and delivery they completely eclipse nuclear power

and, unlike nuclear, renewables day in the sun is sustained, stored and here to stay.

I started my journey with ACF in late 1996 with a six-month gig to help stop the Jabiluka uranium project in Kakadu.

Fast-forward to late 2024 and the welcome news that - finally - mining company Rio Tinto has formally committed to never advance Jabiluka and to instead fully clean up the adjacent and heavily impacted former Ranger uranium mine.

That's a lot of years. A lot of media and meetings, talk and tactics. But the timescale shrinks when you measure it against the 65,000 plus years of the Mirarr people's lived presence in that land or the 100,000 years that Jabiluka's unleashed uranium would have posed a radioactive threat.

Like much nuclear free campaigning, the Kakadu uranium story is a cause for hope.

This is more than a good decision about one special place. It is a massive international scale victory for First Nations recognition, respect and agency and for the environmental, cultural heritage protection, nuclear responsibility and the power of solidarity and tenacity.

The powerful wanted to mine, the Mirarr said no. They were supported by many people and groups far and wide, they never blinked, and they prevailed.



As ever, there is still mopping up needed before cracking the champagne – but this is the game-changer that has been long worked for.

It is a beautiful victory and a massive credit to Yvonne Margarula and the Mirarr community and to all who stood beside and behind them over the long years.

The Kakadu win is not in isolation. First Nation's people and environmental advocates have taken on and won big fights at multiple mine and dump sites around this nation.

There is a Nicaraguan saying that the most beautiful victory is the war that we avoid – in our case it is the nuclear mines, dumps and damage that will never happen because people cared and acted. Many have name recognition, others don't – but they all matter.

Australia today could have national and international radioactive waste dumps, scores of uranium mines, uranium processing plants, nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons. Over the years some politicians and people have worked to realise this vision of an Atomic Australia.

Fortunately, more have rejected this vision in favour of a far more life-affirming one – an Australia that is a leader in renewables and respect, not radioactive risk.

Right now, the nuclear tide is again lapping at the sea wall and we need to engage, step up and fill a sandbag to stop the cynical diversion and delay tactic that is the reality of the Coalition's nuclear push.

We need effective climate action, not nuclear distractions.

The next period will be challenging as a resourced and largely fact-free and unaccountable chorus of nuclear promoters gear up for a further push to spike our renewable future by spruiking a nuclear one.

As we have seen and shown, the nuclear industry has a track record of over-promise and under-performance, and we cannot allow this patchwork of ideology and illusion to shape Australia's energy future.

It is time to once more draw on the lessons of the past to shape the action needed today to safeguard our tomorrow. ☺

Top left: Dave Sweeney at COP29
Photo: Adil Yusifov.

Above: Kimberley Bush Meeting 2010
Photo: Justin McCaul

Campaigns update

By Paul Sinclair, ACF Director of Campaigns

I get a physical buzz near healthy wetlands. They make my skin tingle and send my mood into happiness orbit. I feel like I've been plugged in.

I saw an awesome little wetland recently on Jo and Greg Bear's sheep farm on Canary Island near Boort in northern Victoria. It's surrounded by big old red gums. Aquatic plants and animals are thriving.

Nearby there are rows of baby trees planted in partnership with local First Nations folks. They'll grow out of healthy soil and the Bears' optimism about the future.

The Bears are part of a growing movement of farmers who are doing things differently. Who see a better way. When you start looking, those sorts of folks are everywhere. It's easy to lose sight of them when we feel surrounded by a fog of bad news.

Our campaigns are creating real reasons to be hopeful about the future.

We're seeing declines in deforestation in both QLD and NSW. That means we've helped keep more wildlife like koalas alive and their habitat intact. We're still a global deforestation hotspot and we must accelerate action to stop the bulldozers. But the signs are there

that the action we're campaigning for is having a real impact.

No matter where Australian coal and gas gets burnt it hurts our country, wildlife and the people we love. But we are seeing coal and gas exports declining by small, but significant, amounts and affordable, clean renewables are cutting pollution in Australia.

We've had a mixture of joyful and less happy moments this year.

After years of campaigning, we finally stopped the development of a housing estate in the internationally important [Toondah Harbour wetlands](#). Almost 200,000 Australians backed our campaign to stop the destruction of irreplaceable feeding grounds for thousands of migratory birds.

Our campaign for strong new nature laws has been a roller coaster. We won big commitments to reform the laws including creating Australia's first national Environment Protection Agency. Then the mining industry got in the Prime Minister's ear and convinced him to back away from a long-held commitment to nature law reform backed by about 500 local ALP branches. In the final week of November, it looked possible that the Australian Government, Greens and Independents might make a

deal and pass nature laws through Parliament. Sadly, this hope was dashed by Prime Minister Albanese who gave up on his election promise and backed the resources industry and peak business groups over national nature law reform.

The pressure we've been putting on banks, superannuation funds and Woolworth and Coles throughout the year has been outstanding. These industries are critical to the future of nature, and we've been relentlessly pushing for them to be accountable for the nature damage and climate pollution they create. Winning commitments from Westpac and Woolworths to become "deforestation free" are massive, momentum building achievements.





Our climate and energy campaigns have been pursuing a two-pronged strategy: increase domestic renewables and drive down the export of coal and gas exports. Our team have been working in alliance with the private sector, unions and civil society organisations to push for a \$100 billion package to make Australia a renewable energy superpower. That's resulted in the creation of the Future Made in Australia initiative that could rapidly expand renewables, green industries and create almost 400,000 new jobs over coming decades.

Our courageous team of campaigners and investigators are exposing the gross under-reporting of methane - a hugely damaging climate pollutant - by coal and gas companies using unique camera technology that makes the invisible visible when pointed at a gas well or processing facility. We're challenging the Whitehaven Winchester coal project, the biggest new coal proposal in Australia in the Queensland Land Court.

