

# Annual Review

## 2023-2024

To protect, restore and sustain nature in Australia.

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Channel Country. Image: Kerry Trapnell



# A year of big outcomes for nature



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## July

### People power in Tassie's forests

Citizen science continues to play a key role in monitoring logging in Lutruwita / Tasmania's precious native forests. Across the year, volunteers and supporters have been gathering data that shows how regularly logging operations flout the law. **"The community expects Tasmania's precious forests to be protected by strong laws, but the regulator is nowhere to be seen,"** says Campaign Manager Alice Hardinge. "If the regulator, the Forestry Practices Authority, can't or won't do it, the community should have the right to do so."



A logging coupe in the Styx Valley. Image: Wilderness Society Tasmania.



National Campaigns Director Amelia Young with Senior Campaigner Jenita Enevoldsen on a trip to meet with the River Keepers.

## August–September

### Martuwarra River Keepers

As inaugural funding partner of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council's River Keepers program, we've supported up to a dozen Indigenous leaders from the communities of Yurmulun (Pandanus Park) and Balginjirr to work on Nyikina Country, 60km south of Derby in the Kimberley, NT. The River Keepers are mapping the Traditional Ecological Knowledge—the environmental, cultural and spiritual knowledge—of Martuwarra, the National Heritage-listed river, and are exploring cultural and conservation economy opportunities, such as a walking trail.

During August and September the River Keepers undertook a media training course to empower them to tell their own stories of Martuwarra. In March, we visited Broome to meet with representatives from the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council. It was wonderful to meet some of the River Keepers and exchange insights.

"We look forward to evolving our partnership with Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, to continue actions that progress our common ground of protecting the Kimberley," says Senior Campaigner Jenita Enevoldsen.

## August

### Key deforestation report launched

The Wilderness Society commissioned EY to develop a key new report. The "Following the Money" report focuses on deforestation, following the sectors that are driving these threats and their links to financial institutions. We launched the report at the Investor Group for Climate Change summit, held in Sydney. **Investors, superfunds and banks are now reflecting on biodiversity risk in their portfolios.** They are developing action plans to de-risk their investments and, thanks to our supporters and this report, are taking steps towards ensuring they are not contributing to Australian deforestation.

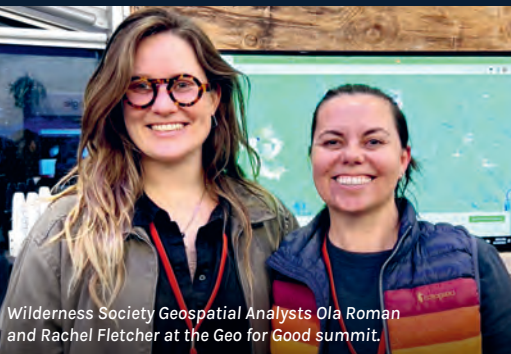


Tim Beshara discussing the report at the IGCC Summit.

## October

### Watch on Nature goes global

The Wilderness Society's Geospatial Analysts Rachel Fletcher and Ola Roman presented Watch on Nature, our land-clearing and deforestation monitoring tool, at Google's annual Geo for Good summit at its headquarters in Silicon Valley! ENGOS, universities and research labs shared the latest advances, ideas and research in geospatial science, new satellite tech and monitoring systems. **"We demonstrated how Watch on Nature works, spoke about the deforestation crisis unfolding in Australia, and had folks from all over the world interested in collaborating with us in future,"** says Ola. Plus, Watch on Nature won a 2023 Australian Good Design Award (Social Impact category) for Excellence in Design and Innovation! Many other organisations are now using the platform too, including Victoria National Parks Association, and some Traditional Owner groups.



Wilderness Society Geospatial Analysts Ola Roman and Rachel Fletcher at the Geo for Good summit.

