

# Understory

NSW BCT Newsletter  
December 2019

Biodiversity  
Conservation  
Trust







Welcome to our third edition  
of Understory



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OPPOSITE Neighbours and stakeholders gather at *Koala Gardens* to learn insights from its landholder, Katrina Jeffrey. Photo by Coral Latella.

Fire and drought

First can I say that our thoughts are with the many landholders that have been directly or indirectly impacted by the horrific fire emergency that has unfolded across NSW in recent weeks and which appears set to continue for some time. We understand that your first priorities will be the safety and wellbeing of your family and loved ones, your property and your plants and animals. If your agreement area has been affected by fires, when you are ready, please feel free to contact us, through your regional BCT contact or our main customer enquiry lines. We may be able to assist impacted landholders with grants or help in other ways.

Our thoughts are also with our agreement holders who are under continuing stress due to the severe drought across large parts of NSW. Again, please reach out to us if you think we can assist in any way.

Our progress and some statistics

Since our last edition, even more landholders have signed a private land conservation agreement.

So far, 159 landholders have signed or plan to sign a conservation agreement with the BCT, creating conservation areas across 36,000 hectares. The BCT is investing more than \$101 million to support these agreements. This investment is split 82% for in-perpetuity agreements and 18% for term agreements (minimum 15-years). Landholders with funded agreements are typically being paid between \$21 and \$423 per hectare per annum to manage these conservation areas. Other agreement holders are eligible to apply for grants within our Conservation Partners Program.

To find out more about our agreements and the biodiversity and landscapes that they are protecting, visit our outcomes webpage [www.bct.nsw.gov.au/private-land-conservation-outcomes](http://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/private-land-conservation-outcomes).

Your contact details

We have been improving our landholder database this year, but we still need to update the contact information for many agreements that were inherited when we were established. We encourage you to get in touch via [info@bct.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@bct.nsw.gov.au) or call 1800 992 688 with your current email, contact details and postal address. Let us know if you need updated signage too.

Your stories

This edition of Understory is packed with stories about some of our landholders. We’ve also featured some of our work with school children. I hope you enjoy reading!

If you would like us to highlight your story in a future edition, please get in touch.

*P. Elton*

Paul Elton,  
Executive Director and Chieftain Executive



## Conservation Champions in Fowlers Gap

Education is a core part of the work of the BCT. Through projects such as *Conservation Champions*, we provide students across NSW the opportunity to learn about biodiversity and nature conservation in a hands-on learning environment.

*Conservation Champions* is run by the BCT and Petaurus Education Group Inc. and promotes the importance of biodiversity conservation in regional communities by educating the next generation of landholders.

In August this year, teachers and students from School of the Air (SOTA) New South Wales, Broken Hill High School and Wilyama High School attended *Conservation Champions* field day events at the Fowler's Gap Research Station near Broken Hill. Fowler's Gap is a 39,000 hectare station established in 1966 by the University of New South Wales (UNSW), and is the only research station in the arid zone of NSW.

The project is centred on building connections between community members and exposing students to first-hand knowledge from local landholders, educators, ecologists & Traditional Owners on biodiversity conservation in their local landscape.

The students from SOTA were given the opportunity to be involved in outdoor activities and collaborate with other students and teachers outside of what is normally a home-schooling environment. The students said, "As soon as we arrived at Fowler's Gap, there was an obvious contrast between the blue of the sky and the red of the soil beneath our feet... it was an amazing place to explore and learn."

As part of *Conservation Champions* the students create a case study that details their time exploring at Fowler's Gap and

apply the learning to the rest of their work throughout the semester.

To find out more about *Conservation Champions* and the partnerships we are forming through this project, visit the education page on our website.

## Landcare conference goes intrepid

Also located in the West this year was the 2019 NSW Landcare and Local Land Services Conference held in Broken Hill. Some BCT staff were among the hundreds of attendees from across the state. Also included in the attendee list were five Intrepid Landcarers sponsored by the BCT, each selected based on their unique perspectives, experiences and what they could bring to the conservation conversation.

Intrepid Landcare is an organisation which inspires, connects and empowers young people to act and lead with their local Landcare groups. They run a range of events, workshops, retreats and coaching opportunities to assist in developing useful environmental volunteering opportunities for young people.

