

Biodiversity
Conservation
Trust

Understory

NSW BCT Newsletter | February 2019



Understory February 2019

bct.nsw.gov.au

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Protecting biodiversity, bringing benefits to landholders.



Welcome to the first edition of *Understory*, the BCT's newsletter for our private land conservation agreement holders. *Understory* will be published three times a year, providing updates about biodiversity conservation, our programs, and landholder stories; and will give you access to information, guidelines and other BCT news.

At a recent all-staff event we held a vote on a suitable name for this publication and *Understory* won. In ecology, the understory (or understorey) is where the important ecological processes occur under a tree canopy. It forms the vital lower-level growth in forests and holds plants and seedlings which are protected by the forest canopy. We see this as a great metaphor for the important stories which form the foundations of an organisation such as the BCT.

Private land conservation has a long and proud history in NSW. The dedicated and often voluntary efforts of landholders and community groups, combined with the work of not-for-profit organisations and government agencies, have protected biodiversity and threatened species through different types of private land conservation agreements across NSW over many decades. *Understory* celebrates the importance of private land conservation and the vital work of all our conservation agreement holders. *Understory* will also provide information which, we hope, will assist you to continue the important work that you do under your agreement.

It is important for me to add at this point that I am sorry that we have been unable to provide our agreement holders with a newsletter until now, when the BCT has been in operation for

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Traditional Custodians identify landscapes that they have a cultural affiliation with as 'Country'. Country plays an essential role in determining lore, kinships and roles and responsibilities, and for many Traditional Custodians, it also reflects their identity as individuals and as a community. Seasonal indicators on Country inform Traditional Custodians when to fish, hunt, burn or undertake ceremonies. BCT acknowledges the Traditional Custodians across NSW and the importance their cultures play on Country in maintaining a balance with our ecosystems.



more than a year. Unfortunately, some records that were passed on to us were incomplete or out of date. One of my priorities has been to build a comprehensive database of all our agreement holders. This project is progressing well and I am hopeful we will be able to send a copy of *Understory* to all our agreement holders very soon. If you know someone who has a private land conservation agreement who hasn't heard from us, please ask them to get in touch with us.

Importantly, we want to hear from you too. Please get in touch through our enquiry phone number or email address if you have any stories or information to share, or if you have any questions.

I hope you enjoy this first edition of *Understory* and we look forward to continuing to work with our landholders in the coming year, to build upon the significant private land conservation outcomes that have been achieved so far.

Paul Elton
Executive Director and
Chief Executive



Who are we and what do we offer?

The BCT is a not-for-profit statutory body, which was established under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 on 25 August 2017. The BCT is charged with continuing the previous private land conservation functions of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the Nature Conservation Trust.

We offer a range of support options for our landholders depending on their situation and agreement type. This includes grants to provide financial support for specific projects, one-on-one advice about pest and weed management and other issues on your property, and factsheets and guides to help you make the right decisions. If you want to learn more about these support options or have suggestions about how we can better support you, please get in touch by phone or email (details at the bottom of this page).

How do I fit in?

You've received this newsletter because our records show that you currently have a conservation agreement with us on one or more of your properties. The BCT supports landholders with new agreements with the BCT as well as landholders with agreements formerly administered by the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Nature Conservation Trust. These agreements are:

- | Wildlife Refuges (under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*)
- | Voluntary Conservation Agreements (under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*)
- | Trust Agreements (under the *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001*)
- | 'In-perpetuity' or termed Registered Property Agreements (under the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*)
- | Biobanking Agreements (under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*).

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The BCT's Programs

The importance of private landholders being properly supported to conserve and manage biodiversity on their land is being increasingly recognised in NSW and internationally. The BCT achieves this through three major programs.

Conservation Partners Program

The BCT's Conservation Partners Program is for landholders wishing to protect and manage biodiversity on their land but who are not eligible for the Conservation Management Program, or not seeking a funded agreement. Agreement holders under this program may be eligible to apply for grants to assist with maintaining the ecological values on their property.