## 14 October

### Light for the Bight

The Wilderness Society South Australia co-hosted a twilight event celebrating the Great Australian Bight and Nullarbor with the Traditional Custodians. The Yerkala Mirning of the Nullarbor and Great Australian Bight have a hereditary belonging to the sky, sea and land Country for more than 65,000 years. **Together with the Mirning Council of Elders, we are negotiating with relevant government and World Heritage officials about the case for World Heritage protection.** More than 50 people from Mirning families and hundreds from the wider community joined in the magical parade by lantern light with song and story. And in January, Light for the Bight was named the Community Event of the Year at the 2024 Citizen of the Year Awards SA!



The spectacular Light for the Bight parade. Image: Bill Doyle.

## 6 December

### Nature Repair Market

The Wilderness Society was a leading voice in criticism that led to important amendments in the Nature Repair Market Bill. 3,693 Wilderness Society supporters signed on to our Nature Repair Market submission to the government flagging concerns with the scheme whereby businesses can receive tradable certificates in return for investment in nature protection and restoration. Following amendments to the Bill, the scheme will no longer be allowed to be used to offset the destruction of nature elsewhere. National Campaigns Director, Amelia Young, says: "While removing the offset link is positive, the fundamental issues of the financialisation of nature remain... **A nature repair market alone will not stop wildlife extinction. Properly enforcing the current EPBC Act is the action we expect the Government to be taking right now,** while also reforming Australia's nature laws."



## 9 December

### Jarrah Forests

Companies such as Alcoa and South32 are strip-mining the globally-significant Jarrah forests for bauxite. These forests, on Noongar country in the south-west of the continent, tell a unique evolutionary story about thousands of species that occur nowhere else on Earth. In May 2024, Wilderness Society campaigners Adele Chasson and Sam Szoke-Burke attended Alumina's AGM and, in front of their most valuable shareholders, directly asked the company's board why they are still deforesting the Jarrah forests?

Above: Karrak / red-tailed cockatoos are losing their habitat to bauxite mining.

## 22 December

### Channel Country Protection from oil and gas exploitation

Christmas came early when the Queensland government announced protections for Channel Country rivers and floodplains from new oil and gas. This is a HUGE win for communities, nature and the climate, and is the result of tens of thousands of people who highlighted the need to protect these globally significant free-flowing desert rivers and fertile floodplains. **"This isn't just a decision that matters locally, but globally,"** says Hannah Schuch, Queensland Campaigns Manager. Nine million hectares of globally significant rivers and floodplains are now protected from mining for oil and gas!



Hannah Schuch (centre) surrounded by some of the amazing supporters who helped protect the Channel Country rivers and floodplains in the Lake Eyre Basin. Image: Justin Gally.



## December

### The Uncovered launches

We released a Corporate Deforestation Benchmark, "The Uncovered"—the first of its kind in Australia. It reveals that Australian companies, including Alcoa and Woolworths, are international laggards when it comes to deforestation-free commitments. Wilderness Society supporters are helping campaigners engage these companies in sectors that are linked to deforestation in Australia, and pressuring them to go deforestation-free.

## February

### PEP-II is finished

In an historic decision, the NSW government legislated a ban on oil and gas mining in NSW coastal waters, making NSW the first Australian state to ban oil and gas along its coastline. The Wilderness Society worked alongside communities to challenge the controversial PEP-II gas proposal for many years, due to the devastating impact the project would have. **"While the industry still has great power over Australian politics, region-by-region, jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction, this is changing,"** says NSW Campaign Manager, Victoria Jack. And in May, thanks to the efforts of a coalition of groups, a hidden attempt to make oil and gas exempt from Australia's nature law was scrapped! Fossil Fuel Industry Campaigner, Fern Cadman, says: "The move to scrap this section of the bill shows the diminishing power of the gas industry to dictate policy in Australia."



A Hands Across the Sand event at Nobbys Beach, Newcastle. Image: Linda Gill.

## March

### Seismic blasting is loud, but we were louder

Last year, 3,971 supporters joined the Wilderness Society in speaking out against a proposal by giant fossil fuel mapping company TGS to use dangerous seismic blasting as part of exploration in the oceans near Tasmania and Victoria. And in March, **after extensive community opposition, Australia's national oil and gas regulator sent TGS's plans back to the drawing board.** That's thanks to the incredible commitment of people like you in our communities speaking up to protect the wild southern oceans, whales and other marine life that call them home.