The speed and scale of the renewable energy build is creating tension and conflict in some locations. Support for renewables is overwhelmingly positive, but there are some legitimate issues being raised about the poor engagement of developers and siting of some projects. Our staff and volunteers are listening, explaining and organising in a number of these communities to find solutions. It's also true there are bad actors at play who are manufacturing conflict to try and stall renewables and keep coal and gas interests happy. The truth is nature needs well sited renewables.

Our community groups are playing a critical role in all this work. They speak with sense and authenticity to decision makers and create power that helps us combat cashed up corporate influence. We have been leading the truth telling about the dangers and failures of the irresponsible nuclear energy claims made by the Coalition. Australia's future is renewable, not radioactive.

And finally, it's great to see mining giant Rio Tinto has announced it will take control of shutting down and rehabilitating the Ranger uranium mine that's surrounded by the World Heritage Kakadu National Park. We've been fighting this mine, whose uranium helped fuel the Fukushima nuclear disaster, for a generation. ACF's Dave Sweeney said:

“The move signals the end of decades of headlines and heartache and draws a line under the threat of future uranium mining in the World Heritage-listed Kakadu region”.

It's a credit to the years of campaigning by the Mirarr traditional owners.

Thanks for all your support - it energises our team as they do their work in parliaments, paddocks, boardrooms and public meetings. Nature needs us all right now to keep turning up and standing up for what matters. 🐻

What does the Trump election **mean for climate?**

By Gavan McFadzean, ACF's Program Manager for Climate and Energy.

With Donald Trump's election to a second term as US president, one of the biggest questions is what this means for climate action.

Given the unpredictability of a Trump administration this is partially a game of 'wait and see'. But the policies of his first term, and his election campaign rhetoric give us insight into what's in store.

But before we get to what an incoming Trump administration will mean for climate action, we can't lose sight of two things.

The first is that Trump doesn't take the reins until late January, so there's several things President Biden can do in the meantime to reduce domestic emissions and fossil fuel exports and 'booby trap' existing policies, such as its signature multi-billion-dollar stimulus package to decarbonise the economy, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), making them more difficult to unwind.

The second is that the US climate movement is strong and prepared for a Trump presidency. It has a range of tactics to push back and work with the private sector

and state governments to keep decarbonisation of the world's second largest climate polluter on track. This isn't a small thing, as states like California have led the way on domestic emissions reduction efforts.

Wishful thinking? Maybe, but it's important to note that US emissions have declined 18% since 2007 and this has mostly been a linear trajectory, meaning the first Trump presidency had little impact on the rate of emissions reduction.

As for what an incoming Trump presidency has in store, we need to break this down into the three critical areas:

1. Leadership and performance in international climate fora, especially the Paris agreement.
2. Fossil fuel exports.
3. Domestic emissions reduction policy and targets.

On the first two criteria there's no sugar-coating it, the signs are alarming.

Within six months of his first election, Trump pulled the US out of the Paris Agreement. This time we expect him to go further

by pulling out of the founding architecture for global climate negotiations altogether, the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

This is particularly concerning because to rejoin under a future administration, it will need support by a two-thirds majority of the US senate, noting that Trump has seized control of the senate for his second term.

This comes at a time when the annual climate negotiations, or Conference of Parties (COPs) have effectively stalled since the relatively effective COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, where, amongst other outcomes, language to phase down coal finally made it into the agreement. Since then, we've had two largely ineffective COPs in petrostates and the recent Baku, Azerbaijan COP is looking no different.

So, for this critical decade for climate action, it's particularly bad timing for global negotiations to weaken further with the US abandoning the Paris Accord, especially as they exercise significant influence and make up around 14% of global emissions.



All eyes will now turn to China, by far the world's largest carbon polluter with over 30% of global emissions, to see whether they will step into the void and play a greater leadership role. There are strong geopolitical, economic, climate and air pollution reasons to do so. Without the US, Paris still covers around 85% of global emissions, so while weakened, the Paris Accord can press ahead with effective efforts to keep global temperature rise to within 1.5 degrees.

When it comes to fossil fuel exports, who could miss Trump's 'drill baby drill' mantra. To be fair, US oil and gas exports have been on the rise already under President Biden, with the US exporting more oil than ever, and looking to ramp up LNG exports. Trump intends to take this to the next level, including weakening the role of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and opening up the Alaskan wilderness and other areas to even greater oil and gas extraction, fracking and LNG exports.

But whether the world wants more US gas remains to be seen, with LNG exports hitting an increasingly oversupplied market, thanks in

no small part to an increase in production in Australia and Qatar. This ironically may help curb the expansion plans of Woodside and Santos in exploiting new reserves in Australia, as our gas is some of the most expensive in the world.

Finally, on domestic emissions reduction the future looks less clear. Perhaps the biggest concern will be around transport emissions, where President Trump is likely to repeal policies that incentivise electric vehicle uptake, as well as weaken vehicle emissions standards.

As mentioned, Trump had little impact to slow emissions reduction in his first term, as the energy market is driving the increase of relatively low-cost renewables, and this is the case even more now compared with Trump's first term.

Biden's signature climate policy is the IRA, a now \$200 billion decarbonisation package which has been driving emissions reduction across the economy. Only about a quarter of the stimulus is out the door, so Trump could put roadblocks in front of further expenditure, but this is easier said than done. The Democrats will be able to frustrate changes to the IRA,

and President Biden was astute to direct over two-thirds of the stimulus towards Republican states and districts, who will be reluctant to turn off the tap to the growth of new clean industries and the jobs that flow from it.

While climate policy in Canberra is affected by what Washington does, there is no credible reason for the Albanese government to lowball ambition. There is every reason to ramp up domestic emissions reduction efforts, replace fossil fuel exports with clean energy exports via its proposed Future Made in Australian (FMiA) reforms, and take a strong 2035 emissions reduction target to Paris and the next federal election.