After the conference, the sponsored Landcarers produced some amazing creative projects based on what they learnt. One of them, Lachie, produced a story on his blog about the conference, where he discusses the shifting culture of agriculture in NSW and shared some incredible photos of the trip. In response our question "how can we work together to conserve biodiversity on private land", Lachie writes:

*"One of the biggest themes I have drawn from both this conference and my research is that community is one of the biggest factors in promoting change. The change will come by farmers getting off-farm, coming together and sharing, creating a community of positive and supportive change... A collaborative approach to farming, as opposed to a competitive*



**LEFT** The winning Intrepid Landcarers visiting a property near Broken Hill with BCT staff. Image by Lachie Thomas.

**BELOW** Conservation Champions students learning field monitoring techniques with BCT's Scott Jaensch. Image by Caitlin Olsson.





approach, ensures that people are working together to better their businesses, industry, and themselves.”

You can read Lachie’s blog at [www.dumbthings.co/content/landcare](http://www.dumbthings.co/content/landcare)

Trails for Tails

The lyrebird is one of Australia’s best-known emblems, garnishing the uniform of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and adorning the ten-cent coin. Little has been recorded about the Albert’s lyrebird, especially on private land. A new collaboration between the NSW Saving our Species program, Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife and the BCT is looking to fill this gap. The Trails for Tails project, developed by the Border Ranges Alliance, targets both Albert’s lyrebird and the marbled frogmouth and involves data collection for both species over two years. The project features a citizen science program where landholders in the Kyogle, Lismore, Tweed and Ballina shires are invited to record sightings and participate in bird surveys. If you have either species on your property and would like to participate, contact Jane Baldwin at [jane@kingfisherco.com.au](mailto:jane@kingfisherco.com.au) or call 0448 414 547 to register your interest.

Conservation tenders closed

Our two most recent conservation tenders – Central West Rivers and Southern Highland Koala Habitat – closed for expressions of interest (EOIs) on Friday, 29 November. We are thrilled to say we received a large number of EOIs for both tenders!

As part of the tender process, we ran a number of information sessions across the tender areas. These sessions saw a variety of attendees with an interest in the tenders and BCT agreements in general. We want to thank all those who attended, and to those who submitted EOIs. If you didn’t end up submitting an EOI you can contact us about other options for your property at any time.

Over the next few months, the Central West and South East teams will be prioritising the EOIs for site assessments and are looking forward to the resulting property visits and meeting potential agreement holders. Site assessments will confirm details such as the area proposed for conservation and its size, the condition of the vegetation in that area and potential management actions.

We offer conservation tenders in specific areas periodically throughout the year. Successful applicants in a tender receive ongoing annual management payments for the management of a conservation area. Tender areas are selected based on our Priority Investment Areas, which

you can read about on the Conservation Management Program section of our website.

Happy holidays from the BCT

The BCT would like to wish all our landholders a very happy holiday season! We know many of you and your properties have had a difficult year and we hope that you get the time to take a break and enjoy the company of friends and family.

We had our all-staff meeting in early December where regional staff had the opportunity to come together and reflect on the hard work of landholders, staff and wider communities. We want to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of the BCT in our second year of operation and look forward to continuing to maintain partnerships (and form new ones) in 2020.

Please note all BCT offices will be closed during the NSW government shut down period, from Monday, 23 December to Friday, 3 January. We will respond to all inquiries when we return to the office and apologise for any inconvenience caused!



TOP TO BOTTOM,  
LEFT TO RIGHT

BCT staff celebrate the end of year at the BCT Christmas party. Photo by Harriet Ampt

The South East team at one of the information sessions in November. Photo by Dean Ansell

BCT Senior Ecologist Tobi conducts a site visit in the Southern Highlands. Photo by Gabi Meek

Ecologists check vegetation conditions on a site visit in the Murray-Riverina. Photo by Coral Latella

Albert’s lyrebird, Adobe Stock Photos.



# Katrina Jeffrey is saving the “cutest animal in the world”



On the north coast of NSW, in a small regional area called Tuckurimba, local resident Katrina Jeffrey spends an hour each morning on her quad bike checking the trees on her property for koalas. She has been doing this for over four years as part of her mission to help restore important koala habitat in the region.

Koalas have been listed as vulnerable in NSW and local populations are under increasing pressure as a result of impacts such as habitat loss and fragmentation. Katrina believes that actions to protect, rehabilitate and connect koala habitat, and manage threats to koala populations, requires collaboration on a state-wide and local scale.