**NEWS FLASH:** In September 2024, thanks to your support, we helped pressure TGS out of the Bass Strait!



## 1 January

### Industrial native forest logging ends

Finally, 2024 heralded the end of industrial native forest logging in Victoria and the state-owned logging agency VicForests. Now, we're lobbying the Victorian government to ensure that the financial, legal and environmental issues that plagued VicForests don't just find a new home in Government, and to deliver on the rights and aspirations of First Peoples to heal and care for Country instead. **Enduring protections for the state's iconic native forests are now in sight,** paving the way for delivery of the Great Forest National Park and other new protected areas—as well as delivering on conservation economy proposals like the Emerald Link in East Gippsland.

Above: An iconic denizen of Victoria's forests: the Leadbeater's possum. Image: Justin Gally.

## March

### "Do you feel heard by politicians?"

We ran TV ads across Lutruwita / Tasmania in the lead-up to the state election in defence of all "activists" who care. "Community members and environment groups who are concerned about nature in Lutruwita / Tasmania are being ignored by too many politicians, they must have their voices heard by Tasmania's parliament," said Alice Hardinge, campaigner for The Wilderness Society Tasmania. The ad showed that we're here, we care, and we won't be ignored.



Campaigner Alice Hardinge talks to Tasmanians as part of a televised appeal during the state election.

## May

### Community rights

Wilderness Society volunteers across the continent met with their MPs to push for federal nature law reforms that deliver a fair say for the public in environmental decisions. A meeting with North Sydney MP Kylea Tink ultimately resulted in Ms Tink proposing amendments to increase the transparency, accountability and integrity of the laws—measures that are key to better outcomes for people and nature.

Community rights campaigner Victoria Jack says: "It was powerful to watch Kylea Tink speak in parliament about the importance of genuine community consultation after hearing from the North Sydney Wilderness Society community group on how **these reforms can help end extinctions and stop rampant deforestation.** This is just one example of the many impacts our volunteers have achieved by engaging with their representatives in federal parliament to enshrine community rights in environmental decision-making."



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## March

### Nature Walk Challenge

For World Wildlife Day 2024, 1280 nature lovers laced up their walking shoes and took part in the annual Nature Walk Challenge. The money raised will support the Wilderness Society's ongoing work to protect the habitats of endangered wildlife across the country.



Supporters in NSW push the case for strong new nature laws.

## May

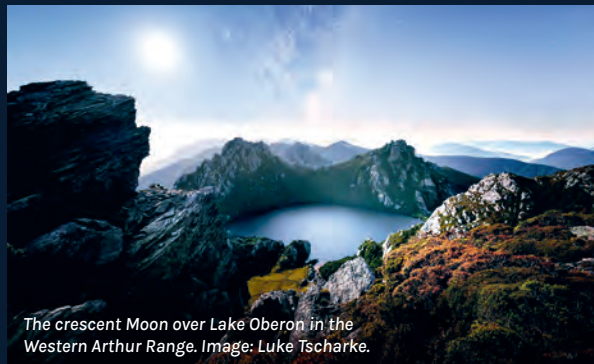
### MPs targeted for new nature laws

More than 500 people helped fund billboards in key electorates across the country, urging these MPs to champion nature inside government. Eight community events were held, 225 personal letters were sent to MPs and 3922 people took action for laws that will actually protect nature. Multiple MPs mentioned the community events in parliament, illustrating the demand for strong nature laws. Biodiversity Policy and Campaign Manager, Sam Szoke-Burke, says: "We know that the MPs saw the billboards—in one case I was even able to speak about the message from the billboards with one of the MPs in front of hundreds of people. **Hundreds of people chipped in because they are sick of inaction.** In many cases the MPs got the message loud and clear."

