



WCPA
WORLD COMMISSION
ON PROTECTED AREAS

IUCN WORLD COMMISSION ON PROTECTED AREAS
OCEANIA
Newsletter No. 2 2020

1. WCPA OCEANIA UPDATE



A sight to raise spirits: Recent use of drones to track turtles has produced remarkable and heartening footage of immense numbers of turtles in north Queensland Photo: Great Barrier Reef Foundation

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/video/2020/jun/10/great-barrier-reef-drone-footage-allows-researchers-to-count-64000-green-sea-turtles-video>

From the world's great rainforests to small parks and gardens, from the blue whale to microscopic fungi, biodiversity is the extraordinary variety of life on Earth. We humans are part of, and fully dependent on, this web of life: it gives us the food we eat, filters the water we drink, and supplies the air we breathe. Nature is as important for our mental and physical wellbeing as it is for our society's ability to cope with global change, health threats and disasters. We need nature in our lives.

Healthy and resilient societies depend on giving nature the space it needs. The recent COVID19 pandemic makes the need to protect and restore nature all the more urgent. The pandemic is raising awareness of the links between our own health and the health of ecosystems. It is demonstrating the need for sustainable supply chains and consumption patterns that do not exceed planetary boundaries. This reflects the fact that the risk of emergence and spread of infectious diseases increases as nature is destroyed. Protecting and restoring biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems is therefore key to boost our resilience and prevent the emergence and spread of future diseases.

<https://tinyurl.com/EU-Bio-Strat>

From the Vice Chair

Dear colleagues, I hope you and your families, friends and communities are well. I thought the above photo of nature in glorious abundance and the clear concise statement from the excellent European Biodiversity strategy, would be an appropriate and cheering header for this newsletter after the grim recent period.

We are living through a great challenge to the world with many implications worldwide for sustainable development and conservation. We know the news is not all negative as humans cope with immense humour and creativity and often rediscover community. We hear marvellous stories of wildlife returning to places now silent and safer, while our species stays home. Clear skies and clean water allow us to see views long lost to pollution, the stars and the mountains. We all hope the lesson is learnt that we must hit the reset button on how we live on earth and enable sharing of the planet with other living things.

Our region of the world has not been as drastically impacted as other regions, but in Australia it comes on top of what was a major disaster for biodiversity and ecosystems, the Black Summer fires. We are strongly supporting the concept promoted by IUCN among others that ecological restoration should be a major component of the recovery investment program. <https://www.iucn.org/news/business-and-biodiversity/202006/iucn-calls-business-put-nature-heart-economic-recovery-plans>

Hopefully all members in whatever roles will also promote this goal. You will note the fine example of New Zealand with 1.1 billion allocated. If we consider our comparative populations, let alone land mass, that should produce a figure of 5.5 billion- we live in hope.

The greatest risk is that the severe economic impacts of the pandemic will be used as a justification for weakening of environmental protections and rapid approval of environmentally destructive development. We understand how serious the economic challenge is but let us all call for investment in a sustainable future, not more damage.

My thanks to WCPA Members Louise O'Flynn, Keith Twyford, Jon Day, Haydn Washington, Mike Williams and Andrew Growcock, for contributions to this newsletter.

News from IUCN

IUCN World Conservation Congress is rescheduled for January. For more detailed update <https://tinyurl.com/IUCN-WCC-update>

Every component of IUCN is working on COVID related initiative. A summary of these efforts can be found in the Acting Director General's latest report which I recently circulated. WCPA is no exception. You have previously received the recent article generated by WCPA. https://parksjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Hockings-et-al-10.2305-IUCN.CH_2020.PARKS-26-1MH.en_-1.pdf

WCPA is also creating a new COVID 19 Task Force to monitor the impacts of COVID on protected areas worldwide. I will shortly be circulating a questionnaire which we are currently developing for Oceania. Also see item below with some good sources.

Representations

It has been a relatively quiet time during COVID but many members have continued their contributions in Specialist groups. After inputs from a variety of members the Vice Chair has submitted a short submission on the review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

We have also written to the NSW Ministers for Environment and Agriculture to express concern over regression in managing marine areas in NSW.