When Katrina first came to her property (now aptly named *Koala Gardens*), the grass was slashed short and there were only lone mature trees. She and her husband Chris spotted the odd koala using the land, however it wasn't until 2011 that they began to plant koala habitat trees themselves. In 2012, Chris began to develop the first signs of motor neuron disease.

It was at that point that Katrina stopped thinking about the property and concentrated on looking after her husband. Chris passed away the following year, and it was a few months later that Katrina decided to step back out onto her land. Expecting to find a property taken over by weeds, Katrina was amazed to discover around two thousand koala food trees had self-sown and regenerated.

Katrina sold the tractor and bought herself a quad bike, which allowed her to actively observe the growing koala population on her property. In 2015 she spotted around one koala per day, but as the young habitat trees continue to grow, more and more koalas could use them for food and shelter. Katrina is now seeing five times the number of koalas on her land per day.

Non-profit organisation *Friends of the Koala* have played a significant role in the work Katrina has been doing at Koala Gardens. They are a community group run by volunteers dedicated to conserving koalas on the north coast of NSW. Rehabilitators operate a 24-hour rescue service for sick, injured and orphaned koalas and provide koala food trees for free to local landholders through their native plant nursery. *Friends of the Koala* play an active role in promoting habitat restoration in the Northern Rivers Region, encouraging landholders to make new plantings and look after existing vegetation.

Katrina joined *Friends of the Koala* to learn more about the animal she was helping to provide habitat for. She now spends a lot of her time looking after koalas in the Care Centre and supervising other volunteers.

Katrina says, “As Australians, we all know what koalas are, but we don't actually know an awful lot about them.”

In 2015 Katrina signed an in-perpetuity conservation agreement with the BCT that includes ongoing annual payments to support the work she is doing on her land.

A large part of habitat loss is fragmentation. Koala populations become cut off and are unable to disperse in order to maintain high levels of genetic diversity. There are several programs in place, such as the NSW Koala Strategy and the Saving Our Species iconic koala project, which are directed towards conserving koalas and their habitats.

Katrina has collaborated with *Friends of the Koala* and NSW Government Saving our Species program to help run several field days at Koala gardens as a way of beginning to tackle koala habitat fragmentation in the region. These days are open to anyone in the local community who wishes to learn about koalas and find out what they can do to support struggling koala

populations in the area. Katrina says the field days are an important part of what she does.

“The field days are a really fabulous opportunity to get people looking at what regeneration actually looks like in a hands-on learning environment.”



BCT staff were invited to attend

one of two field days in September and were incredibly inspired by the passion and extensive knowledge Katrina was able to share with those who were there. The events were organised by Saving our Species in line with threatened species day. Over 35 people (including children) from a range of different areas in the region came to hear about the work Katrina is doing on her land and meet some of the resident koalas.

**“If we can't save the cutest animal in the world, what is going to happen?”**

**ABOVE** Katrina at her property, *Koala Gardens*. Photo by Colin Elphick.

**OPPOSITE** Rescued koala at the *Friends of the Koala* sanctuary where Katrina is a supervisor. Photo by Colin Elphick.



# Your stories: Sportsman Creek

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Nestled next to the rugged sandstone ridges and valleys of Banyabba Nature Reserve on NSW's North Coast lies Sportsman Creek, and landholder and artist, Jeff Keyes. Jeff spends his days managing the 50 hectare property for conservation and photographs a range of plant and animal species that take refuge in this important wildlife corridor. Eighteen recorded threatened and endangered species use the property's important rivers and unforested landscape, including the squirrel glider (*Petaurus norfolkensis*), glossy back cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) and little bent-wing bat (*Miniopterus australis*).



Jeff is extremely passionate about conservation.

*"I want to create an atmosphere where normal people can get involved in nature. We have a divergent culture, where nature and people looking after it are separated from the rest. We need to bridge this gap!"*

To help enable this pursuit, the BCT sponsored Jeff to attend the Private Land Conservation Conference (PLC19) in Adelaide, where he had the opportunity to meet and learn from a variety of people and organisations doing exciting things in the private land conservation space.

*"I don't get many opportunities to go to conferences, so it was a great experience. I really enjoyed seeing what the industry is up to in the conservation space and meeting like-minded people."*

In April this year, Jeff heard that his application for a BCT conservation partners grant had been accepted. Annual grant payments are now being made to Jeff for a period of three years, which will support the continued restoration of his riparian zone along Sportsman's Creek and increase the overall protection of old growth trees within the targeted area (which has been identified as having one of the highest numbers of arboreal mammals in the Clarence Valley). Jeff will also continue his work eradicating weeds, and one hectare of previously cleared pasture was planted-out with native species in early September.