## June

### Sky Country campaign launches

With its vast Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, Lutruwita / Tasmania is home to incredibly dark skies. This is especially so in Southwest National Park, where ecological function—unimpeded by artificial light—has remained unchanged for millennia. Our campaign for Southwest Sky Country to become an internationally recognised Dark Sky Sanctuary launched in June, along with a guide which explains the importance of Dark Sky Sanctuaries and how **the Tasmanian government can and should protect the night skies of the southwest.**



The crescent Moon over Lake Oberon in the Western Arthur Range. Image: Luke Tscharko.

## June

### 30 years of Nature books

The 2023 Environment and Karajia Awards for Children's Literature saw 21 books shortlisted. The awards ceremonies took place as part of Nature Book Week after much deliberation by the judges in what was a stirring year for nature writing. *Looking After Country with Fire* by Victor Steffensen, illustrated by Sandra Steffensen, took the Karajia Award, while EACL winners included *Berani* by Michelle Kadarusman, *Kind* by Jess McGeachin, *The Tree at Number 43* by Jess McGeachin, and *The ABC Guide to Loving the Planet* by Jaclyn Crupi. The Environment Award for Children's Literature has been going since 1994. To celebrate 30 years of nature books that promote a love of nature in children, we launched a special series of events for 2024.



Nature Book Week Ambassador Prof. Jen Martin gives a talk.

# From the CEO

**For almost 50 years the Wilderness Society has been working to protect this continent’s natural landscapes and unique wildlife. And it is thanks to all of you who have supported us—our members, donors and volunteers—that we are prepared for the future.**

As an organisation we have always had to evolve, finding novel ways to stand up and be a voice for the environment and communities.

In the late 1970s, the Wilderness Society pioneered mass movement, grassroots environmental protest to ensure the Franklin River remained flowing free. In the 1980s we worked nationally to get legal and legislative changes in place to lock in these protections.

Now we are developing strategies to cope with the challenges of today. In the face of Australia’s alarming rates of deforestation we have built Watch on Nature. This groundbreaking

satellite monitoring technology has enabled allies, First Nations groups and our volunteers to report vegetation destruction, and have analysts confirm and request drone footage to capture it. This type of action shines a light on the flaws and loopholes that exist in state and federal nature laws, including their regulation and enforcement.

At the same time, we are delivering corporate campaign strategies to make it untenable for businesses like supermarkets to turn a blind eye to this type of deforestation in their supply chains. This is just one slice of the work happening right now to deliver on our vision.

**As we look to the future and the challenges ahead, we are supported and propelled by the foundations of our past.**

Our Lutruwita office, 132 Davey St, Nipaluna / Hobart, was HQ for the famous Franklin campaign and has been the spiritual home of the Wilderness Society ever since. We

are in the process of much-needed renovations and restorations of the property and we will share more on the progress of this (and some of the history uncovered) in the coming year.

As a society, people are at the core of everything we do. Thanks to our dedicated members and supporters across the continent, we are primed to deliver on our purpose to protect the big nature-scapes, crucial to the survival of so many threatened species.



**Matt Brennan**  
CEO, The Wilderness Society Ltd



# From the Convenor on behalf of the Board

**Like many people, I often feel a unique mix of anger, exhaustion and frustration in the face of relentless news coverage about the dire state of our environment. I very often ask myself, why and what can one do?**

This is why the Wilderness Society and every member, volunteer and donor matters. You are the source of much inspiration. Whether you are a supporter who gives to an appeal, a member donating regularly, someone who has pledged a gift in your Will or a volunteer that shows up for our community events and rallies or writes to their local politician. Each of you—your time, money and voice—inspire all of us at the Wilderness Society.

Without you, there would be no Wilderness Society—there would be no community and campaigning work to protect the places that are now so important for our shared future—and for that, I am profoundly grateful.

Earlier this year, one of our campaigners shared with me that ‘action is the antidote to despair’:

amid the many challenges facing our natural world this is exactly the spirit that uplifts so many and it’s a message that we simply must heed.