Opportunities for Members

Support the Vice Chair on Twitter

I frequently tweet on protected area topics. I retweet material from IUCN protected Areas, IPBES, UNEP and individual experts. Twitter assists strong pro protected areas information and comments to penetrate much further than the conversations among ourselves so if you use twitter please follow me. My twitter address is @PenelopeFiggis, also if you wish use the handle @IUCN_PA

Webinar Series: Strengthening Protected Area Management Effectiveness

Evaluation of protected area management effectiveness (PAME) is recognized as a vital component of responsive, pro-active protected area management and is an essential component of adaptive management. PAME assessments are primarily important for improving management so that protected area objectives and conservation outcomes are met. As part of continuing to improve best practice, a four-part webinar series has been developed aiming to strengthen and continue connections among protected area practitioners and those involved in the evaluation of management effectiveness for protected areas. It is part of the IUCN WCPA's "Vital Sites: The Journey to Marseille", a 6-month series of online events and multimedia content to run between June 2020 and the rescheduled World Conservation Congress in January 2021.

You can find out more details and register for relevant sessions in the links below.

22 July 2020: [Exploration of the different approaches and tools used in PAME around the world](#)

23 July 2020: [Closing the loop – ensuring management effectiveness assessments lead to better conservation outcomes](#)

29 July 2020: [The IUCN Green List – a standard for conservation of protected and conserved areas](#)

30 July 2020: [Understanding management effectiveness at regional and global scales](#)

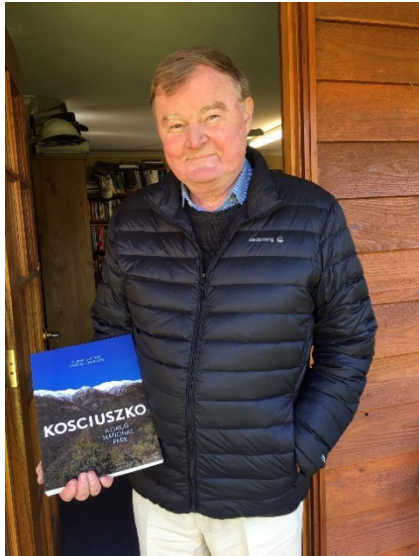
News of Members

Long-term WCPA member and highly regarded natural resource management facilitator Michael Williams has recently been appointed by Commonwealth Minister for the Environment Hon. Sussan Ley and NSW Minister for Environment and Energy Hon. Matt Kean as the Independent Chair of the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Advisory Committee. Willandra Lakes Region was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1981. The 240,000 ha World Heritage property includes Mungo National Park, 130 km north-east of Mildura in south-west NSW.



As a geomorphologist Mike has had a long interest in the story of Mungo Man and the incredible narrative of Willandra's Traditional Owners' continuous living culture for at least the last 50,000 years. He facilitated the agreement-making process that assisted in the repatriation of Mungo Woman and Mungo Man - the oldest known cremation and burial sites in the world. Along with over 100 other Ancestral human remains, Mungo Woman and Mungo Man were repatriated from ANU, and then the Australian National Museum, back to Mungo National Park in November 2017. Mike also facilitated the process that delivered new governance arrangements for the World Heritage property. The 18 person Advisory Committee includes; 17 members, a majority of whom are elected Traditional Owners - Barkandji/Paakantyi, Ngiyampaa and Mutthi Mutthi, along with leaseholders of pastoral properties within the World Heritage property, scientists, local government, NPWS Regional Advisory Committee and tourism members, together with the Independent Chair.

See www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/types-of-protected-areas/world-heritage-listed-areas/willandra-lakes-region



Many of you know Dr Graeme Worboys. Graeme was the chief instigator and editor of the extraordinary WCPA effort the 802 page *Managing Protected Areas: A Global Guide* now translated into Spanish and with a remarkable download of 103,000. Despite serious health issues in recent years, Graeme hasn't rested on his laurels and has worked assiduously on a detailed history of his beloved Kosciuszko National Park. It is a homage to the alpine landscape itself and all the people who have been part of its creation, management and defence over the years.



