

WETTENHALL ENVIRONMENT TRUST
THIRTIETH **ANNUAL REPORT — 2026**



WETTENHALL ENVIRONMENT TRUST

An environment organisation and perpetual charitable trust, the Wettenhall Environment Trust's objective is to support projects that enhance or maintain the vitality and diversity of the Australian natural living environment.

For over half a century, Norman Wettenhall was devoted to ornithology and conservation. In November 2000 Norman died and, once again, we open our Annual Report with family reflections from his funeral, which captured his lifelong love for the Australian landscape and his deep connection to its birds and plants.

These reflections drew upon bird metaphors to portray Norman's character. He was an eagle — far-sighted, wide-ranging and visionary — seeing opportunities others might miss. Joan, his wife, preferred to think of him as a bright and sociable parrot, compassionate and generous rather than predatory. Others saw in him the bowerbird, a meticulous collector of art, books, and used stamps for the Red Cross; the owl, wise, always seeking knowledge; and the Willie Wagtail, energetic, curious and constantly engaged.

Norman's influence reached far beyond his personal passions. He played a major role in shaping many of Melbourne's key cultural and environmental institutions. He served on the inaugural Council of the Australian Conservation Foundation and chaired the Victorian Conservation Trust (now Trust for Nature) through its early years. He was founding chairman of Heide Park and Art Gallery, helping transform it into a leading space for Australian modern art. He was also a founding member and deputy president of the Museum of Victoria and spent two decades with the National Trust of Victoria, where he served as vice-president and chaired its Landscape Preservation Council.

Following his naval service in 1945, he joined the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union. In 1997, he sold his remarkable natural history library to establish the Norman Wettenhall Foundation — now the Wettenhall Environment Trust — dedicated to the protection of birds and their habitats.

More than a quarter of a century later, we again acknowledge Norman for shaping a collaborative, enduring approach to environmental care. His legacy lives on through the many successful projects the Trust continues to fund, sustained by wise investment and generous donations.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT



This annual report highlights nine small environment grants that received full marks in their reports back to the Trust.

We ask grant recipients to report at completion of the project, approximately 12 months after the grant is allocated and it is often remarkable what has been achieved.

Reading about the difference a grant has made is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a trustee.

We find we are supporting dedicated and resourceful researchers and volunteers, prepared to pursue an idea and make it happen, helping to protect and restore our environment in so many different ways.

In the 2025/2026 financial year, small environmental grants ranged from $2,000 to $50,000, 27 such grants on average receiving approximately $9,775.

In addition, two landscape restoration grants were allocated as were two for leadership development.

We have gradually been able to increase our giving, thanks to donations and a healthy portfolio, managed so well for us by ACCRU financing. Our goal is to keep increasing giving, if and when, we receive applications of high quality.

Using a scoring matrix and ranking system, trustees critically assess each application that comes to us via Beth Mellick, our inimitable Executive Director (who filters out ones that are not suitable). When we reach our funding limit for that quarter, some must be rejected, but the plan is to lift the limit, allowing for more good projects to be funded.

To be 'good', a project has to address our strategic goal, which is to directly make positive changes to biodiversity conservation in Australia, with short term outputs and long-term objectives and values. This can be achieved through monitoring, recording and sharing data, delivering community education, providing community capacity building (e.g. training) and research and science.

We prioritise collaborative grassroots partnerships as we believe they give the best chance for ensuring custodianship for the positive biodiversity changes that applicants' seek.

The application questions are reviewed by trustees regularly because we want the process to be simple, but to clearly highlight the project's relevance and impact.

This last year we have given another large grant of $50,000, thanks to a donation. Last year it went to Winton Wetlands for the Growling Grass Frog project. This year it is to Trust for Nature and Zoos Vic for their collaborative project on the Plains-wanderer (see page 16).

The difference donations make is substantial, helping us to maintain our corpus and therefore the interest we can use for funding. Thank you very much to all our current donors and the past ones (who we hope may join with us again).

The need for philanthropic funding such as ours is great, especially as many sources of federal and state funding for those out there doing on-ground work in the environment sector have dried up completely or are precarious short-term funds.

In addition, apparently less than 4% of total philanthropic giving goes to the environment according to the Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network (AEGN).

Meanwhile biodiversity attention becomes more urgent each day, not only to prevent further loss, increase resilience in preparation for further onslaughts (e.g. bird flu), but also enhance climate mitigation. Climate change is connected tightly to loss of biodiversity, undeniably linked. By protecting and enhancing biodiversity, natural ecosystems can absorb and store vast amounts of carbon dioxide.