With less US competition, there are opportunities for Australia to get a stronger foothold in the jobs and clean industries of the future, and the Albanese government should seize the day in accelerating our climate ambition in spite, or because of, a Trump White House. 🇺🇸

Top tips to combat climate anxiety and burnout

Formidable activist and retired psychologist Di Tucker sees firsthand how prevalent climate anxiety and burnout is in the movement. She kindly shared her top tips for managing these feelings.

1. Talk about climate anxiety and burnout in your spaces.

Understand how it manifests and what the symptoms are. If people are feeling irritable, short-tempered, critical, doubtful – these are all signs they’re feeling overwhelmed.

2. Take breaks. You don’t have to leave; you can come back!

3. Have social meetings. Have catch ups with fellow activists and friends that are purely social.

4. Build check-ins into group activities. Leaders in groups can make sure people feel safe by welcoming new group members and building check-ins into meetings.

5. Seek out mentors and learn. We can learn how to cope and how to deal with these emotions when we start to feel overwhelmed. Seeking help is strength.

6. Take small actions. Taking a small action like signing a petition gives you a sense of agency and can be a pathway to bigger actions if you choose.



At ACF we understand too well the complex emotions that can come from fighting for our beautiful big backyard. We encourage you to take Di’s tips on board and reach out to your fellow activists for support. 🌱

“Young people have every right in the world to a healthy and safe climate.”

Above: Di Tucker

Photo: Supplied

Right: March for Nature 2024

Photo: Ari Balle-Bowness/ACF



I love clean energy and I vote
www.greenpeace.org.au/loveclean
www.climatemovement.org.au

YES TO PROTECTING NATURE
STOP BULLDOZING THE BUSH

PM, ACT SWIFTLY FOR NATURE
LIKE NO OTHER BIRDS
SWIFT PARROT ENDANGERED

YES TO PROTECTING NATURE
STOP BULLDOZING THE BUSH

NO NATURE NO FUTURE

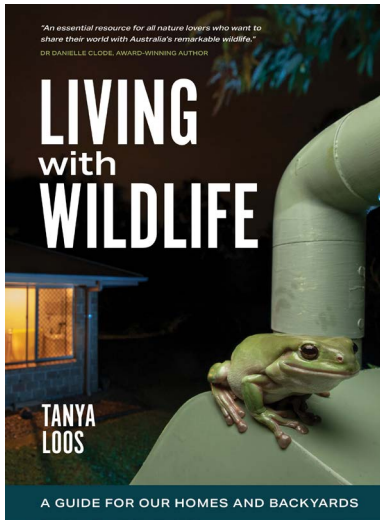
birdlife AUSTRALIA

Wilderness Society Life Support

AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Nature needs us. now

Book recommendations



Living with Wildlife by Tanya Loos

Possums in the roof, an echidna in the garden, or perhaps a python in the pantry? *Living with Wildlife: A Guide for Our Homes and Backyards* explores commonly asked questions and issues about encounters with wildlife. Taking a wildlife-friendly approach, Tanya Loos provides practical information, advice and solutions, based on current guidance from wildlife rescue organisations and the latest research.

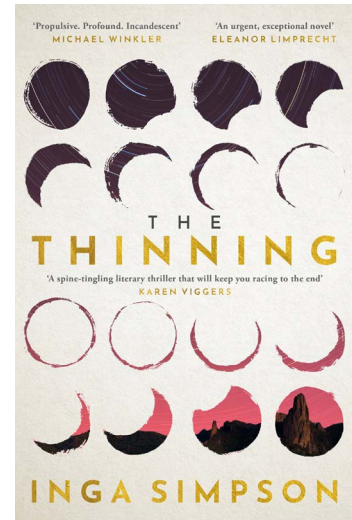
Living with Wildlife features helpful advice on wildlife rescue, both for every day and during extreme weather events, as well as common issues such as feeding wildlife, pets and driving. As urbanisation and climate change effects intensify, Australian wildlife need our help now more than ever, making this a timely guide for successfully living alongside our wild neighbours.



Facts and Other Lies by Ed Coper

From fringe conspiracy theories to 'alternative facts', a timely look at how we arrived in the 'fake news' era.

Facts and Other Lies puts fake news in its historical context and explains how disinformation has fractured society, even threatening democracy itself. It explains why disinformation is so potent and so hard to stop, and what we can do to help prevent its proliferation in Australia - where politicians and shock jocks are already operating from the same dark playbook. It outlines how anyone can defuse disinformation in the home, office or pub, or wherever the deluded gather to spread their nonsense. Be prepared!



The Thinning by Inga Simpson

We haven't always lived like this...

Fin grew up by an observatory, learning about telescopes and planets, inspired by the passions of her mother and father, then leaders in their fields of astrophotography and astronomy. Those days are long over. Now Fin, her mother, Dianella, and a band of outliers live deep off the grid, always on amber alert and always ready to run.

In the outside world, extinctions and a loss of diversity threaten environmental stability. With a new disaster looming, Fin finds herself thrust into an unlikely partnership with a stranger who has appeared in camp. Terry is one of a new breed of evolved humans, the Incompletes, who are widely distrusted. But the pair will need to work together during a dangerous journey if they are to play their part in a plan to help restore the natural world - and humankind.

Inga Simpson

on nature and writing

By Cassie Mutch, *habitat* Editor

Nature is at the heart of Aussie author Inga Simpson's books. We sat down with Inga to learn a little more about her and this love for our beautiful big backyard.

The respect and love you have for nature is so clear in your writing. Can you tell us a little bit about your journey as a writer and nature lover?

I grew up a property in central west New South Wales, so the natural world was always central to our lives – and livelihood. There was a rugged part of our farm we called 'up the back', where I camped and roamed. I always loved trees and I had the freedom to notice the details, I guess. We also did a lot of bushwalking in the nearby Weddin Mountains and, later, in the Budawang Range.