Also watch a promo on the book here. www.youtube.com

2. INTERNATIONAL NEWS

COVID 19 AND PROTECTED AREAS



The coronavirus pandemic will have immense and long lasting impacts on the conservation of biodiversity and protected areas. In many countries, people have rediscovered the importance of their urban and peri urban green spaces for both mental and physical health.

People have delighted in the stories of clean, clear skies and rivers and wild animals returning to urban areas or once polluted waterways.

However in many nations particularly in

poorer countries the pandemic has created new threats to nature. Nature-based tourism has been important for financing biodiversity conservation creating an incentive against destructive practices and poaching. The abrupt disappearance of tourism income has created many problems

Photo: The Masai women in Masai Mara National Park can earn important income from selling their traditional arts and crafts. Their community as a whole benefits by the approach of the ecotourism operator Basecamp. Without tourism these important funds disappear. The facility has approached previous clients including WCPA members to assist, which they have been happy to do. c. P. Figgis

RESOURCES ON COVID 19 IMPACTS ON NATURE

There are an astonishing number of research papers, editorials, information briefs and workshops being written or organized on the relationship between conservation and the emergence and management of COVID-19. I will not inundate your inboxes with too much information but includes some which are relevant to the WCPA.

A link to a **call to action on Wildlife Trade** - this site represents a broad coalition of experts on wildlife markets. As we all know, position on wildlife trade can be very polarized and challenging. This expert position seems to be very well considered.

<https://preventpandemics.org/>

Zoonotic diseases spill over into the human population when people come into contact with affected wildlife. These diseases originate in animals, but they are spread to people by practices that disrupt the balance of nature and raise the risk of disease transmission."
<https://www.conservation.org/blog/what-does-covid-19-have-to-do-with-nature-these-5-articles-explain>

Humanity's "promiscuous treatment of nature" needs to change or there will be more deadly pandemics such as Covid-19, warn scientists who have analysed the link between viruses, wildlife and habitat destruction.
<https://tinyurl.com/Guardian-mistreatment-nature>

Pandemics like COVID-19 could occur more frequently unless we stop rapidly destroying nature, a group of biodiversity experts has warned.
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/scientists-pandemics-coronavirus-nature-covid19-health/>

The relationship between Covid-19 and protected and conserved areas.
<https://tinyurl.com/mongabay-on-covid>

Impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on biodiversity conservation and tourism
<https://tinyurl.com/covid-tourism>

Conservation implications of COVID19: Effects via tourism and extractive industries
<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0006320720306984>

The relationship between Covid-19 and protected and conserves areas.
<https://tinyurl.com/wildlife-post-covid>

Impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on biodiversity conservation
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S000632072030495X>

Colleagues at the UN Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre have just put out a cogent, accessible set of arguments of how nature conservation can help prevent future human health pandemics.
<https://www.unep-wcmc.org/news/six-ways-conserving-and-sustainably-using-nature-could-prevent-future-pandemics>

COVID ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLANS CALLS TO INVEST IN NATURAL WEALTH

Many countries are seeing their post Covid recovery plans as an opportunity to accelerate their transition to greener, low carbon, sustainable economies and more equitable, healthy societies. The opposite approach - short term promotion of any activity which might generate income or provide a job, is a major threat to real progress away from environmental destruction with all its consequences to humanity and all species. Let's hope the world will follow the following examples:

CANADA

Canadian PM Justin Trudeau has called for a green recovery from Covid addressing both climate change and Biodiversity benefits.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6905894/coronavirus-governments-recovery-green-route-study/>

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand has made an outstanding job of managing the pandemic and now looks like showing leadership on the economic stimulus investments. The small nation of just 5million people is investing 1.1 billion dollars into 'jobs for nature' including building infrastructure in national parks, weed control, and freshwater restoration (see item below)

EUROPEAN UNION

European leaders have called for green investment to restart growth after the coronavirus pandemic. A group of 180 political decision-makers, business leaders, trade unions, campaign groups and think tanks have urged the bloc to adopt green stimulus measures.