Conservation Management Program

The BCT's Conservation Management Program is for landholders in priority investment areas or with conservation assets seeking to enter agreements with annual conservation management payments. The BCT encourages landholders to participate via Fixed Rate Offers or Conservation Tenders.

Biodiversity Offsets Program

Landholders can apply at any time to enter a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) to generate and sell biodiversity credits. Once the credits are sold, BSA holders receive annual, in-perpetuity payments to manage their land and biodiversity. They may also make a profit from the sale of credits.

Visit www.bct.nsw.gov.au for more information about these programs.

The BCT Regions

The BCT has staff across NSW in six regional teams: Central West and Western, Murray-Riverina, North Coast, Northern Inland, South-East, and Sydney-Hunter. Each regional team has one ecologist, a program support officer and landholder support officers. The regional teams are there to provide support for our existing and future agreement holders. If you're unsure what region you are in, please view our more detailed map on our website, or contact us using the details at the bottom of this page.



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BCT News

Current open programs

Do you have a friend or neighbour interested in entering a conservation agreement? We currently have various options available, including landholder applications under our Conservation Partners Program, Conservation Partners Grant and Fixed Rate Offers. For more information, including eligibility requirements, please visit our website. You can also get in touch and BCT staff from your region can talk through the options best suited to your property.

You may be eligible to apply for a Conservation Partners Grant. Grants can be used for conservation expenses such as weed or feral animal control, fencing, native vegetation enhancement and habitat restoration. We have already approved 32 grants in the last year and we assess grant applications on an ongoing basis. For more information about our grants, please visit www.bct.nsw.gov.au/grants

Education at the BCT

In late November 2018, students from Holbrook School and Albury High in the Murray-Riverina region visited Yencanyah, a property in Burrumbuttock, to learn about local biodiversity and about private land conservation in a 'BioBlitz' event. On the property, the school kids learnt how to recognise important pollinators, and habitats and ecosystems which support biodiversity. They also learnt from Indigenous artist and

Wiradjuri Elder, David Dunn, about Aboriginal cultural heritage in the area.

As part of this project, the BCT also funded a book written by Albury High School students. The book is a case study on a leading conservation champion, Clare Cannon, who manages biodiversity alongside her farming enterprise on Woomargama Station. You can download a copy of the book or view a video filmed on the day on the news section of our website.

This event generated significant interest in local biodiversity conservation among primary and secondary school children. It forms part of a larger objective of the BCT to raise public awareness about the importance of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation on private land. We will be rolling out a Bioblitz program in various regions across the state in 2019. Keep an eye on our website for more information.

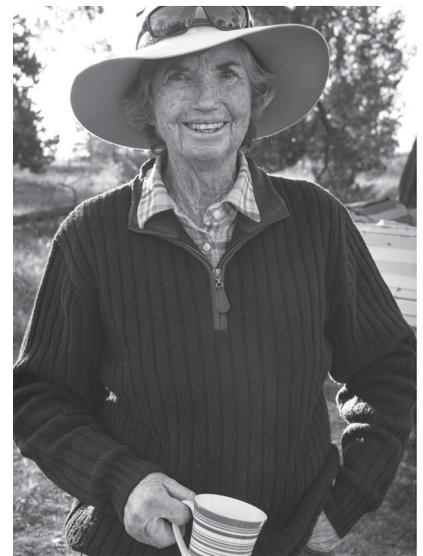


Your Stories

Helen and Owen Huggins

Landholders Helen and Owen Huggins are conservation champions. They hold two Conservation Agreements between them, over two different properties, Wood Park and Savernake, in the Murray–Riverina region. At Wood Park they run a merino stud and breed working dogs, while Savernake is purely dedicated to biodiversity conservation.

The pair see conservation as an integral part of being a landholder, and now their properties will earn annual payments in-perpetuity. Helen’s family has owned Savernake for



generations. She’s absolutely thrilled that it is now protected, and will be for future generations.