The United Nations Climate Action document has the headline: 'Biodiversity — our strongest natural defense against climate change'. (https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/biodiversity). So, any would-be donors that are worried about climate change, please consider our Trust and help us to make a difference.

This annual report includes a summary of our donor event at Domain House, Royal Botanic Gardens, where about 70 supporters were captivated by the world of fungi as presented by our keynote speakers and laid out on several demonstration tables. See page 20.

The financial report on page 23 has been prepared by our newest Trustee Roly Wettenhall who is a chartered accountant, and according to Beth Mellick, he has made her life much easier. We are extremely confident that the financial reporting is complete and accurate and thank them both for their diligence.

On that note, I will complete this report with a huge thank you to Beth for her 20 years with WET. Her exceptional ecological insight and sharp economic acumen keep us focused and confident that our work is truly worthwhile.

Jane Halliday
WET Chair

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees meet and make decisions about awarding grants, they review grantee final reports, they make decisons about policy and our investments, and stay abreast of news in the sector. The team carries out annual strategic planning, and tries to go away on a field trip. Many thanks to our committed and knowledgeable Trustees, who spend a considerable amount of time assessing and scoring applications and final reports. Each Trustee brings with them skills and knowledge in particular areas.

Our latest Board news is that Roland Wettenhall, known to us as Roly, was successfully approved as a board member. Roly is a forensic accountant and is supervising our financial management. He takes up the role of Finance Chair. See his report on page 22.

Photos: left to right are Jane Halliday (Chair), Gib Wettenhall, Geoff Park, Adam Wettenhall, Libby Rumpff, Trudy Wyse, Cecilia Myers, Digby Race and Roland Wettenhall












EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

I'm so pleased to be able to bring you the 30th annual report in my 20th year here at Wettenhall Environment Trust. I've learnt so much over this time, but I still continue to learn and grow.

This year I have been working with the Board to look at, and assess, the potential impacts that our grants are having on biodiversity conservation.

As part of this work, I started a course with the Centre for Social Impact called "Giving in Complexity". I'm hoping that this course will help me with further developing our granting evaluation framework, and thinking around good grantmaking, potential granting impacts, and intentionality.

WET Board member and bird fanatic, Geoff Park, ran a program called *Life with Birds* at this year's Castlemaine State Festival. Some of the proceeds from this series of workshops has been donated to the Wettenhall Environment Trust. With these funds, WET will work with other bird fanatics and ecologists in and around Castlemaine to develop a bio-acoustic bird monitoring project.

The project aims to go beyond normal bird surveys, and collect deep data on bird activity in the Muckleford forest (Box and Ironbark woodlands) using 24 hour sound recorders. The data collected will be analysed and assessed to find out what bird species are in the forest each season. The data will help to understand how changing weather patterns are affecting bird breeding and movement in the area.



Photo: Wettenhall board member, Gib Wettenhall, with Executive Director, Beth Mellick, out looking for Swift Parrots at the Muckleford trestle bridge in central Victoria

Indeed, new technologies and techniques are now in-built into many research and monitoring projects. Many of our grants involve sound recorders, advanced cameras, AI-driven software, and eDNA profilling.

Citizen science is being performed at a more technical level, and it will be interesting to see where it takes us, who will become Australia's new citizen scientists, and what role they will play with more advanced technology and expertise at their fingertips.

Beth Mellick, Executive Director

GRANT MAKING ACTIVITIES 2025/2026

Wettenhall Environment Trust has three grants programs — the Small Environmental Grant Scheme (SEGS), the Landscape Restoration Program, and the Leadership Development Grants program.

After grants are awarded, they are recorded in a database, and coded by the 'issue' and the 'category' so we can keep a track of what kinds of things we are supporting. Some grants, of course, can cover more than one issue, or more than one category, but they have been coded as best represents the outcomes of the grant.

TOTAL GRANTS for 2025/2026 = 31
TOTAL AMOUNT for 2025/2026 = $339,134

ISSUES



Fauna $157,136
(46%)



Flora $38,032
(12%)



Flora & Fauna $51,679
(15%)



Landscape restoration $56,988
(17%)



Marine $35,299
(10%)

CATEGORIES



Research & Science $222,987
(66%)



Community capacity $75,206
(22%)



Community education $40,941
(12%)

SUPPORT FOR LEADERS IN CONSERVATION

WELA (Women's Environmental Leadership Australia) Wettenhall Environment Trust Scholarship

WELA is a national leadership program for women working or volunteering in the environment sector. The training they receive gives participants skills, knowledge and confidence to lead environmental projects.

