

NATURAL HERITAGE

THE THOMPSONS

Bordering Alan and Marrion Elliott's property is a remarkable patch of the National Trust covenanted remnant bushland containing wetland owned by Val and Peter Thompson. Having fallen in love with the property in 2005 Val and Peter finally purchased the land in 2006.

The previous landowner made the decision to subdivide and sell off part of his land. The WA Planning Commission stipulated that a conservation covenant be placed on the bushland as a requirement of the subdivision. There is a choice of conservation covenant programs in WA and these are run by the National Trust, the Department of Agriculture and Food and the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

In this case, the former landowner chose to covenant his property with the National Trust. The covenant was in place before Val and Peter purchased the property. Far from being scared away by the thought of a restrictive conservation covenant on their title, Val and Peter saw this as a very positive mechanism for the future conservation of the site. Rather than acting as a deterrent to prospective buyers, the existence of the conservation covenant in this instance has been a great selling point. As a result of the subdivision and subsequent implementation of the conservation covenant, this important parcel of land containing remnant bushland and wetland has now passed into the hands of a couple who are not only committed to preserving the existing biodiversity values, but will actively work to further improve, regenerate and protect the site.

As Val and Peter embark on an exciting and rewarding future in conservation, they will have the support and resources of the

National Trust at their disposal. In the coming months they can look forward to meeting our Stewardship Officer, Steve Newbey, who will work together with them to develop a Management Plan for their site that fits in with their plans and ideas. These will include fencing off the wetland area, improving vegetation in the buffer zone, weed control and addressing the dieback problem. They can also count on the assistance and support of DEC, WWF-Australia and many other local organisations committed to preserving what little remnant bushland is left in an increasingly developed area.



Remnant bushland on Val and Peter Thompson's property, J Dalby/National Trust.



Val and Peter Thompson with their new National Trust covenant sign. J Dalby/National Trust.

WORKING STRATEGICALLY

The National Trust's Conservation Covenant Program receives a steady stream of enquiries from landowners interested in protecting the native bushland on their property. These enquiries are often generated through the range of networks and partnerships that the National Trust has been working to establish since the Covenant Program was officially launched in 1999.

Existing covenants are a major asset to the National Trust in the promotion of the program and word of mouth has proved to be an extremely effective way to communicate the benefits of conservation covenants to other landowners. The Trust also works in partnership with other conservation organisations to spread the word through established networks.

This approach allows the National Trust to work strategically in order to target potential covenants in specific areas. While every covenant makes an important contribution to the conservation of Western Australia's natural heritage, certain areas are particularly significant due to their high biodiversity values or fragmentation.

SOUTH WEST REGION

The South West region has exceptionally high biodiversity values, supporting many species of Western Australia's endemic flora and fauna. The area also contains four wetland systems that are recognised internationally for their significance. These values require protection and active management to counteract the impact of threats, which include salinity and invasive species¹.

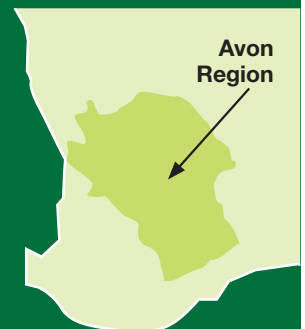
The National Trust of Australia (WA) in partnership with private landowners and environmental groups in the region have ensured the protection of approximately 7503 hectares of remnant native bushland via conservation covenants.



AVON REGION

The Avon region has been extensively cleared, retaining just 13.2% of its original native vegetation. Despite this, the area retains significant biodiversity values, containing many species that are endemic to the region. As approximately 43% of the remaining native vegetation in the region occurs on private land, the National Trust is working closely with landowners and other organisations to provide legal protection and management services for this important natural asset².

The National Trust Covenant Program has negotiated 26 conservation covenants in the Avon region (inclusive of Geraldton Sandplains), protecting 3198 hectares of remnant native bushland including a site at the National Trust's Central Greenough Historic Settlement. Due to developing strategic partnerships in the Avon, this figure is set to increase.



¹ Retrieved 25 June 2007 from <http://www.nrm.gov.au/nrm/wa-swwa.html>

² Retrieved 25 June 2007 from http://www.avonnrm.org.au/about_us/regional_profile/biodiversity.html