European politicians, companies, lawmakers and activists called for green investment to restart growth after the coronavirus pandemic, saying fighting climate change and promoting biodiversity would rebuild stronger economies.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan's government are offering labourers, who are out of work due to the coronavirus lockdown, a chance to earn money by planting trees. The project is part of Pakistan's existing initiative to plant billions of trees to counter the effects of climate change.

Pakistan is badly affected by climate change, experiencing more than 150 extreme weather events between 1999 and 2018. Tens of thousands of out-of-work labourers will find relief in planting billions of trees across the country to deal with climate change threats.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/green-stimulus-pakistan-trees-coronavirus-covid10-environment-climate-change>

UPDATE PLANNING OF THE CONVENTION ON BIODIVERSITY

As most members are aware the highly significant Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties (CBD COP) 15 has been delayed by the pandemic and is now expected to take place in mid-2021. In 2021 the CBD COP will adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework as a stepping stone towards the [2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with nature"](#). The CBD has adopted a comprehensive and participatory process for the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/european-politicians-ceos-lawmakers-urge-green-coronavirus-recovery>

The process adopted by Parties to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework contains a set of principles to guide its implementation, an organization of work and sets out a comprehensive consultation process, including provisions for global, regional and thematic consultation meetings. An [information note](#) on ways and means to contribute to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework has been developed to provide background information and to outline various opportunities for Parties, other Governments, and all relevant organizations and stakeholders to participate. More information:

<https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020>

<https://tinyurl.com/CBDpost2020>

3. AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL NEWS

FIRE DISASTER NSW & VICTORIAN RESPONSEs

Post the catastrophic 2019/20 Black Summer fires which had particularly severe impacts on NSW and Victoria both governments are implementing emergency recovery plans to protect and restore wildlife populations. The NSW plan includes:

- a large-scale program of inventory surveys and monitoring to locate refugial populations and track the success of these interventions.
- rapid assessment to identify the proportion of habitat that had been lost for key threatened species, and to identify the critical remaining habitat areas. Interventions to protect threatened species habitat.
- emergency phase supplementary food, shelter and water for brush-tailed rock wallabies and watering points for koalas and other species were provided.
- Feral animal control including the largest fox baiting programs in the state's history, targeted trapping and shooting of feral cats and other control measures.

- Intensive weed control to protect sensitive habitats from invasive weeds like bitou bush and orange hawkweed
- NPWS is also providing advice and support to wildlife rehabilitators and carers. In November 2019 NSW provided an additional \$1.47 million support for volunteer wildlife rehabilitators

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/about-npws/fire-recovery-2020>
<https://johnmenadue.com/paul-collins-a-new-era-of-fire-part-2/>

The Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has developed a report on the impact of the Victorian fires on biodiversity. The report found the Victorian fires have burnt mostly in areas that have high biodiversity value with at least 60 per cent of over 50 National parks and nature conservation reserves in Victoria impacted. Informed by the report, the Victorian Government has taken immediate action to support Victoria's bushfire impacted wildlife and biodiversity with a \$17.5 million funding package to assist Phase 1 of the Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery program.

There are over 170 Victorian rare or threatened species that have had more than 50 per cent of their habitat effected. This includes 13 species listed under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. 70 per cent of the Warm Temperate Rainforest was within the fire extent. A significant area of habitat across Victoria has now burnt multiple times since 2000 with one result being the potential failure of Alpine Ash regeneration. Species and vegetation communities of most immediate concern include the Long-footed Potoroo, Ground Parrot, Glossy Black-cockatoo, Large Brown Tree Frog, Diamond Python, Freshwater Galaxiids, Colquhoun Grevillea, Betka Bottlebrush and Warm Temperate Rainforest.
<https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/home/biodiversity-bushfire-response-and-recovery>