WET has set up a WELA scholarship. We want to support women who are working in the field of nature conservation. If applicants, or the organisation they work for, don't have the capacity to pay for their participation in the program, we can help them with our scholarship.

This year we supported Andrea de Kauwe from the Southern Otway Landcare Network and the Conservation Ecology Centre.

https://wela.org.au/programs/wela-national-program/scholarships/



WELA recipient, Andrea de Kauwe

Australian Wildlife Conservancy Intern Program

AWC is a global leader in conservation, managing sancturaries across more than 12.9 million hectares. They implement and practice on-ground conservation to protect wildlife.
The intern program offers university graduates the opportunity to work on one of their properties and to learn skills in on-ground conservation.

This year we are helping to support Tess Atkinson. Tess graduated from the University of Sydney, and has been subsequently working as an ecologist for a consultancy. In order to increase her on-ground skills and lead her into a PhD, she has taken up an Internship on the Piliga State Conservation Area in NSW.

Australianwildlife.org/work-with-awc/internships/



Tess Atkinson releasing a Brush-tailed Bettong, or Woylie, during a trapping survey in Pilliga National Park, which is managed by AWC under a conservation partnership.

GRANTS AWARDED 2025/2026

Small Environment Grant Scheme (SEGS)

ORGANISATION	PROJECT	
Friends of Jirdarup Bushland Inc	Djoobuk: Orchids of Jirdarup	$5,000
Macedon & Mt Macedon Landcare Group	Printing of *Waterways and Wildlife* Booklet	$1,941
Tasmanian Land Conservancy	Turning camera trap data into conservation action: smarter citizen science tools in WildTracker	$9,600
Deakin University	Optimising the reintroduction of Bush Stone Curlew into its former range	$5,000
University of Newcastle	Investigating Little Penguin populations in NSW to determine possible threats and inform conservation strategies	$4,500
Arcadia Coastcare	Mangroves, foreshores, and shallows of Arcadia	$5,000
Museums Victoria	Marine Crustacea Isopoda: guide to families and genera of the world	$13,000
Mount Roland Land Care	Culverts for Crayfish: Creating safe corridors for Tasmania's endangered Giant Freshwater Crayfish	$14,299
Southern Highlands Landcare Network	Life-size costume of Glenda the Glider	$2,000
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria	Monitoring the re-introduction of a locally extinct and critically endangered *Banksia canei* in northeast Victoria	$12,015
Invertebrates Australia	Scouting for moths	$12,000
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club	Butterflies of the Mt Alexander region	$2,000
University of Western Australia	Caring for the fire carrying plant: cross cultural fire management for *Banksia media*	$1,944
University of Adelaide	Non-invasive monitoring of Australian Sea Lions: linking body condition to population health	$3,000
Environs Kimberley	Environs Kimberley backyard biodiversity blitz	$14,695
Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative	Fauna management plan	$2,428
James Cook University	Understanding the ecology and behaviour of platypus in Far North Queensland	$4,938
Ovens Landcare Network	Platypus and eDNA in the Ovens River catchment	$19,203
Citizen Science Crew	Citizen science for threatened species and habitat monitoring at Devilbend Reserve	$6,700
Katanning Landcare	Supporting citizen science to close data gaps for local native species conservation	$10,125
University of New South Wales	Shifting reef neighbours: tracking change between green algae and kelp on Sydney's coasts	$5,000
Zoos Victoria and Trust for Nature	On-ground engagement and delivery of key conservation actions for the Plains-wanderer and its grassland habitat	$50,000
Hunter Bird Observers Club	Spatial ecology, behaviour of Australian resident and migratory shorebirds	$14,989
Friends of Yellagonga Regional Park	Artificial nest tube installation and breeding monitoring for Carnaby's Black Cockatoo in Yellagonga Regional Park	$8,749
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria	Speeding up documentation of species of macrofungi of conservation concern in eastern Australian Nothofagus cool temperate rainforests	$14,073
BirdLife Australia	Understanding habitat use of the critically-endangered Swift Parrot across its mainland Australia range	$19,729
Friends of the Grey Crowned Babbler	A 30-year re-assessment of population trends for the threatened Grey-crowned Babbler - extra funding to add on to last grant	$2,000