I was a big reader, too. The ents in Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings*, in particular, really captured my imagination. Part of me longed to run off and live in a tree, like the boy in Jean Craighead George's *My Side of the Mountain*. As an only child, I inhabited a space



somewhere between the natural world and imaginary worlds. My early stories were all outdoor adventures.

But it wasn't until I made a tree-change to the sunshine coast hinterland in my early thirties that I returned to that early self. Observing birds, koalas and other creatures every day in the sub-tropics was quite an education! As was defending that forest from encroaching threats. I was studying creative writing at the time and discovered the genre of nature writing, which has always been inherently ecological. My writing and environmental consciousness

emerged together. Since then, I have read a lot of Indigenous writing, which has deepened my knowledge and broadened my perspectives.

I now live on the far south coast of New South Wales, where I am lucky enough to live and write among incredible landscapes – forest and sea. I have also rediscovered my love of camping and combined it with multi-day walking. Walking, writing, taking photographs and learning more about birds and trees is all part of my practice.

Above: Inga Simpson
Photo: Supplied



***The Thinning* is your sixth fiction book and nature seems to be central in all of them. Do you feel like nature will always be a key element in your books, and why?**

I think so. It's just so intrinsic to who I am and how I live my life. It's central to my writing voice and what interests me. I have come to realise that not everyone lives as I do or sees the world as I do. And, with so many threats to our natural world, if not our survival on this planet, it feels like the only thing I should be writing about.

What feelings do you hope *The Thinning* evokes in readers?

Awe and wonder, maybe anger and fear, too. But ultimately, empowerment and hope.

It's hard not to feel despondent about the threats to our planet. How do you keep hopeful while also sharing such important messages in your writing?

It is hard not to feel overwhelmed sometimes. I'm lucky enough to live surrounded by natural beauty, and to have close encounters with whales, whiplarks and wallabies every day. And I'm able to walk

and camp in amazing wild landscapes within our national parks. That gives me inspiration, energy and calm. It also reminds me how much beauty there is left in this world – how much there is still worth fighting for. I've seen, too, how quickly the natural world can recover when we make good decisions. The abundance of life returning to the marine park surrounding my home, for example.

For me, hope comes through doing something. But I can't do everything. I focus mainly on my local area – and my skills. I'm lucky enough to have a voice, to be able to connect people to the natural world through my writing. My photographs, too. As I try to show in *The Thinning*, any individual can make a difference. And, as communities, we have the power to change how our world will look tomorrow.

Finally, can you share a few of your own favourite books that fellow nature lovers should read?

Astronomy: Sky Country by Karlie Noon and Krystal De Napoli. *Limberlost, Flames and Dusk* by Robbie Arnott. Kim Mahood's *Craft for a Dry Lake* and *Position Doubtful. A River Runs Through it* by Norman Maclean, Adam Waymouth's *Kings of the Yukon: an Alaskan Journey*, *Flight Lines* by Andrew Darby. And anything by Mary Oliver. 🍷

Above: Little Guerilla
Photo: Inga Simpson

Caring for **Olkola Country**

By Paul Sinclair ACF Director of Campaigns

The Olkola people have been custodians of their lands located in south-central Cape York peninsula for thousands of years.

This year the Olkola people and corporation are celebrating the 10th anniversary of when, after thirty years of campaigning, the Queensland Government returned 33,630 hectares of their ancestral home. Today the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation manages a staggering 869,822 hectares of land making them the largest non-government landholders in the region. [Olkola are again living on Country](#), united in their quest to care for Country.

ACF has long held an important relationship with the Olkola people and in 2010, partnered with them to help negotiate land hand-backs from the Queensland Government.

ACF staff and supporters have been fortunate to have seen first-hand the deep care the Olkola people and corporation have for Country and the incredible work that has been done to rebuild connection, education and employment opportunities for Olkola people.

Former ACF Councilor Sue Richardson who traveled with Olkola said:

“I came away with a great respect for the ambition, vision and capability of the Olkola people that we met. It was exciting too to see the close and constructive role that the ACF has played in supporting the Olkola in their ambitions.”



Above: Aerial view of Killarney Station
Photo: Kerry Trapnell



OLKOLA RANGER





ACF supporters and staff were lucky enough to join [the inaugural Journey on Olkola Country](#) in 2015 – an innovative on-country tourism experience led by Olkola guide's. ACF's Graham Tupper and Andrew Picone played a leading role in supporting this new business. Olkola's objective was to create new income from ventures like Journey on Olkola Country to support the return of their community to their country. Everyone who joined the tour was blown away by the rich landscapes, wildlife, stories and knowledge generously shared by the Olkola rangers and team. Today these tours are now entirely run and owned by Olkola. A new Cultural Knowledge Centre is also being built to house important artifacts and be a place to further education and understanding.

Another major campaign being led by the team at Olkola is the program to protect the Golden-shouldered parrot in partnership with Bush Heritage Australia. [The Golden-shouldered Parrot or Alwal is a totem for the Olkola People and endemic to Olkola Country.](#) To further protect Alwal, Olkola had formed and is leading the first Indigenous-led threatened species recovery team in QLD.

Olkola have started the initial process of tentative listing for World Heritage over their Country, and completed most of their healthy country plan – a 10-year plan from 2016-2026. Olkola Land Managers work in partnership with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers to manage and care for the National Parks including pest and weed management, fire management, monitoring wildlife, and more.

In this anniversary year ACF extends our thanks for the generosity Olkola have shown ACF staff and supporters and we offer our heartfelt congratulations on their decade of achievement. 🎉



Above: Golden-shouldered parrot / Alwal
Photo: Kerry Trapnell

Left: Rangers on Olkola Country
Photo: Keyona Iverach, Olkola staff



Behind the camera with **Brendan Sydes**

By Cassie Mutch, *habitat* Editor

Aside from being known at ACF for his love of legislation, Brendan is known for snapping stunning photos of wildlife, from winged wonders to crawling critters.