BABY BILBIES BORN AT AWC REFUGE

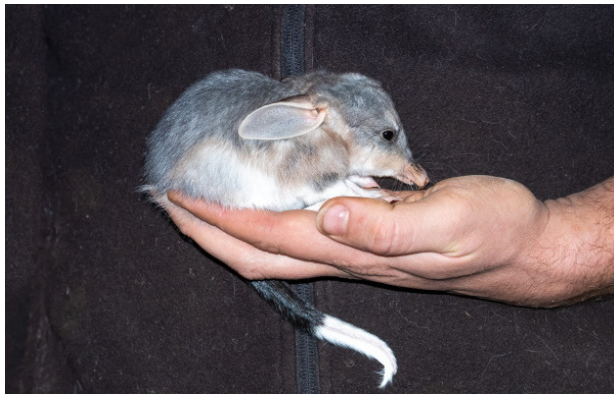


Photo: AWC ecologists captured 53 individuals during the last survey and 21 were not marked, meaning some of them were conceived and born at Mallee Cliffs. *Photo: B Leue/AWC*

Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) and the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS) have a ground-breaking partnership project to save endangered species. They are very happy that baby Bilbies are being born at Mallee Cliffs National Park. Until the partnership reintroduced Bilbies to the

Pilliga State Conservation Area in 2018 and Mallee Cliffs in 2019, this iconic Australian mammal had not been seen at either site for more than 100 years.

The Bilbies were released into feral predator-free breeding areas and will ultimately be released into a 9,570-hectare fenced area at Mallee Cliffs which will be the largest safe haven of its kind on mainland Australia.

This partnership will ultimately see ten regionally extinct and nationally threatened mammal species reintroduced to the state, including the Western Quoll, Red-tailed Phascogale, Numbat, Shark Bay Bandicoot and Bettongs.

<https://www.australianwildlife.org/nsw-welcomes-new-generation-of-bilbies/>

'HUGE' MARINE PARK ESTATE OF NSW UNDER THREAT



Many WCPA members in our region are marine experts. You are all keenly aware that the oceans and marine dependent wildlife need more and better protection rather than less. This is not only crucial for fish species to recover and thrive but for other species like whales, seals, penguins and seabirds to also have healthy populations. According to Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) only 7% of NSW is fully protected. However, Minister for

Agriculture, Mr Adam Marshall, who has responsibility for 'conserving marine biological diversity and marine habitats', clearly says in this video that as the marine park estate is 'huge' and there will be no more marine parks declared and he is keen to further roll back protection in other marine parks in NSW. WCPA has written to the government to protest this assertion.

Photo: c. Colin Leel

<https://www.fishingworld.com.au/news/video-nsw-minister-for-agriculture-says-no-more-marine-parks>

We view with particular concern the specific removal of no take zones from Bateman's Bay NP the location of Montague Island, an IUCN Green listed island for its good management. The removal of full protection in surrounding waters is likely to impact on the health of the populations of the island which make it a major drawcard for south coast tourism.

The AMCS is encouraging people to write letters to the government.

<https://www.marineconservation.org.au/actions/dont-cut-nsw-sanctuaries/>

SHARK BAY AT RISK FROM CLIMATE CHANGE



The environmental and socioeconomic vulnerability of Shark Bay (or Gatharragudu meaning 'two-waters') has been assessed using a Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) developed by Scott Heron and Jon Day at James Cook University.

Photo: Big Lagoon Cheryl Cowell
DBCA Parks & Wildlife WA

The CVI report (<http://www.wamsi.org.au/cvi-shark-bay>) shows that Shark Bay has High Vulnerability to the potential impacts of three key climate stressors - Air Temperature Change, Storm Intensity and Frequency, and Extreme Marine Heat Events - by 2050, with a low capacity for the system to adapt to climate change.

Climate change was also shown to have a high degree of impact on the Shark Bay community, both socially and economically. Around 100,000 tourists visit Shark Bay each year to see dolphins, turtles, dugongs and the world's most extensive population of active stromatolites. The CVI assessment considered the economic dependence of key business types in the area, the local population's connection with the area, and the capacity of the community to adapt to climate change. Shark Bay is one of Australia's 20 World Heritage properties, and one of only four marine properties in the world that meets all [four natural criteria for World Heritage listing](#).

KOSCIUSZKO – OUR ALPINE ICON PARK HAS MULTIPLE PROBLEMS

Kosciuszko maybe one of most beloved icon parks but it has more than its fair share of challenges.

