

NATURAL HERITAGE

REHABILITATION OF THE AVON REGION

Laura Colman, *Natural Heritage*

The Avon Natural Resource Management (NRM) Region retains just 13.2% of its original vegetation; however, this area continues to exhibit astounding biodiversity, with many species found exclusively in the region. More than 40% of the remaining native vegetation occurs on private land and the National Trust is working with landowners, the Avon Catchment Council, WWF Australia and other environmental groups to conserve this valuable natural asset.

The Avon is one of six NRM regions in Western Australia, covering an area of 11.8 million hectares. More than 60% of the region is agricultural and its high proportion of cleared land has led to widespread salinity. Native plants are adapted to be efficient at collecting and using rainwater; consequently, very little drains away into groundwater. The removal of native plants means that the majority of rainwater enters the groundwater system, resulting in rising water tables, which bring the natural salt deposits to the surface.

Despite widespread clearing and land degradation, the Avon region is home to an incredible range of flora and fauna species, earning it recognition as part of an international biodiversity hotspot. There are 34 hotspots in total, only one of which occurs in Australia, making the conservation of the Avon's natural heritage especially significant.

The National Trust is adopting a holistic approach to conservation in the Avon region, targeting areas that will contribute to the rehabilitation of the region as a whole. Properties that provide habitat for threatened species, link existing bushland or contribute to salinity containment across the catchment are of particular interest. The Trust works closely with the Avon NRM Council and environmental groups, such as WWF Australia, to identify areas of interest and explore possible solutions.

AVON ICONS:

BLACK-FLANKED ROCK WALLABY (*Petrogale lateralis*)

Black-flanked Rock Wallabies were once common in central and southern Western Australia; however, the species is now threatened and only exists in small, isolated populations. The National Trust is working to create links between existing Rock Wallaby populations by extending habitat. A number of conservation tools will be employed in order to achieve this, including revolving funds, conservation covenants and land donations.

CARNABY'S BLACK COCKATOO (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*)

Carnaby's Black Cockatoos are endemic (exclusive) to Western Australia and have become endangered due to loss of habitat. Carnaby's Cockatoos breed in the Wheatbelt and nest in the hollows of Eucalypt trees, many of which have been cleared to make way for development and agriculture. The National Trust is working to protect the habitat of Carnaby's Cockatoos through conservation covenants and partnerships with other organisations.



Male and Female Carnaby's Black Cockatoo, L Lauri, Birds Australia.

MORTLOCK RIVER

The Mortlock River has been identified as a regional priority under the Avon NRM strategy, due to its landscape and ecological significance. A recent assessment of the river by the Department of Environment and Conservation uncovered its poor state of health, which has been largely attributed to unsustainable land use and poor management. The National Trust is exploring opportunities to contribute to the rehabilitation of the Mortlock, in partnership with the Avon Catchment Council.

References:

http://www.avonnrm.org.au/about_us/regional_profile/biodiversity.html
<http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/Hotspots>
<http://www.carnabyscockatoo.org/>
http://www.naturebase.net/plants_animals/pdf_files/sp_black-flanked_rock-wallaby.pdf#search=%22Black-flanked%20Rock-wallaby%20petrogale%22
<http://www.nrm.gov.au/state/wa/avon/publications/report-card/index.html>

CONDITIONAL CONSERVATION COVENANTS

Louise Leigh, *Natural Heritage*



Monson Property, Yallingup. Unknown.

Conservation Covenants provide an invaluable source of protection for our native bushland in Western Australia. The National Trust of Australia (WA), through its Conservation Covenant Program has to date registered 95 covenants over approximately 43000 hectares of privately owned Western Australian land comprising in whole or part native bushland. The Covenant Team is gearing up for many more registrations over the coming months working towards 100 registered covenants in WA.