Leadership Development Grants

WELA	Scholarship	$6,409
AWC	Internship program 2026	$13,750

Landscape Restoration Grants

Swamps, Rivers and Ranges	Translocation of Growling Grass Frogs into Winton Wetlands	$30,000
Connecting Country	Project worker	$25,047

TOTAL GRANTS 2025/2026 $339,134

SMALL ENVIRONMENT GRANTS

Mount Roland Landcare

"Culverts for Crayfish: Creating Safe Corridors for Tasmania's endangered Giant Freshwater Crayfish"

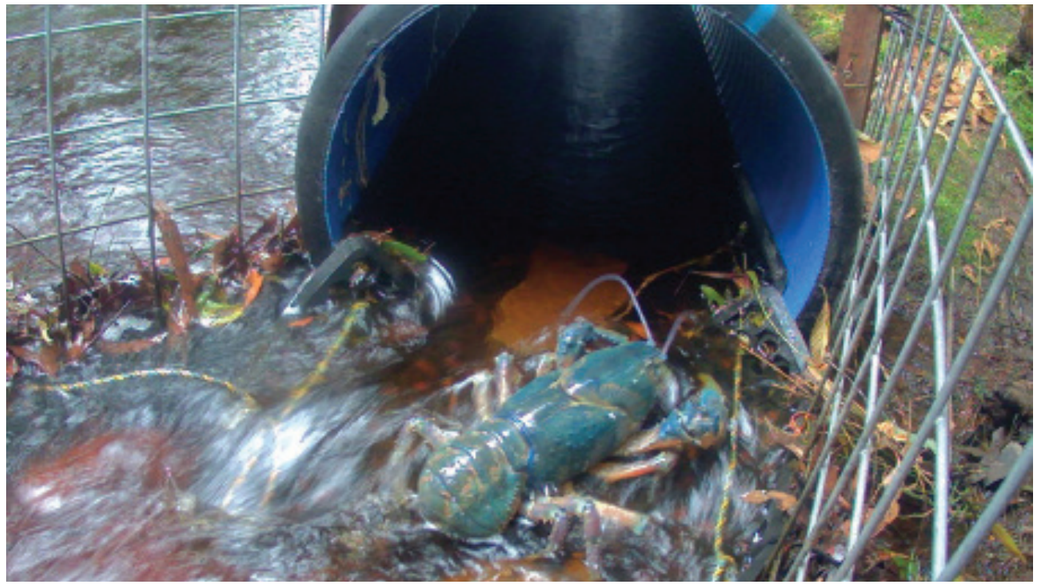
How does the crayfish cross the road? It often uses human-made 'water highways' underneath the roads. The endangered Giant Freshwater Crayfish is the largest freshwater crustacean in the world and found only in northern Tasmania!

The Mount Roland Landcare and other groups and agencies have done some work on understanding how the crayfish are using under-road culverts, drains and pipes to successfully move upstream or downstream, moving through the landscape to breed and survive.

These 'water highways' can be difficult to use — some are too smooth and offer little grip for animals going against the flow, other pipes are sitting too far above the water level.

In this project the Landcare group has experimented with practical modifications and retro-fittings. They then used camera monitoring at five different sites to see what and how aquatic wildlife are using them.

They analysed the footage and found that the crayfish are using the culverts when they have been modified with rocks, ramps, rubber mats, and roughened surfaces. Also seen on camera are platypus and rakali using the culverts. This work shows that with minor modifications, water highways can be successfully used to provide connectivity for a range of wildlife.



Museum Victoria

"Marine Crustacea Isopoda: guide to families and genera of the World"

Marine isopods play essential ecological roles in ocean systems, yet no single reference exists to enable accurate identification beyond regional scales.

This project will deliver the first comprehensive global guide for the identification of marine isopods; a group essential to healthy marine ecosystems as scavengers, grazers, and prey for higher trophic species. Reliable identification is the foundation of effective marine research, management and conservation.

The 470-page guide will contain keys and illustrations, and enable scientists, educators, and community naturalists to accurately identify species, detect environmental change, and recognise new or invasive taxa. In the long term, the project will contribute to a more informed and connected global research community, supporting efforts to conserve marine biodiversity and maintain the resilience of ocean ecosystems.