It is the very personification of all that the Wilderness Society does, and the basis of all social change. Right now there has never been a more important time to show up, do something and act to protect what we all love.

On behalf of the Board I’d like to say thanks to the entire team for their commitment and thanks to you for believing in what we are tasked to achieve.



**Karl Tischler**  
Convenor, The Wilderness Society Ltd



## Board Members:

**Karl Tischler – Convenor**  
Appointed Director from 28 July 2021; Re-appointed Convenor 12 December 2023

**Amanda Branley – Deputy Convenor**  
Re-elected 25 November 2021; Re-appointed Deputy Convenor 12 December 2023

**Andrew Barker – Director**  
Re-elected Director 29 November 2023

**Lisa Roberts – Director**  
Re-elected 23 November 2022

**Natalie Warren – Director**  
Elected Director 29 November 2023

**Michael Gillam – Director**  
Elected Director 29 November 2023

**Jen Martin – Director**  
Appointed Director from 10 January 2024

**Bill Doyle – Director**  
Appointed Casual Director from 10 June 2024

**Paul McDonnell – Director**  
Elected Director 23 November 2022; Resigned 20 July 2023

# Your support in action

**As part of a society of people who care about nature, you've been powering progress for Australia's globally unique wildlife and living cultural landscapes over 2023-4.**

Together, we've been taking on destructive industries. We've defeated fossil fuel giants in New South Wales and the Channel Country, exposed potentially illegal forest destruction across northern Australia, and highlighted the disastrous effects of bauxite mining in WA's jarrah forests. This has been accompanied by visionary proposals to better respect, protect and connect remarkable ecosystems, like the Emerald Link conservation economy for the forests of East Gippsland, Victoria, or World Heritage listing for the Great Australian Bight and Nullarbor.

With your support, Wilderness Society is the inaugural founding partner for the River Keepers program. In March we visited Rubibi / Broome to meet with representatives from the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council. It was wonderful to meet some of the River Keepers—whose roles are focused on creating livelihoods on Country while caring for Country.

For decades, conservationists, pastoralists and Traditional Owners have worked together to protect the rivers and floodplains of the Channel Country, in the northern

part of the Lake Eyre Basin. Some of the last free-flowing desert rivers left on the planet are now protected from oil or gas drilling. Wilderness Society volunteers and community supporters were part of the recent push that led to the Queensland Government passing the necessary regulations—but we can't stand complacent, as critical mineral mining to power the renewables revolution still threatens this globally significant place.

Ahead of the next Victorian election, we are in a race to secure enduring protections for Eastern Victoria's tall wet forests.

**You helped deliver the historic outcome last year, when that state government decided to bring forward the planned wind up of industrial native forest logging.**

Now, we are working to secure protections that respect the rights and aspirations of Traditional Owners, and their roles to manage, heal and restore forest Country.

Our multiple-award winning deforestation monitoring platform, Watch on Nature (WoN), has exposed eye-watering amounts of shocking deforestation. Allies using WoN detected clearing on a

pastoral station called Claravale that resulted in the first ever fine for illegal deforestation issued in the Northern Territory.

We've continued our movement-leading Community Rights in Environmental Decisions campaign, centred on the three universal rights of: timely access to accurate information, meaningful consultation, and ability to have decisions examined in a court of law.

Almost four years ago, the independent review of the EPBC Act (the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act) showed that the lack of transparency, accountability and integrity in how environmental decisions are made is a major weakness of the nation's environment law. So we've been advocating for these community rights to be included in the EPBC Act reforms, alongside the closing of deforestation loopholes.

Being able to have courts examine government and corporate choices and decisions about environmental destruction, or protection, is a key community right. With your support, we will continue to defend this right and carefully take strategic legal action when required.

In Lutruwita / Tasmania, we've done just that, whether that's to protect the world-class values of the Tasmanian Wilderness and World Heritage Area from inappropriate helicopter tourism, or to seek to have the court hear evidence of logging in breach of the state regulations. Your support is vital to enable us to conduct this important legal research and secure court representation by expert lawyers.