Snowy 2 is Australia's largest development in a protected area. There has been a flurry of articles on Snowy 2.0 these past months with concerns still being raised over the environmental impacts of the huge Snowy 2 energy storage plans and also many questions being asked about its value for money and whether adequate attention has gone into alternative expenditures for the estimated 5.1 billion dollars

<https://tinyurl.com/yc75h9nn>:

The following are some recent articles which outline the concerns:

"Conservationists question fast-tracking of Snowy 2.0 in order to save COVID-19 hit economy", Alasdair McDonald, Bega District News, 12 May 2020

<https://tinyurl.com/Bega-article->

"Snowy 2.0: It's all downhill", Gary Dunnett, The Australian, 13 May 2020

<https://tinyurl.com/Snowy-2-Dunnet>

"Let 'er rip!: Snowy 2.0 project now an integrity test for Gladys Berejiklian", Quentin Dempster, Crikey, Pearls and Irritations, 13 May 2020 –

<https://tinyurl.com/Dempster-article>

Post fire Brumby issues



The battle to remove feral horses from Australia's 'protected' high country continues. A feral ravaged Kosciuszko NP was also very seriously affected by the summer fires. Despite some movement by the NSW govt post fires there is still major concern as damage continues.

The link below is a new report prepared by Ian Pulsford, Graeme Worboys and Dave Darlington all of whom have worked over the last 30-40 years in

Kosciuszko National Park following a field inspection on 3-4 March 2020 to the Mt Pilot area south of Thredbo in Kosciuszko National Park. Bob Debus accompanied Dave Darlington and Graeme Worboys on the inspection. As expected the scale of feral horse impacts is increasing, particularly along treeless drainage lines as the horse and deer population have increased significantly over recent years. The report is published on the Australian Alps National Parks web site.

<https://tinyurl.com/alps-ctments>

<https://aboutregional.com.au/feral-horse-legal-action-delaying-the-inevitable/>

Photo: Horse trampling impacts to the same stream banks, headwaters of the Ingeegoodbee River near Tin Mines Hut, Kosciuszko National Park, 3 March 2020 (Source: Ian Pulsford).



KALBARRI NP GETS SPECTACULAR LOOKOUTS

The Kalbarri Skywalk in Kalbarri National Park WA opened on 12 June 2020. Kalbarri National Park is an iconic location, famous for its 80-kilometre gorge, coastal cliffs that plunge more than 100 metres to the ocean, striking wildflowers and many recreational activities. The \$24 million project is to provide a major tourism boost for the Mid-West region.

Annual visits to the national park have increased by almost 100,000 over the past five years to more than 450,000 last year. For the Nanda Traditional Owners, the facility showcases their culture and stories through interpretive and artistic elements.

<https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/news/wait-over-kalbarri-skywalk-opens>

HEALTHY COUNTRY THE AIM FOR RENAMED REWILDING PROJECT



The Great Southern Ark, an innovative land management project on southern Yorke Peninsula, South Australia has been renamed Marna Banggara to honour Traditional Custodians, the Narungga People.

The project's aim is to improve economic and agricultural outcomes by enhancing biodiversity and the health of the district's ecology. The southern Yorke Peninsula's distinctive geography as a 'mainland island'

makes it an ideal area for these translocations. It is surrounded by sea on three sides with uninterrupted farmland to the north, providing an isolated area that also has large areas of high-quality native vegetation. Photo: Garry Goldsmith

Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation Business Manager Garry Goldsmith said renaming using their language means there's a sense of support from the wider community acknowledging the Narungga people as the Traditional Owners, who have looked after this Country for thousands of years.

Marna Banggara is based on a model of rewilding that involves returning native species that can help restore the landscape's ecological function. It is unique from most other rewilding projects in that the project area is part of a working landscape, where agriculture, local business, the community and reintroduced species will co-exist.

After a decade of planning, the first locally extinct species, the Brush-tailed bettong, is due to be released on southern Yorke Peninsula in autumn next year. In preparation, the project team is continuing its fox and feral cat control and monitoring activities.

<https://tinyurl.com/Marna-Banggara>

4. NEW ZEALAND NEWS

NEW ZEALAND 1.1 BILLION FOR TRANSFORMATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS?

