

ROUND THE BEND
CONSERVATION CO-OPERATIVE

A residential conservation community



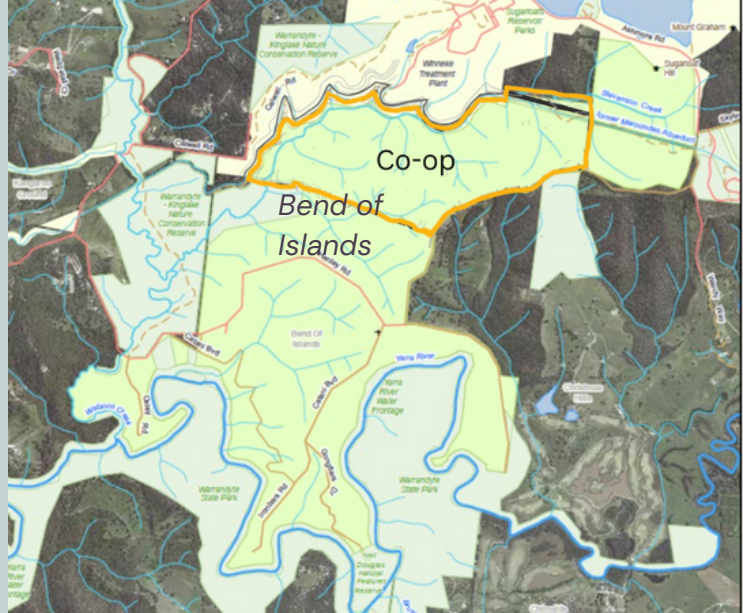
Supporter Impact Report

Working together to protect
habitat and biodiversity

2023



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We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners of the land on which Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative stands. We respectfully recognise Elders both past and present and endeavour to demonstrate this respect by managing this unique land and protecting its integrity.

Cover image: Mountain Flat-pea, *Platylobium montanum* subsp. *prostratum*



Welcome

On behalf of Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative, we would like to acknowledge and thank our funding bodies and our Patrons for their continued support of our work.

Your contributions help to protect this important 132 hectares of native bush, a vital section of the Warrandyte-Kinglake conservation corridor and home to Powerful owls, Brush-tailed Phascogales and many other important and endangered plant and animal species.

Our combined efforts in co-operative land management have achieved the preservation of an area that is now considered of exceptional local and regional biodiversity.

Our Members contribute to the conservation of the property through annual levies and through volunteering their time.

Weeding, planting, monitoring cameras, checking exclusion plots and plant guards are just some of the activities undertaken every month by Members.

We apply for and gratefully receive a range of grants every year. These grants and the Patron contributions go solely towards the conservation work. They enable us to purchase materials and employ contractors to perform some of the more challenging tasks which are beyond the capabilities of our members. It makes an enormous difference.

Thank you for your ongoing support!



Activities

Work parties – the backbone of our work

The weather has been kind to us this year and no work parties have had to be cancelled. Our achievements have been many and special mention should be made of the contributions of our new Associate members and the friends they have brought along. It has been a pleasure to introduce so many new enthusiastic participants to our work and as they say, many hands make light work.

Activities this year have included:

- Placing guards around over 128 “recruit” species
- Maintaining the “Burgan Line” to prevent it from encroaching into targeted areas of high biodiversity
- Planting seedling species into exclusion zones
- Minimizing the encroachment of woody weeds and exotic grasses