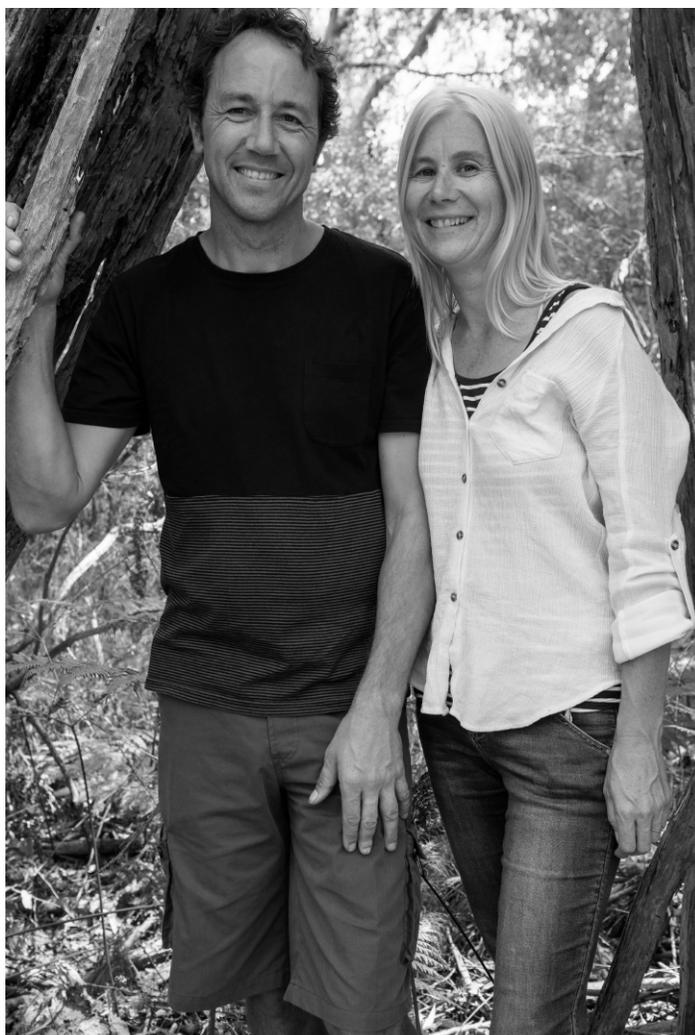
“I think Savernake has become a bit of an icon, especially now that it is being protected.”

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Andrew and Jeanette (Nette) McCoubrie

Andrew and Nette McCoubrie are some of our newest landholders to sign an in-perpetuity Conservation Agreement with the BCT to protect the 80 hectares of Koala Habitat on their property in Dunbogan. Andrew said they were ‘absolutely wrapped’ to get the news.

“To know that it’s going to be permanently looked after and that the future owners of the property are going to be compensated for their efforts gives us tremendous relief. It’s just a great result!”

Andrew and Nette have been updating the BCT on the wildlife they’ve spotted, sending koala photos and even a video of a Squirrel Glider climbing over Andrew’s shoulders! The BCT is thrilled to have these conservation champions on-board.

If you'd like to share your story, please get in touch.

Properties available

The BCT Revolving Fund is always looking for properties with high biodiversity value to purchase. To get in touch, please contact us using the information at the bottom of this page.



Picola - \$ 1,300,000

SOUTHERN NSW
Approx. 2.5km west of West Wyalong

- | Broad acre cropping and grazing
- | Rural conservation
- | Agriculture



Pretoria - \$ 725,000

NORTHERN NSW
Centrally located between Tamworth, Gunnedah and Quirindi

- | Mixed farming
- | Lifestyle/weekend getaway



Mt Yaven - \$555,000

SOUTHERN NSW
Near Wagga Wagga

- | Small-scale farming
- | Rural conservation
- | Private creek and mountain views

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Dr Neil Byron | Member

BCT Executive

Paul Elton | Executive Director & Chief Executive
Carolyn Davies | Director Programs
Alan Goodwin | Director Regional Delivery

Thank You

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust gratefully acknowledges all those landholders who have shared their stories for this issue and for past communications.

Thank you to those who have supported the BCT through its start up, and to the many landholders who have told their neighbours, friends and family about us. Together we can work to protect biodiversity on private land in New South Wales.

**Did you enjoy this issue of Understory?
Please remember to recycle or pass this on
to friends and family.**

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