Brendan kindly agreed to share some of his favourite photos with us as well as a few quick-fire facts.

Firstly, can you describe your role at ACF?

National Biodiversity Policy Adviser - which since I joined in January 2023 has seen me mostly focused on ACF's campaign for national nature law reform.

You can see the respect and love you have for nature through your photos - have you always loved the natural world?

Yes. My parents were keen amateur naturalists and camping trips, the outdoors, birds and orchids were a strong part of growing up in country Victoria.

What is your favourite thing to photograph?

Tough question but if I had to choose, I would say insects - there's just so much to discover that's new and interesting.

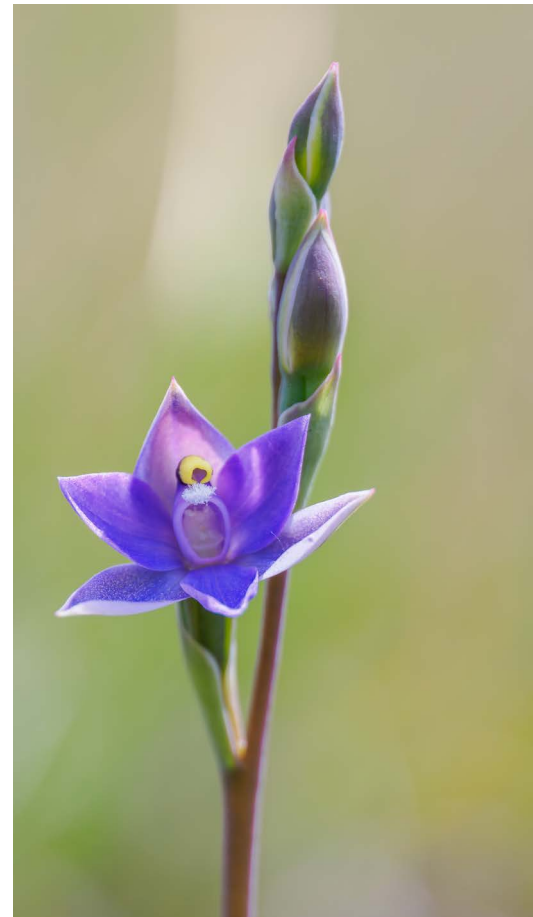
Top tips for budding nature photographers?

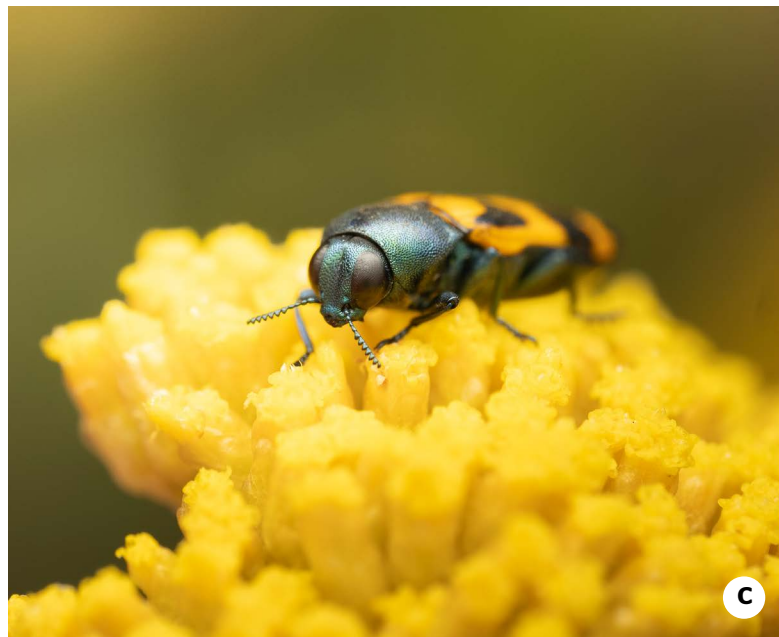
Don't get too tied up in the equipment, travelling to far flung locations, or posting things on social media. For me at least, nature photography is about creating the opportunity for close observation of nature and attention to the details all around us. A phone and an iNaturalist account and you are on your way.

Enjoy flicking through some of Brendan's photos and get inspired to pick up a camera or simply get out into nature. 🌱

Left: A species of leaf beetle, *Calomela satelles*, feeding on golden wattle leaf.

Right: A sun-orchid, flowers opening on a sunny spring day.





A. Stick Mantis **B.** Thick-tailed gecko **C.** A species of Jewell Beetle on an everlasting daisy



D. Scarlet Robin **E.** Eucalypt leaves and buds after rain **F.** A tiny weevil species on everlasting flower buds **G.** Corellas at sunrise



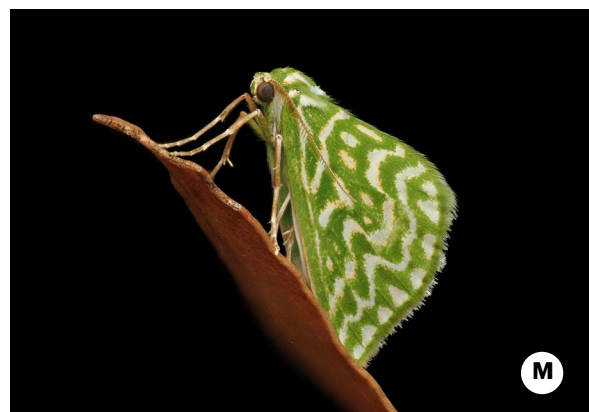
H. A dragonfly (Wandering Percher) in the early morning dew **I.** Corellas at sunrise **J.** Echidna



K



L



M



N

K. Yellow footed antechinus **L.** Sacred Kingfishers **M.** *Cymatoplex sp.* - an undescribed species of moth
N. Crimson rosella feeding on hawthorn berries on a frosty winter morning



Cliff Cobbo

GLOBAL NATURAL CAPITAL 2024
First Nations

Our call for a Nature Positive Future

By Josie Alec ACF's First Nations Lead

First Nations people have passed knowledge down through our stories and ancestors for over a millennia. Our voices are integral to a nature positive future, and we must be heard and listened to.