To our opponents: don't underestimate the power of people to make change. To our supporters: thank you for being part of a society that cares for Australia's wondrous places and remarkable wildlife.

We've an exciting, and challenging, year of people-powered campaigns ahead of us.

**Amelia Young**  
National Campaigns Director



National Campaigns Director (right) admires a blue-tongue lizard with her niece, Camille, and campaigns manager Adele Chasson while taking part in the Nature Walk Challenge.

We acknowledge First Nations Peoples across the continent as the traditional custodians of Country, over which sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders and Ancestors who have cared for Country through millennia and acknowledge the unbroken connections to culture and Country which continue to endure today.

# The financials

For the 2023/2024 financial year, The Wilderness Society delivered an operating deficit of \$1,302,941. The main drivers of the deficit were budgeted increased expenditure on environmental campaigns and programs and a challenging year for donations.

The latter is due partly to the economic circumstances where cost of living and other social pressures reduced the organisation's ability to acquire new members via our regular face to face fundraising practices.

This was partly offset by Total Expenditures being less than expected in a challenging high inflationary environment. They increased only slightly to \$12,627,643 from \$12,597,321 in 2023, reflecting the careful oversight of the finances by the Board and reduced fundraising expenses.

Prudent financial management over the past five years sees the overall equity position remaining healthy.

This financial information is extracted from the Full Consolidated Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2024, which can be accessed at [annualreview.wilderness.org.au/finances](https://annualreview.wilderness.org.au/finances)

**Matt Brennan**  
CEO, The Wilderness Society Ltd

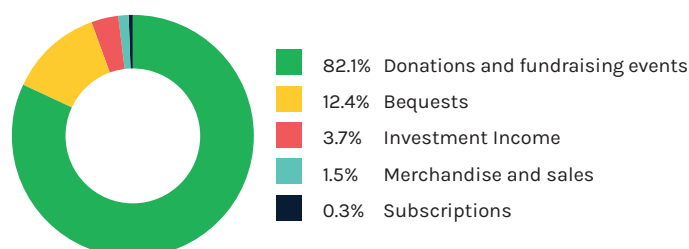
## Financial results (for the year ended 30 June 2024)

|                                                            | 2024                | 2023                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Income from fundraising, donations, bequests and grants    | \$10,903,403        | \$12,114,361        |
| Investment and other non-operating income                  | \$421,299           | \$284,946           |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                                        | <b>\$11,324,702</b> | <b>\$12,399,307</b> |
| <b>LESS: EXPENSES</b>                                      |                     |                     |
| Environmental campaigns and programs                       | \$6,194,728         | \$5,849,477         |
| Recruitment of new supporters                              | \$1,713,015         | \$2,156,842         |
| Fundraising expenses - staff, appeals, supporter and costs | \$3,240,442         | \$3,314,020         |
| Governance, finance and operations                         | \$1,250,630         | \$1,047,971         |
| Depreciation and amortisation                              | \$228,828           | \$229,011           |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                                      | <b>\$12,627,643</b> | <b>\$12,597,321</b> |
| <b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR</b>                  | <b>-\$1,302,941</b> | <b>-\$198,014</b>   |
| Other comprehensive income                                 | \$-                 | -                   |
| <b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>                          | <b>-\$1,302,941</b> | <b>-\$198,014</b>   |

## Financial position (for the year ended 30 June 2024)

|                                           | 2024               | 2023               |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Total Assets                              | \$10,704,288       | \$11,455,437       |
| Less: Total Liabilities                   | \$2,657,188        | \$2,091,786        |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>                         | <b>\$8,047,100</b> | <b>\$9,363,651</b> |
| Accumulated Surpluses                     | \$641,940          | \$730,784          |
| Reserves                                  | \$6,926,031        | \$8,129,298        |
| Non-controlling interest accum. surpluses | \$479,130          | \$503,569          |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>                       | <b>\$8,047,100</b> | <b>\$9,363,651</b> |

### Revenues



### Expenditure