Photo: *Neastacilla tharnardi* King, (Arcturidae, Michael Marmach of isopods collected in Victoria)

Invertebrates Australia

"Scouting for Moths"

Invertebrates Australia wants to work with young people to monitor the Bogong moth during its annual migration. Under their Bogong Watch citizen science program, they will engage 20 Scout and Guide groups across southeastern Australia.

The grant will help the group: train young people to monitor Bogong moths through in-face and on-line workshops; pay for monitoring kits that can be borrowed by the various groups; and pay for a dedicated worker to co-ordinate the program.

Scouts will collect nocturnal light-trapping data during the migration period, record abundance, timing, and weather conditions — following a standardised protocol.

Information gathered on moth abundance and distribution will contribute to the iNaturalist database, and be used to identify key breeding areas, leading to production of resources for conservation efforts.



Photo: Nighttime insect badge

SMALL ENVIRONMENT GRANTS

Hunter Bird Observers Club

"Spatial ecology, behaviour of Australian resident and migratory shorebirds"

The Hunter Estuary is located at the mouth of the Hunter River in Newcastle, NSW. It is one of Australia's top shorebird hotspots. Field observations and bird counts are indicating a decline in populations.

This project will collect more data on where the birds go and what they do further afield. Traditional monitoring is only capturing around 25% of all shorebird activity, limited by inaccessibility to sites and problems with noctural sightings.

To better understand the decline of shorebird populations, researchers on this project will use new, light nano/accelerometer tags with Bluetooth technology and solar panels, attaching to individuals. They will gather movement and behaviour information from the tags. Direct observations and nocturnal monitoring will also be used alongside the GPS data to model behaviours including flying, roosting and foraging activity.

Birds to be tagged include the Pied Stilt, Red-necked Avocet, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pacific Golden Plover, Whimbrel, and Far Eastern Curlew.

Conservation planning is currently focussed on roosts, but now with this new information, conservation can also look at foraging sites.



Photo: Grey-tailed Tattlers (Paul Fuller)

University of Newcastle

"Investigating Little Penguin populations in NSW to determine possible threats and inform conservation strategies"

PhD researcher, Gabrielle Potts-Todd, is aiming to fill an information gap on what and where Little Penguins eat in NSW.

In this project Gabrielle wants to understand the prey requirements of the Little Penguin in NSW during their breeding season when their foraging range is limited. Is poor prey availability contributing to their decline?

The research will include the collection of scat and water samples across six colonies. Our funds will be used to sequence water samples to characterise the biodiversity at the foraging sites.

Knowing what Little Penguins eat and where they forage will help future conservation of the species when marine heatwaves affect their prey. The study will also help Taronga Conservation Society with their work on Little Penguins in captivity.



Photo: Gabrielle (Newcastle Uni) testing Little Penguins

Environs Kimberley

"Environs Kimberley Backyard Biodiversity Blitz"

Broome is home to many threatened, ecological and culturally significant species. These species have significant populations in or near Broome, yet they often go unrecognised and unrecorded.

The group believes that some species are facing increasing threats from urban pressures. The bio-blitz aims to address the gap in knowledge — collecting data, so they can begin to address some of these threats.

The bio-blitz project will engage Broome residents in monitoring, and then helping to conserve native wildlife. Participants will deploy camera traps to collect data on species like Bilbies, Brushtail Possums, Blue-tongue Skinks and possibly Northern Quolls.

Our funds will support a project officer to co-ordinate the event and volunteers, collect the data, and produce a report of the results. We hope this leads to more work in the Broome community.



Photo: Alex (Environs Kimberley) with fauna camera

SMALL ENVIRONMENT GRANTS

Ovens Landcare Network

"Platypus and eDNA in the Ovens River Catchment"

The Ovens River is only one of two river systems in the Murray-Darling Basin with unregulated natural flows. Although it has great conservation values, the river faces challenges from agricultural practices and population growth. The platypus depends on these natural flows and good water quality for survival, but more information is needed on their distribution.

In order to provide information on platypus populations and their location, this project will collect and analyse environmental DNA from across the Ovens River Catchment.

The advent of environmental DNA (eDNA) as a tool for assessing animal populations has been revolutionary. It is now possible to assess the presence of species in and around waterways without the onerous use of netting or other means of live capture.

Ecologists will select 150 sites for testing, then volunteers will attend workshops and be trained to use eDNA sampling kits to take samples, then undertake analysis.

This project will complement similar projects around north east Victoria. All data collected by various groups and agencies is working towards maintaining riparian health, and helping to direct potential restoration efforts.