We are excited to see how this precious piece of land is improved through the grant funding and Jeff's hard work. You can visit Jeff's website at [www.sportsmancreek.org](http://www.sportsmancreek.org) to track his progress and view his incredible photos.

LEFT Jeff (right) attending the PLC19 Conference pictured with the BCT's Rose Porter.

OPPOSITE Red-necked wallaby image captured by landholder Jeff Keyes at Sportsman Creek.





# Your stories: Don Durrant's Rainforest

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Don Durrant is full of stories. These are stories from the land, his land. And no wonder – he has owned and managed his piece of rainforest near Kyogle in North Coast NSW for 49 years. At 21, Don inherited a small piece of farmland from his father. He ran cattle like his father but didn't continue the clearing that had taken place on the property for decades. In fact, he had an eye on a patch of completely uncleared neighbouring rainforest to his farm, which he liked to explore on horseback when he was a kid. On the day he inherited his land, Don called the owner of the rainforest asking if he'd be interested in selling. "Not a chance," was the response. And yet, 17 years later, Don got a call back. "Let's meet at the gate on our horses and go for a ride." They settled on a price that afternoon.

Since then, Don has worked tirelessly clearing lantana and planting local rainforest trees. He established his first agreement in 2000 (a Wildlife Refuge) and has since entered two more agreements to cover a total conservation area of approximately 233 hectares. This area contains habitat for five endangered flora species and 26 threatened fauna species, and also has a remnant patch of Critically Endangered *Lowland Rainforest of Subtropical Australia*. In May this year Don received a BCT grant, which will add value to the two sites on his land that are being managed by NSW Saving Our Species (SOS).

Don has had hundreds of visits from friends, family, local schools, rangers, local Indigenous people, all flocking to see the impact he has made reforesting his little piece of paradise and revelling in his self-taught knowledge of the land. He's had WWOOFers (Willing Workers on Organic Farms); one from Canada who ended up spending five times longer on the land than she originally intended, and a couple from the UK, who enjoyed their time with Don so much that they invited him to their wedding back home.

A tour of Don's property means endless stories at every twist and turn of his windy rainforest road (some even worthy of switching off the engine for full effect). He names what feels like every species, knows which of the hundreds of individuals he has planted himself or by visitors, shows signs that visitors have made, and takes you to the 'walk of fame' where every visitor plants a tree and adds it to the immense row.

Don's hard work has been paid off by his generosity and willingness to share his knowledge and experience with so many lucky people who will no doubt cherish that experience for life.

OPPOSITE Don Durrant on his favourite tree, a 1000-year-old Moreton Bay fig. Photos by Harriet Ampt.



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# Properties for sale

The BCT Revolving Fund is always looking for properties with high biodiversity value to purchase. To get in touch, please contact our Property Sales Manager Chris Perceval on 0437 147 611, or you can contact our general enquiries line (info on the back cover).



## Picola \$ 1,300,000

SOUTHERN NSW  
Approx. 25km 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



## Blackbutt \$625,000

NORTHERN NSW  
15 minutes to Uralla  
and less than 40  
minutes to Armidale

- | Conservation/Agriculture
- | Mountain escape
- | Breathtaking view to the Honeysuckle  
and Moonbi Ranges



## Mulunga \$880,000

NORTHERN NSW  
35 minutes' drive  
to Tamworth

- | Large lifestyle block/hobby farm
- | Rural conservation
- | Architecturally designed home



## BCT Board Members

Hon. Robert Hill AC, Chairperson  
Virginia Malley, Deputy Chairperson  
Renata Brooks, Member  
Duncan McGregor, Member  
Hon. Gary Nairn AO, Member  
Russell Taylor AM, Member  
Dr David Freudenberger, Member  
Dr Neil Byron, Member

## BCT Executive

Paul Elton, Chief Executive Officer  
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.

Do you want to receive your copy of *Understory* via email? If so, drop us a line at [info@bct.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@bct.nsw.gov.au) with your name and property details and we will add you to the database.



A photograph of a lush forest. Tall, slender trees with green foliage form a dense canopy. The forest floor is covered in a thick layer of green ferns and other undergrowth. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a dappled light effect. A small red and white tag is visible on one of the tree trunks in the middle ground.

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