In October, I co-wrote a statement alongside First Nations advisers Vanessa Barnett and Cliff Cobbo from WWF, and in October presented it to the Environment Minister. Delivering this statement has been one of the highlights of my time as First Nations Lead at ACF.

This is a statement I'm incredibly proud of and one that was signed by more than 40 groups and individuals. It is a statement calling on the government and business representatives to engage Indigenous peoples on all 'nature positive' decision-making processes and outcomes.

Left and right: 2024 Nature Positive Reception at Taronga Zoo.
Photo: Quentin Jones / WWF

Part of the statement reads:

“Nature Positive may sound like a new concept, but First Peoples have been nature-positive for millennia. We call it caring for Country. Whether it's land, sea or sky, caring for Country has been part of our stories and songlines for generations. It's driven by one simple principle: leaving Country better than you found it.”

First Nations voices need to be at the forefront of the Albanese government's nature law reform, approvals process and environmental planning for the future. This has to be done through meaningful, respectful and transparent dialogue.

It was such a pleasure to see the faces of our Indigenous colleagues as they read through the statement and signed on to support our words. It was incredible to gather with our allies and other organisations including WWF, the Australian Climate and Biodiversity Foundation, and the Nature Positive Initiative.

It is heartening and invigorating to see so many passionate individuals together fighting for change.

While the Global Nature Positive Summit is a start, it must progress beyond a talkfest. The Albanese government needs to take meaningful action to be nature positive. That means no more reckless approvals for coal and gas that destroys our lands and waterways.

The Albanese government has a responsibility to the people of this country to start protecting the land and sea from destructive industries and business by utilising and implementing traditional knowledge into its environmental laws. We are at a crisis point.

It's about sustainability and longevity of all life on earth. 🌍



Community

voices

How I became an environmental activist

by Martin Mansfield ACF
Greater Western Sydney

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera writes that, “Mankind’s true test ... consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals.” And, I would add, nature and all other life on Earth.

It is difficult to avoid his conclusion that, “And in this respect mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle.”

I have always loved nature and animals. I learnt this from my mum and dad. Some of my earliest memories are of bushwalks with my family when we would stop to admire the views and look closely at the beauty of the flowers we saw.

As I’ve become more and more cognisant of the “fundamental debacle” that Milan Kundera writes about, the worst manifestations of which are climate change and species extinction, I’ve become increasingly determined to try to do something about it especially since the birth of my granddaughter last year.

So, all these experiences and understandings have brought me to ACF and in particular



to the Greater Western Sydney Community Group.

Our democracy purports to operate in the interests of the Australian people but it seems more and more to be operating to fulfil corporate interests. ACF has the knowhow, experience and structures to combat this distortion of democracy, to engage with government and business, to influence political and corporate decision-making, and to speak truth to power.

ACF builds what is the real essence of democracy: people power, including through its network of Community Groups. These

groups bring together people in a local area to support ACF’s national campaigns and to build the understanding of other people in their area of the need for climate action and nature protection.

Corporate interests may have money but their influence can be thwarted by people power, by the power of individual citizens working together, including through the ballot box, to ensure that governments take the actions we need to enable all life on Earth not just to survive but to thrive. 🌱

Above: Martin Mansfield
Photo: Supplied



Spotlight on the West

By Maureen Phillips
ACF Perth

Perth is a beautiful place with stunning beaches and the Derbarl Yerrigan Swan River fronting the city, but our skyline is dotted with some of the biggest fossil fuel companies on the planet. The WA economy is based on mining, completely at odds with protecting nature and our climate. If WA was a country, it would be the third biggest gas producer globally.

Our Perth community group started this year with community screenings of the inspiring *Heart of Country* documentary, followed by sign-making with WA legend Judy Blyth, and protests at the Woodside AGM. It was fantastic to see all the environment groups rally together and then enter the Woodside AGM to speak as proxys. We collectively called out the dangers of expansion

of the Burrup Hub gas processing plant in the Pilbarra. The Burrup region includes Murujuga with the most ancient indigenous rock art and first ever petroglyphic depiction of a human face. The rock art is being eroded by acidic air pollution from the current plant and this will only worsen.

Woodside plans to expand fossil fuel production until 2070 and recently received approvals from the WA Environment Minister who rejected over 700 appeals.

Later in the year we ran a fabulous Nature Forum in the Curtin electorate which was attended by Federal and State MPs. Our guest presenters spoke about nature and human health, nature positive laws and our southwest biodiversity hotspot, the jarrah forests. These forests are home to our endangered Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. I highly recommend watching

Black Cockatoo Crisis on SBS for a great insight into WA's unique forests and the risks from climate change and bauxite mining...more mining! Our group is part of the End Forest Mining Alliance and we all work together to raise the issues of toxicity to people and the rest of the environment, and to stop our forests being destroyed for bauxite and lithium extraction.

ACF has been a great supporter on the national stage. Perth and the rest of WA can seem a long way from many groups along the eastern side of Australia, but like the Northern Territory, our WA government seems to have its head in the sand when it comes to nature protections. WA's emissions are going up and up, so we appreciate the support of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Thanks ACF. 🌱

Above: ACF Perth
Photo: ACF

Bear and Twig family farm

By Cassie Mutch, *habitat* Editor

Nature is at the heart of Jo and Greg Bear's sheep farm on Canary Island near Boort in northern Victoria.

"Sustainability is the philosophy that we live by. It's our purpose. We're pretty open to having a crack at nearly anything as long as it's environmentally friendly and aligns with our values." Jo said.

Much like how plants can grow back fresh after fire, it was after experiencing financial hardship and droughts that Greg and Jo were prompted to consider a different way to use their land.