Photo: *Banksia canei*

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

"Monitoring the re-introduction of a locally extinct and critically endangered Banksia canei in northeast Victoria"

WET provided a grant to the Gardens in 2024 to undertake genetic analysis of *Banksia canei*, in order to guide the re-establishment of a locally-extinct population in Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park in north east Victoria.

The final report from this project was evaluated and scored by the Board, and because it scored so well, we were happy for them to apply for further funding.

This new grant will support RBGV to monitor the 800 plants in the National Park, recording information, and re-planting where necessary.

The planting is in a remote site where the tube stock was helicoptered in, so monitoring the planting will be difficult. Our grant will cover the cost of equipment and transport to monitor this population, as well as the insurance populations at other sites. Funds will also cover the cost of salary for staff to visit sites.



BirdLife Australia

"Understanding habitat use of the critically-endangered Swift Parrot across its mainland Australia range"

The critically-endangered Swift Parrot is estimated to have only 750-1,000 individuals left — the decline due primarily to loss of habitat. It migrates to the mainland from Tasmania twice a year during the non-breeding season, feeding on woodland which is constantly under threat.

The Swift Parrot Recovery Team developed a citizen science monitoring program, running since 2021, covering 2,000 sites. It uses a 5-minute monitoring and recording process on BirdLife's Birdata app. The program relies on volunteers going out to monitor in particular parts of Victoria, NSW, ACT and Queensland where historical records of Swift Parrots presence exists.

This grant will help BirdLife analyse the data, (around 10,000 surveys) using occupancy modelling — the probability that a site is occupied, and probability of detecting the species given it is present. Species distribution modelling will be used as a complementary approach. Having a close look at this data will help with questions about habitat, available resources, conditions for detection, and survey protocols.

The project will produce maps to add to the the National Swift Parrot Recovery Plan. The maps will also be used by BirdLife to work with conservation groups and help identify areas for protection.



Photo: Swift Parrot in the Muckleford forest (Geoff Park)

LARGE ENVIRONMENT GRANT

Zoos Victoria and Trust for Nature

"On-ground engagement and delivery of key conservation actions for the Plains-wanderer and its grassland habitat"

The Plains-wanderer is a small, ground-dwelling bird found in eastern Australia. The species is the only member of the family *Pedionomidae* and is not closely related to any other species on the Australian continent. The evolutionarily-distinct, critically-endangered bird is dependent on native grasslands that are themselves under threat.

Plains-wanderers require a very particular vegetation cover — native grasses that are not too dense and not too sparse. So, the decline of the species is linked to the loss and degradation of this preferred habitat.

WET is aware of a number of organisations who are working to prevent the extinction of both the species and its habitat, focussing on monitoring, pest control, and improving grazing management. Both government and philanthropic money is being spent on the Plains-wanderer in the Victorian northern plains, and NSW Riverina.

The challenge for WET was to find a place where we could help in a very direct way. In late 2025 we brought several groups together for a workshop to develop an understanding of current projects everyone is working on; identify gaps in these current efforts; and clarify what support they could see to fill these gaps. We then invited a proposal from the group, represented by Zoos Victoria and Trust for Nature.

The Zoo and TFN are currently doing outreach work with landholders, but they are only reaching around one-third of all landholders across stronghold areas.

The key challenge of this project is ensuring that no further grassland habitat is lost and more land is under secure, appropriate management to support the persistence of the Plains-wanderer and other grassland species into the future.

It is critical to provide an on-ground presence in the regions that host remaining Plains-wanderer populations, which means engaging with landholders of remnant native grassland, as well as the broader communities, providing expert advice to support appropriate grazing management. This project will be about furthering landholder stewardship, as well as research activities like using bioacoustic monitors to collect data.

The aims of this project will be achieved through increasing capacity to deliver best outcomes for grasslands and the Plains-wanderer. This will be done by funding two outreach roles — one with the Zoo and one with Trust For Nature.

All information about landholders — where they are, what grazing management they are using, what support they are being given, as well as grassland condition, and priority areas — will be shared with all groups working on Plains Wanderer conservation. There will also be communication between groups and landholders.

The project further aims to create a data repository of information, and a map showing this good quality and priority grasslands.

In the first year we will donate $100,000 with half of this already allocated. When miletones have been met, the second half will be sent.

This large grant (for us, it's large) was made possible because of a $50,000 donation from one of our donors. We hope to continue supporting this project for three years and we encourage contributions from any other funders who would like to co-fund with us.