Whilst the Conservation Covenant Program normally operates on a voluntary basis with the specific purpose of assisting landowners with the protection and sustainable management of the bushland on their property, use of conservation covenants as a tool to assist government agencies in land use planning and environmental evaluations has grown over the years. This includes situations where the covenant is set as a condition of subdivision by a regulatory agency such as the Western Australian Planning Commission.

In these cases subdivision approval is often granted upon registration of a conservation covenant on the landowner's title.

GENERAL

The landowner is arguably motivated by the desire for development approval, however, in the National Trust's experience, the motivation can be for the preservation of existing bushland, landowners who take the responsibility of ongoing management and conservation of existing flora and fauna seriously.

Conservation of Western Australian bushland remains the primary focus behind the The National Trust of Australia (WA) covenant program. However, the Trust recognises that development of rural land in particular is becoming more and more commonplace.

Whilst commercial gains are made, our conditional covenants have embraced the conservation values approach more often than not. Jenny Monson for example, with whom the Trust has recently registered two conditional conservation covenants.

Jenny entered the covenant arena as a result of an application to rezone her land in Yallingup from Agriculture to Conservation and Special Provision Area (SPA). As part of the SPA, subdivision and development was to be granted in accordance with strict guidelines provided for in the Town Planning and Development Act 1928.

One such requirement was that the property, occupying a unique south-facing location on the Leeuwin Naturalist Ridge and consisting of high quality remnant vegetation covering the majority of the site be conserved and enhanced by the adoption of a restrictive conservation covenant over the property.

Jenny embraced negotiations with The National Trust of Australia (WA) to conditional covenant her land but more importantly, Jenny recognised the buck did not stop there

Far from this, Jenny accepted the unique way in which The National Trust of Australia (WA) ensures long term management of its covenanted land.

By signing a separate Deed of agreement with The National Trust of Australia (WA) and permitting the registration of a caveat on title, Jenny took protection of the bushland to a new level in that subsequent purchasers of her land would be alerted not only to the existence of a restrictive covenant but to the existence of ongoing management relations with the Trust through the Deed.

Jenny has gone on to sell one of her subdivided lots and because of her acknowledgement of a need for ongoing conservation has ensured this unique area of the world will remain so under the continued guidance of The National Trust of Australia (WA) for all time.

COUNTRY DELIGHTS AT WOODBRIDGE WINS THE *POSTCARDS WA* "BEST SUNDAY BREAKFAST SPOT"

Last month Sarah and Alex Brown's *Country Delights at Woodbridge* was voted Perth's top provider of Sunday breakfasts. The presenter's decision was based on quality, value, service and the venue's ambience. Visit *Country Delights* one day soon at Ford Street, West Midland – it's open every day, including Saturday nights, but closed on Wednesdays. Make sure you make time to visit Woodbridge, built 1883/5 (open 1-4pm every day but closed Mondays and Wednesdays).



Country Delights, H Waldmann.

For more information or reservations phone *Country Delights* on 9274 1469.

VACANT VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Clerical Volunteer: An enthusiastic volunteer is needed for the National Trust's Heritage services area to carry out routine filing, photocopying, and media monitoring. If you have one day a week free and are passionate about records please contact Robert on 9321 6088 or email robert.mitchell@ntwa.com.au

Data Entry Volunteer: The National Trust is seeking a person with data entry skills to enter data from paper records into the National Trust's Heritage Database. If you have at least half a day free each week to volunteer and are passionate about heritage contact Robert on 9321 6088 or email robert.mitchell@ntwa.com.au

Introduce a new member and you could WIN

Win a weekend escape for two in the Perth Hills. Escape for two days to the Perth Hills and indulge yourself. Two nights accommodation at Mundaring Weir Hotel including breakfast, champagne on arrival, lunch at a Hills Cafe and dinner at the Mahogany Inn as well as a National Trust Outdoor Kit. Conditions apply.

Contact Zoe on zoe.lawrence@ntwa.com.au for an application form today.