"We had a tough few years and we decided to take away our emphasis from irrigation. We were very lucky to be able to buy more land which gave us more diversity and we sourced greater knowledge around what we had. The system became more resilient," Greg said.

It was a risk but it's this curiosity, resilience and realising the potential of the natural land that prompted Jo and Greg to explore different ways of farming.

"We've predominantly been using holistic grazing management which is all about mimicking the natural movement of large numbers of animals. The idea came from Allan Savoury who worked in national parks in Africa. We saw how productive a system it was, and it just built our curiosity and made us think 'what else could we do?' Greg said.

For Jo and Greg, biodiversity is a key focus on their farm. With climate change causing unpredictable, extreme weather, having diverse life on their farm means they can adapt and remain resilient.

A large part of this is developing a deeper understanding of the land, especially through connections with First Nations people, ecologists and experts.

"About two years ago, we were really fortunate to connect with a local traditional owner who visited our farm to collect wallaby grass seed. I ended up working alongside her, and we had such amazing, authentic conversations," Jo said.



"We ended up doing a really big tree planting project and had up to 11 locals from Barapa Barapa come and work alongside us planting trees. Every Friday afternoon we would sit by the river, have a yarn, cook lamb sausages on the campfire and eat together. It was just the best time."

"Biodiversity isn't just about plants; it's people as well. Welcoming different people with different views. It just opens your eyes to a whole new world you hadn't thought about," Jo said.

One such instance was when a visiting ecologist spied a rare critter under a cotton bush in Jo and Greg's paddock.

"He just looked under the bush and saw a frog hopper which is a kind of grasshopper. Apparently, they haven't been seen in this area for 30 or 40 years. That was when we realised the significance of what we had in that paddock," Greg said.

By welcoming a diverse range of views and being open to implementing different practices, Jo and Greg have created a space that is resilient, productive and kind to the environment. They are working with the land and constantly learning more about their own backyard.

"If we've got 100 different plant species, some are going to flourish in wet times and others in dry. Nearly every month something new pops up and we just can't believe it. It's really exciting." Jo said.

But it isn't always easy, and for more farmers to take this route there needs to be more support.



"We're spending a lot of time managing this stuff, and there needs to be some sort of financial element to ensure we can keep doing this," Greg said.

For Jo, work needs to be done on a fundamental level to help people understand their role.

"There's some really good things going on in farming communities," Greg said, "I think it's great to be able to connect and share our story with ACF and hopefully help people understand so this is a path more people can take."

"I think it's helpful to remember that this environment belongs to everyone. We can all benefit from it, and having those considerations can help us maintain this longer term,"

Jo and Greg see lots of farmers working hard to protect nature, but without financial support and recognition it's not always an easy path to take.



Jo and Greg Bear on their farm in northern Victoria
Photos: Tom Kinsman



Dreaming up Wild At Art

with founder Lorraine Bower

By Cassie Mutch, *habitat* Editor

From an idea brewed between two friends to arguably the biggest threatened species art competition for kids in Australia - Wild At Art wouldn't be here without founder Lorraine Bower.

Founded and launched in Sydney in 2016 with the help of Susie Russell and a small team from Forest Media Network behind the scenes, the competition had 600 entries in just the first year alone.

It seemed to be the missing piece Aussie children needed – a place to express themselves and their love for Australia's unique wildlife.

The competition continued to grow year on year, stretching into other states and classrooms, with more and more kids putting pencils, paintbrushes and curious minds onto paper.

Left: Sheltered by nature by Kayley, 10
Below Lorraine Bower and Wild At Art prints.





Running an art competition that continued to hunger for growth year on year was no easy feat. After working briefly with a few other organisations, Wild At Art joined forces with ACF in 2021 under the leadership of ACF staff member Taryn Sadler in partnership with Lorraine and Forest Media.

“It seemed to me that working with children was a way to change people’s minds from the very beginning.”

It was here that the competition was officially and fondly dubbed - ‘Wild At Art’. Over the years entries continued to pour in at an increasing rate, with around 35,000 artworks submitted since the competition began. That’s a lot of cute critters and talented kids!

An artist herself, Lorraine has put in an enormous amount of work to make Wild At Art what it is today, but she never expected it to encompass so much.

“The competition has become more than I thought it ever would. I’ve had so many parents and teachers tell me how amazing it has been and how much the kids have learnt,” Lorraine said.

“In the first year this mother came up to me and she said ‘My son decided to draw a regent honeyeater, and he will always love this animal. It will always be ‘his species’ and that really stuck with me. I thought a child who picks out an animal will know about that for the rest of their lives.”

Wild At Art goes beyond the visual. Alongside their artwork, each child has to include a written piece about the animal they’ve chosen and why.

“We didn’t want it to be just about painting a picture. We wanted the children to think about why they were choosing a plant or animal and do some research,” said Lorraine.

“Reading some of their explanations is so touching... sometimes I’ve been in tears reading what kids have said and how important it is to them.”

“Kids don’t want to grow up in a world that doesn’t contain these beautiful species they love.”

From the outside, Wild At Art is an art competition. If you dig a little below the surface, it is so much more. It is a love letter to the planet, and a cry from our youngest generation to protect the planet.

One of the biggest impacts Wild At Art has is how it’s reaching decision-makers and politicians through exhibitions held in parliament and art sent directly to the inboxes of local MPs. In 2023, over 30 MPs and 40 school-aged children attended a Wild At Art exhibition in parliament, facilitating a critical link between young people and decision-makers.

While Lorraine will be stepping back from Wild At Art in 2025, she’ll still be involved and has big dreams for where it can go.

“I’d love for more people to see the artworks through exhibitions, and I’d love to find a way to honour the teachers involved. They do such incredible work bringing Wild At Art into the classroom.”

Thank you to Lorraine who created something that has and will continue to touch hearts around the country.

