

Towards new habitat connections in the Yarra Valley

Yarra4Life is a major environmental project in the Yarra Valley that aims to protect, improve, increase and connect habitat for native animals including the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeaters Possum. A long-term goal is to have habitat links from the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve north to the Yarra Ranges National Park, south east to Kurth Kiln Regional Park and west to the Dandenong Ranges National Park, thereby expanding the habitat range for these and other native animal species.

Partner organisations working together in Yarra4Life in 2014/15 included Parks Victoria, Yarra Ranges Council, Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Landcare Network, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, Trust for Nature, Victorian National Parks Association, Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc. and Conservation Volunteers Australia. The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA coordinates Yarra4Life on behalf of the partner organisations by convening a Coordination Committee, managing the project's finances and employing project staff who lead the delivery of on-ground works, reporting and promotion.

Achievements in 2014/15

The major Yarra4Life activity in 2014/15 was delivering the second year of a five-year, \$1 million project funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme. This included the completion of an Ecological Character Description, an Action Plan and a Social Research Report. The first round of incentives for private landholders in high priority locations was determined targeting pest plant and animal control and revegetation. As part of this, 13 landholders were assisted to develop Property Works Plans which included identifying on-ground works to be carried out in the year ahead.

Community engagement activities were also undertaken to raise awareness of the environmental values of the area. Twenty-five events were conducted including field days, planting days and working bees.

Another major Yarra4Life activity in 2014/15 was overseeing the delivery of the first Judith Eardley Yarra Wildlife Grants.



Next steps

Significant landholder assistance and on-ground work, as well as community engagement activities, will continue in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 with the funding allocated to this work from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme. In addition, Yarra4Life will explore the development of an annual community Yarra4Life event and the concept of a Great Yarra Trail.

Case study - Community engagement at Wanderslore

One of Yarra4Life's community engagement activities in 2014/15 was a seminar and walk at the 10-hectare Wanderslore sanctuary at Launching Place at which 50 people learned about wildlife monitoring and how they can undertake conservation work on their own land.

The Wanderslore property was gifted to the Trust for Nature in the 1980's by Miss Constance Coleman as a sanctuary for local wildlife such as wallaby, wombat, echidna, antechinus, possums, bush rats, bats, reptiles and many birds.

Wildlife specialist Ed McNabb educated the participants on the calls of a range of local animals with a focus on owls and mammals. Botanist Dr. Graeme Lorimer explained the importance of monitoring changes in vegetation over time and described some techniques.



Trust for Nature's Ben Cullen co-hosted the community environmental education event at Wanderslore

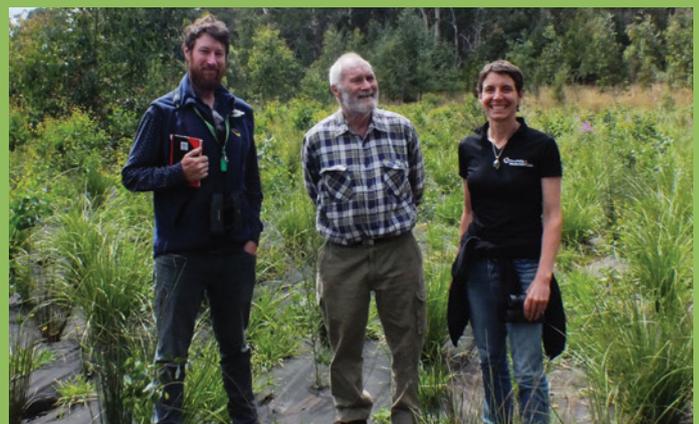
Case study - Judith Eardley Yarra Wildlife Grants

In 2014/15, work commenced to implement the Judith Eardley Yarra Wildlife Grants provided to Greening Australia, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater and Warburton Primary School.

These three partners have shared in \$320,000 that was provided for these grants from the Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association for on-ground environmental works to improve the habitat for native wildlife in the Yarra Ranges.

Greening Australia planted over 115,000 understorey plants across 3 hectares at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve and Warramate Hills. The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater planted over 12,000 seedlings and constructed 2.3 kilometres of fence protecting 1.5 hectares of habitat in and around the reserve.

The Warburton Primary School students and parents removed weeds, constructed paths and undertook revegetation to establish a Sustainability Hub. The Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association raised the money for these grants from its opportunity shop operating in Healesville manned by a dedicated group of environmentally-minded volunteers. The Association honours the late Judith Eardley's passion for native Australian wildlife.



James Fraser, Bob Anderson and Sarah Maclagan amongst revegetation undertaken by the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater as part of its Judith Eardley Yarra Wildlife Grant