New Zealand's 2019 [state of the environment report](#) highlighted deep concerns about trends in biodiversity conservation, greenhouse gas emissions and freshwater health.

<https://tinyurl.com/NZ-budget>

Hence there has been considerable praise for the post covid budget allocating 1.1 billion over 5 years to environmental restoration.

\$433m for freshwater restoration

\$200m for a "Jobs for Nature" partnership between DOC & others

\$154m for conservation work by DOC & others

\$147.5m for pest control/PFNZ

\$100m for wilding conifer work

\$40m for pest/weed control in Crown land and rivers

However there has been criticism that it said little about climate change and there are concerns as there are in many countries that COVID recovery funding could lead to fast tracking projects which are not assets to sustainability goals and could create a legacy of problems for the next generation. Kevin Hague, CEO of Forest and Bird has said the \$20b infrastructure fund need to deliver nature-friendly infrastructure that cuts New Zealand's

greenhouse gas emissions and delivers a transformation of fishing, farming, and forestry into a genuinely sustainable primary sector.

FRESHWATER RECOVERY IS MAJOR PRIORITY

With ninety-four percent of urban and 82 percent of New Zealand's pastoral rivers unsuitable for swimming at some point of the year, 90% of wetlands drained and destroyed; and 76% of native freshwater fish heading towards extinction there has been high public support for water reforms.

In announcing the reforms would go ahead despite COVID stresses on farmers Environment Minister David Parker said "The most salient environmental issue for a number of elections was actually freshwater, New Zealanders were worried that they were losing what they see as their birthright through the degradation of our waterways."

The plan includes:

- Limits on farm practices deemed higher-risk, such as winter grazing and feed lots, and interim limits on agricultural intensification.
- A national cap on the use of synthetic fertiliser will also be imposed, to be reviewed in three years.
- From July 2023 all cattle and pigs will have to be kept out of waterways more than a metre wide.

But some rules of around fencing and nitrate levels have been softened. Forest & Bird Chief Executive Kevin Hague has said that a simple national bottom line for nitrogen and phosphorus pollution is missing from the freshwater reform package" It's vital that a national limit for nitrogen pollution in our rivers is set. Most freshwater scientists believe it should be there. The proxies and measures in the reforms leave too much to chance,"

5. PACIFIC ISLAND & PNG NEWS

COOK ISLAND PERMITS DEEP SEE MINING EXPLORATION

In a concerning move the Cook Islands government is allowing miners to prospect for minerals on its seabed, with possible mining occurring within five years. The government justifies the decision on the need to ease the country's economic dependence on tourism, which has been hard hit by COVID 19 -related travel restrictions. Scientists, environmental advocates including our colleagues in Te Ipukarea have expressed alarm at the plan and warned of potentially disastrous ecosystem impacts that could also hurt local fisheries. <http://www.tiscookislands.org/perch/resources/te-ipukarea-society-newsletter-may-2020.pdf>

SEPIK CHIEFS CHALLENGE PNGS LARGEST MINE



An Australian-registered miner ultimately owned by the Chinese state-owned Guangdong Rising Assets Management, has proposed building a vast gold, silver and copper mine on the Frieda river, a tributary to the Sepik. The mine would be the largest in PNG's history, and one of the largest in the world, covering 16,000 hectares, and is forecast to yield gold, silver and copper worth an estimated US\$1.5bn a year for more than 30 years.

Photo: Locals protest against mine at PNG's Sepik river region. Photograph: Project Sepik

The Sepik is a river of immense importance providing diverse habitats and extensive lake systems and providing the livelihoods of approximately 500,000 people who depend almost entirely on products from the rivers and forests for their livelihoods.

The river is also of immense cultural importance. Leading to the strong opposition from the Haus tambarans - the cultural and political hub of villages in the Sepik region. In an unprecedented move, the 28 haus tambarans issued a collective [Supreme Sukundimi Declaration](#) calling for "a total ban on the Frieda river mine".

It said: "The river is the life of the Sepik and therefore it must be protected at all cost. It is our innate role to guard the river from exploitation and destruction by outsiders. Our future is in peril from this proposed mine and, therefore, we have gathered together as guardians of the river to stand firm."