Photo: Plains Wanderer (Aaron Grinter)



LANDSCAPE RESTORATION GRANTS 2025/2026

Outside of the Small Environmental Grants Scheme is our Landscape Restoration Program. We work over a long period to support groups who meet agreed goals and targets.

Organisation	Grant Awarded	Amount
Swamps Rivers and Ranges	Growling Grass Frogs at Winton Wetlands	$30,000
Connecting Country	Project Officer	$25,047

Swamps Rivers and Ranges

“Growling Grass Frogs at Winton Wetlands”

Recent management changes at Winton Wetlands in north-east Victoria presented unexpected challenges for the science team. Following the Victorian Government’s decision to no longer manage the site, a replacement organisation is yet to be appointed.

This transition caused staff redundancies at a critical time for our ongoing partnership with Winton Wetlands and the Growling Grass Frog rewilding project (featured in last year’s report).

To keep the project moving forward, Swamps Rivers and Ranges (SRR) stepped in to manage the frog project. Because SRR is one of our supported landscape restoration projects, we were confidently able to transfer funding to them.

To finish the planned translocations, we provided an additional grant of $30,000, following our $50,000 grant to Winton Wetlands last year.

Under the initial funding phase, the first translocation was already finished: Growling Grass Frogs were gathered from a Coliban Water site near Bendigo; and frogs were safely moved to the Winton Wetlands facility and breeding ponds.

Before releasing them into the wider wetlands, they needed more founder populations.

WET Executive Director, Beth Mellick, once again accompanied the team to complete two hands-on night collection trips at the Bendigo site. Thirty frogs were captured each trip, and brought back to the Winton Wetlands laboratory for quarantine, health checks and feeding. Beth then travelled to the wetlands to participate in the frog release into the wetland habitat.

SRR will monitor the frogs to track their establishment and eventual breeding. Confirming successful breeding will mark a major milestone for the project, creating a proven model for future rewilding programs by other conservation groups.

Connecting Country

“Project Officer”

WET has supported Connecting Country with money for workers, governance and development of restoration projects from its outset in 2008.

Since that time, our grants have mainly supported their education program and their Brush-tailed Phascogale monitoring program.

This year WET is again supporting Connecting Country with a capacity grant. The grant will be used for employment of a worker to revisit their foundational document, the Biodiverity Blueprint, looking at landscape linkage projects throughout the region, updating the plans, and re-connecting with the Landcare groups in the network.

The project officer will look back at what they’ve done and what they haven’t done, and come up with new resotration actions for large scale projects.



Photo: Ecologists, Winton Wetlands, Swamps Rivers and Ranges, and Coliban Water on a frog catching night in Bendigo (Beth from Wettenhall in the centre back)

DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

This year we held an event for our supporters that focussed on all things fungi. Thanks to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne for letting us use Domain House for the night.

A big thank you to our well-known and much-beloved guest speakers: Alison Pouliot, fungi ecologist, photographer and author; and Tom May the Royal Botanic Gardens Victorian Principal Research Scientist and author. Also thank you to Ema and Emily and their volunteers from MyCommunity Applied Mycology, grant recipients and fungi researchers who set up a display and offered practical lab demonstrations. Ema and Emily then joined Alison and Tom on stage to discuss fungi projects.

The speakers and panellists talked about the role and relationship of fungi in the ecosystem, and Gib Wettenhall offers this summary: "Almost all Australian plants have some kind of beneficial mycorrhizal relationship with fungi, highlighted Ema Coro. This vast web of connection is, however, hidden underground, out of sight. Not so the above ground fruiting spores, as demonstrated by the photography of Alison Pouliot. She said that she is at pains to show off their natural beauty, thereby bringing fungi more into the public's sight.

Ecologist Tom May is approaching this task from a different direction through describing and naming some of Australia's estimated 250,000 species of fungi. Only 5% of this number has been done, and as Tom pointed out, without taxonomy, fungi's remarkable and critical relationship with flora will remain unheralded."

Photos: To the right is the MyCommunity Applied Mycology demonstration. Below is Alison Pouliot, WET Chair Jane Halliday, panel moderator and WET board member Libby Rumpff, Emily McIntyre, Tom May, Ema Corro, Bottom is Alison Pouliot and her display.







DONORS 2025/2026

Wettenhall Environment Trust is a charitable trust with tax deductible status. Donations that extend the Trust's ability to augment the wellbeing of the Australian natural living environment are gratefully received.