Fauna cam

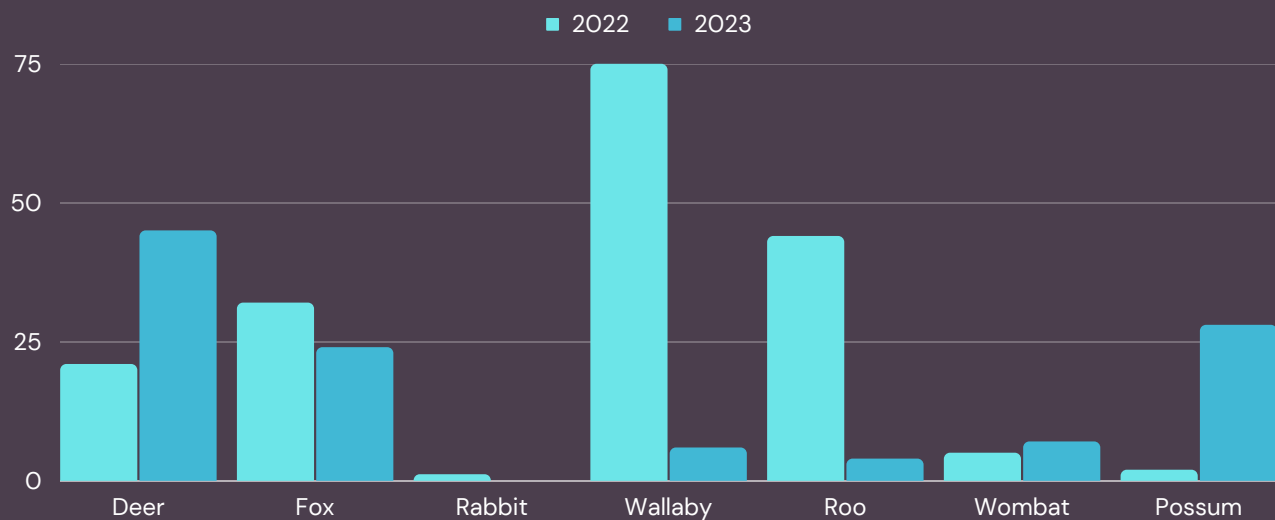
Data collected through Fauna Cam pin-points areas frequented by foxes and deer and assists in targeting control measures, but it also gives us an insight into animal behaviour, of both the native and feral variety.



A Phascogale caught raiding a fox trap



Sambar bucks locking horns



Note: cameras in different locations each year



Fox trapping

This year some of our members spent time with a local pest control contractor who taught them how to set fox traps and how to choose the most viable locations.

Our motion-sensing cameras have enabled us to monitor wildlife and detect areas of fox traffic, identifying areas for setting fox traps. However, as soft jawed fox traps require daily monitoring, we have been limited in the number of locations where traps can be set.

Our plan is to purchase 4G-enabled cameras which will allow us to monitor fox traps in more remote locations as well as enhance our general Fauna Cam project. We're also investigating other technologies.

The Co-op has documented records of fox predation of a Superb Lyrebird nest and a White-throated Nightjar chick in recent years, so fox trapping is an important protection for these locally significant species.



Deer culling

In July we were invited to participate in another round of deer culling as part of the Nillumbik Deer Control Project. The contractor developed a Shoot Safety Plan in consultation with Members which included a map of the locations to be used on the Co-op. This was assessed and approved by Directors.

There have been two visits by the contractors, in July and September, with another planned in October. Drones have been used to locate the deer, though so far only six have been dispatched.



A Red Deer caught on Fauna Cam

Nest boxes

No one is quite sure when the first nest boxes were placed on various ridges and along tracks on the Co-op, but we've been adding to them and now have over thirty which we monitor once a month with 'spy cam' – a camera mounted on an extendable pole. An App allows us to see what is inside in real-time.

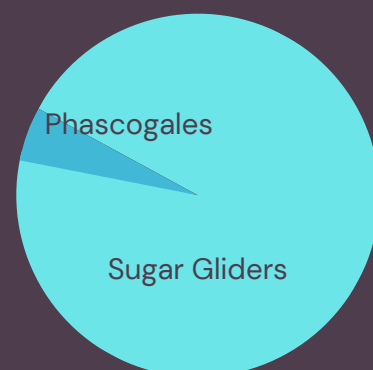
It is not uncommon, as we hoist the pole and insert the camera into the entrance hole to find a few striped faces of sugar gliders staring back at us. Even if no one is home the species of inhabitant is evident by their 'nest'. Sugar gliders are house-proud creatures – not a leaf out of place and a beautifully constructed spherical nest.

Phascogales on the other hand are the kind of tenants who leave their shit (literally) all over the place and their 'bed', such as it is, is made of whatever they can lay their hands on at the time.

While Phascogales are not frequent users of the nest boxes, there are regular anecdotal sightings which may indicate that they are more comfortable with natural nesting sites in the bush.



Sugar Glider nest



*Nest box records
September 2022 to August 2023*



Achievements

Guarding “recruit” species

As part of his 2018 Review of our Flora Strategy, Dylan Osler recommended that we increase the vegetation cover to the slopes of the outlying north-western areas of the Co-op, by guarding of recruiting native plants to protect them from grazing pressure.