We can’t wait to be blown away by more creativity and heart in Wild At Art 2025. 🌱

Top, left to right:
Warrul Thigaraa (Honey Bird) by Lavinia, 11
Golden Numbat by Kaia, 9
Barbie of the bush by Lillian, 7

Barry's

love of nature

Asha Collins, ACF Gift in Wills Coordinator

Barry Clugston's love for nature began in Victoria's most north-westerly corner, in the Mallee region.

Growing up on a sheep farm, Barry explains, "We had a couple of paddocks with good bush, and I spent a lot of time in there as a kid."

His connection to nature and the land has only deepened through the years.

Developing an early interest in birdwatching he fondly remembers the native birds of the region, the pink cockatoos, various parrots and birds of prey. He recalls how local farmers used the bird's behaviour to predict the weather, even as farming practices unwittingly contributed to habitat loss. This early regard for nature sparked Barry's environmental activism, his passion often leading to robust discussions with local farmers, with Barry's foresight and love for the land frequently winning them over.

In the early 70's, Barry sought help from ACF to protect the Mallee's 'Big Desert' from development. Alongside a small group of dedicated locals, Barry campaigned to have the area recognised as a Wilderness Zone. He recalls his meeting with ACF's then-CEO Geoff Mosley, "He took it on board

and included us in the discussions, so we felt vindicated by his support." The campaign succeeded, and the 'Big Desert' gained formal protection, a defining achievement of Barry's advocacy.

Throughout the 1990s, Barry served on the ACF Council, using his deep knowledge of the land and tireless dedication to further conservation efforts. For these reasons and more, Barry has left a gift to ACF in his Will, ensuring his legacy of protecting Australia's wilderness will continue for generations to come.

After 50 years of collaboration with ACF, Barry's advice to future generations of advocates is simple: "Always have hope." 🌱



Left: Barry moments after a huntsman spider jumped on him
Photo: Supplied

Write your Will online for free with Gathered Here to protect nature for future generations

As a valued member of the ACF community, you can [write your Will for free using Gathered Here - an Australian online will-writing provider](#). Gathered Here's platform is a way for anyone with a simple estate to write their Will online. While there is no obligation to do so, should you choose to include a gift to ACF in your Will, you'll be safeguarding our irreplaceable native wildlife and their habitats long into the future.



How to spot disinformation:

The red flags to look out for!

Research shows that learning what disinformation looks like is one of the best ways to stop it from spreading.

Check out these common red flags that indicate the content you're viewing may be disinformation and some simple tips on how to counter them:

Red flag: Impersonation

A bad actor may impersonate a trusted source or create a convincing fake source to spread disinformation. Because we're exposed to thousands of messages and ads daily it can be tricky to spot impersonation.

How to counter it:

Double-check if the info you're getting is from an official account. Don't trust an unfamiliar source even if it seems trustworthy, double-check the info with a source you know and trust.

Red flag: Cherry-picking information

Bad actors cherry-pick data that appears to confirm one position while ignoring other data that contradicts it. This can be very misleading, distorting reality through a narrow lens to support a specific view.

How to counter it:

Be cautious with sources that skip over details or dissenting views. Ask yourself: "What's being left out?" Consider the full picture and explore diverse sources for a clearer perspective.

Red flag: Overly emotional content

Content that draws out a strong emotional reaction like fear or anger can hinder our ability to assess the quality of information. Bad actors may use this to trick us into sharing disinformation.

How to counter it:

When content provokes a strong emotional reaction in you, pause and take a breather before re-evaluating the news. Consider the language used by the source and whether it seems deliberately designed to make you feel a certain way.

Red flag: Discrediting opponents

Discrediting their opponents helps bad actors deflect our attention and scrutiny away from flaws in their arguments, or the disinformation they spread.

How to counter it:

Firstly, when you see content that attacks a group or individual, ask yourself what is motivating the author. Are they more interested in reporting information or smearing a target? Secondly, double-check if the claims are accurate.

Red flag: Conspiracy theories

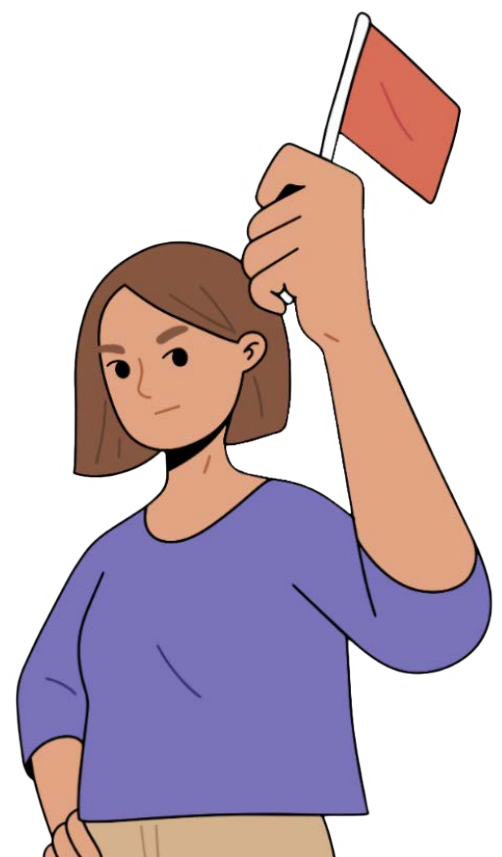
Conspiracy theories are a powerful disinformation tool. They cast doubt over facts and encourage conspiratorial thinking that pushes public discussions away from those facts.

How to counter it:

Conspiracy theories thrive on speculation. Ask yourself if the content you're viewing is evidence-backed or prompting you to speculate? If it's speculation, ignore it.

When more of us learn how to spot disinformation, we're better at stopping it from spreading.

Find more resources and a shareable version of this fact sheet at: www.acf.org.au/disinformation-resources. 





Brown tree-creeper
Photo: Brendan Sydes



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