We have recently had a big push on the guarding of these recruits, to capitalize on the ‘three-year wet’. Almost the whole of the target area has been covered since April 2022 with 128 recruits being guarded. To achieve this we purchased our second lot of 200 guards and 600 stakes.

Target Species

- Acacia pycnantha (Golden Wattle)
- Acacia mearnsii (Black Wattle)
- Acacia acinacea (Gold-dust Wattle)
- Bursaria spinosa (Sweet Bursaria)
- Hakea decurrens (Bushy needlewood)
- Exocarpos cupressiformis (Cherry Ballart)
- Pomaderris prunifolia (Prunus Pomaderris)
- Lepidosperma laterale (Variable Sword-sedge)
- Lomandra longifolia (Spiny mat-rush)



Hakea decurrens



Plant list update



*Pale Vanilla-lily,
Arthropodium milleflorum*

Timed to coincide with the launch of Council's review of the Biodiversity Strategy, the Co-op's [Plant Lists](#) on the website have been updated.

This is the first update since 2015, and there have been a lot of taxonomic changes, but also some interesting additional species found, over the last 8 years.

The total plant census for the Co-op stands at **514 species** recorded: 406 indigenous taxa and 108 naturalised exotics.



The White-throated Nightjar returns

138 bird species have been recorded by members since 1995. These include the threatened Powerful Owl and other species that are rarely found so close to Melbourne such as Spotted Quail-thrush, Lewin's Rail, Spotless Crake, Olive Whistler, Red-browed Treecreeper and Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. Our records are annually submitted to Birdlife Australia.

Another rarity this close to Melbourne, the extremely elusive White-throated Nightjar, *Eurostopodus mystacalis*, has returned for the season with its call being recorded on 1 October 2023.



White-throated Nightjar, female and chick

The White-throated Nightjar has been monitored on and near the Co-op for many years and documented since 2007. During that period three breeding events have been recorded (in 2013/14, 2018/19 and 2020/21). There is little doubt that the species is suffering from habitat loss and predation, and is just hanging on in our patch of high biodiversity within Melbourne's peri-urban zone.



Bird sightings



This juvenile Red-backed Kingfisher is an amazing addition to the Co-op bird list – No. 138!

Photographed near C Track, it was probably blown from its normal range in northern Victoria by the incredible North winds we've had this Spring.

Superb Lyrebird numbers are also progressively building in the area with three individual birds being heard simultaneously on some occasions. For details of the successful return of the Superb Lyrebird to our area, see this [Victorian Naturalist article](#).



Superb Lyrebird, *Menura novaehollandiae*



Birds breeding

In late 2022, Eastern Rosellas successfully raised six chicks in a tree hollow only two meters away from one of our houses on C track. They have nested here since 2016, but chicks were predated by Sugar Gliders in 2016 and 2018. It was a big relief when all 6 chicks had fledged.



Watch this video of one of the chicks taking off for the first time, after encouragement from its parent.



Reintroduction of the Wine-lipped Spider orchid

We've achieved some great results in this project to reintroduce the locally threatened Wine-lipped Spider orchid, *Caladenia oenochila*.

The project was begun in 2018, in partnership with Nillumbik Shire Council, when a 30m x 30m exclusion plot was established on the Co-op, selected for its high biodiversity habitat and for the commitment of its members in assisting with the many tasks involved.

The exciting news is that in 2022 a new recruit grew 3 meters from the original plants that were planted in 2018. This recruit flowered, was naturally pollinated and proceeded through to successful dispersal of its seeds.

This is a significant milestone for this on-going project. Now we just need lots of the other plants to take the cue and produce remote recruits.



Hand pollinating and the pollinated Wine-lipped Spider orchid



Achievements

Moths

The Co-op, is an area of outstanding biodiversity and is rich in invertebrate fauna, including Moths.

One of our members, Frank Pierce, has been recording the Moths on the Co-op for several years.

Most are almost impossible to find during the day, but fortunately many are attracted to light at night where they settle and are easily photographed.

Over 480 species have been identified. You can see more of the beautiful and unusual Moths found on the Co-op on our new [Moths web page](#).

Pinara divisa



Flora Strategy

As our Flora Strategy outlines, weeds are one of the biggest threats to our bushland. They are the 'silent killer' of biodiversity and our greatest effort is expended on controlling them.

Our intensive effort in this critical area is made possible not only by our own members' labour, but greatly expanded by the financial support we've received from Nillumbik Shire Council and Melbourne Water. We hope that our achievements are positive affirmation of the value of their support.



Hovea linearis



Flora Strategy achievements this year

- Continued control of Sweet Vernal and Briza below the “weed line” with both our volunteer labour and contractors.
- Continued control of the spread of Burgan, including follow-up treatment.
- Inspected ridges and slopes for woody weeds such as *Acacia howittii*, *Acacia floribunda* and *Pittosporum*.
- Checked gullies for thistles, blackberry and exotic herbs.
- Engaged contractors to control thistles and other weeds on Stevenson Ck. and its tributaries.
- Undertook our annual follow-up check of *Ehrharta erecta*. Three years on from the successful completion of this 6-year *Ehrharta* Control Project confirmed that we are still on the path to long-term success.
- Continued implementation by members of their 'site specific' Weed Management Plans, to combat the weed surge from three consecutive wet years
- Protected several threatened species and made a concentrated effort to place guards around naturally recruiting threatened plants in targeted areas, to take best advantage of the three consecutive wet years.
- Surveyed the Christmas Guinea Flower, *Hibbertia porcata*, showing that there has been little change in the extent of the population when compared with the 2003 Survey.



Wallaby grass



News

Nomination of Hibbertia Porcata

Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative has a large population of Christmas Guinea Flower, *Hibbertia porcata* (taxonomically revised from *H. pedunculata* in 2013).

Ours is the major population of the two currently known within Victoria and both are in the Shire of Nillumbik

Practical steps to protect and increase the occurrence of this iconic species on the Co-op have been implemented as part of our overall Flora Management Strategy.

Recently Warren Tomlinson, the Shire of Nillumbik Biodiversity Officer, prepared and submitted a Nomination to the Victorian Scientific Advisory Committee for this species to be listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. This nomination has now been accepted for review though this process can take some time.

It is hoped that elevation of the status of this rare plant will facilitate the acquisition of grants to further study and implement appropriate protection and management strategies.



New species recorded on the Co-op



Over 40 specimens of this Green Lacewing have been recorded on the Co-op since 2016, but until now its identification has remained a mystery despite much research.

Finally it has been identified as ***Mallada traviatus***. This is a 'first record for Victoria', which added to the identification difficulties. Previous records have been in New South Wales & Queensland.

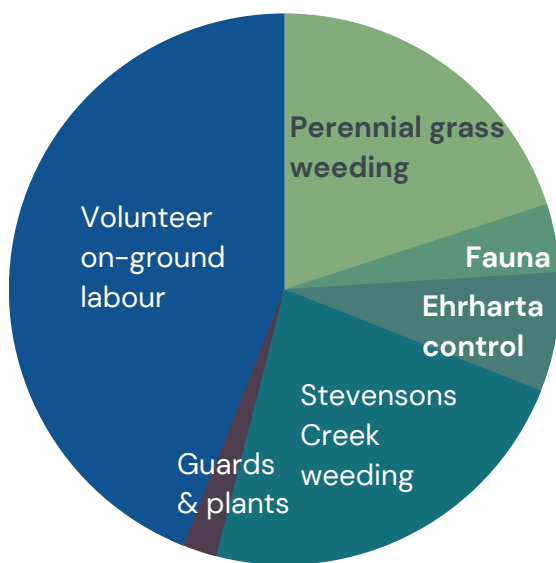
As part of the effort to identify the species, specimens were collected and submitted to Museum Victoria, and are the only specimens of the species held by the museum.

For more photos see one of the records on [iNaturalist](#)



Numbers

100% of grants and Patron fees is spent on conservation. This pie chart illustrates our conservation spend and the allocation of conservation work this year, including the volunteer labour of Members and Friends.



The chart does not include the many hours spent writing grant applications, planning and organising works, or any of the administration involved, all of which is done by our volunteer members.



Number of Co-op Members



Number of Friends



Number of Social Media Followers



Number of eNews Subscribers

**ROUND THE BEND
CONSERVATION CO-OPERATIVE**

A residential conservation community



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We are grateful for the support of:

Nilumbik Shire Council

Melbourne Water

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