Donors A-Z up to $250
Annonymous
Helen Clarke
Philip Eggelston
Jennie Epstein
Ian and Elizabeth Fraser
Julie Gerstman
Ann Gillespie
Janine Haddow
Jane Halliday and Michael Leighton-Jones
Penelope Johns
Christopher Lamb
Euan Moore
Rob Oke
Carol Richardson
Libby Robin
Rob Southey
Suzy and Andrew Speirs
Ray Thomas
Peter Turner

Donors A-Z up to $500
Colin Agar
Margaret and Carrick Chambers
Peter Cope and Zoe Metherell
Rachel Faggetter
Barbara Howlett
Margaret Kelso
Rosemary Macindoe
Philip Moors
Digby Race
Jennifer Rolland
Keith Stockwell
Roland Wettenhall

Donors A-Z up to $1,000
Susan and Peter Duras
Louise Gourlay
Ruth McKenzie
Gib Wettenhall

Donors A-Z up to $2,000
Michael Martin
Cecilia Myers
Robyn Porter
Michele Velik and Derek Lord
Martin Wettenhall

Donors A-Z up to $2,500
Lady Marigold Southey
Myer Foundation

Donors A-Z up to $5,000
Harriet Edquist
Lesley Griffin

Donors A-Z up to $10,500
Rose Gilder
Newstead Arts Hub
David Wettenhall
Williams Fund

Donors A-Z up to $50,000
Susan Morgan

FINANCE CHAIR REPORT



The financial advisors for the Trust have faced the winds of uncertainty and volatility when making investment decisions during the financial year to 30 June 2026. In Australia and overseas, the energy crises were exacerbated by the prospects of conflict that would wax and wane with the political uncertainties. Despite these issues, the corpus of the Trust has continued to increase due to a number of positive attributes: the investment portfolio had significant returns achieving a return of approximately 10%; the management of the Trust kept a tight rein on operating expenses with a reduction from the previous year; dividend income was extraordinarily high with a 42% increase on the previous year.

The Trust was able to increase its surplus from $36,652 to $108,946 and the corpus of the Trust increased by nearly 3%, after grant distributions.

The Trustees, when facing the economic uncertainties, have had to make decisions that would be prudent and worthwhile without walking away from the many excellent grant applications from around Australia. Tertiary and research institutions are operating with greater scrutiny of research projects and local landcare and citizen scientists have faced greater difficulties finding grants.

In respect of the Trust's three programs of Small Environmental Grants, Landscape Restoration, and Leadership Development, they have continued to be the focus of attention. The reduction in grant distributions during the year, while small, is disappointing but has meant that the Trust is in a strong position into the future:

	Net assets	Grant distributions
30 June 2023	$4,457,559	$261,429
30 June 2024	$4,696,021	$349,469
30 June 2025	$5,070,406	$368,113
30 June 2026	$5,221,036	$339,134

As noted in last year's Annual Report, the challenge in these times of increased volatility in financial markets and the increasing costs faced by the applicants for grants, is to continue this growth in the Trust's corpus and grant activities. The participation of our long-term donors and partners will continue to ensure the ongoing success of the Trust in conservation terms as will the generous expert investment guidance of Accru Wealth Management.

This support, along with the Trust's collaboration with community groups and private landholders, provides a strong and viable platform to make an enormous difference in the battle to conserve the biodiversity of Australia and to support the men and women out in the field every day of the year.

Roland Wettenhall, Chair, Finance Committee

FINANCIAL REPORT 2026

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2026

CURRENT ASSETS	$
Cash and cash equivalents	289,028
Trade and other receivables	29,667
Investments, at market value	4,929,548
TOTAL ASSETS	5,248,243

CURRENT LIABILITIES	$
Provisions	25,271
Trade and other payables	1,936
TOTAL LIABILITIES	27,207
NET ASSETS	5,221,036

EQUITY	$
Founder's gift	1,000,000
Retained earnings	2,968,698
Investments revaluation to market	1,252,338
TOTAL EQUITY	5,221,036

Income Statement for the year ended 30 June 2026

REVENUE	$
Donations	124,158
Dividends and capital profits	427,662
Interest	16,944
TOTAL INCOME	568,764

EXPENSES	$
Operating expenses (incl publication, events, support for the landscape restoration program, staff costs etc)	120,683
Grants paid	339,134
TOTAL EXPENSES	459,817
TOTAL NET PROFIT	108,947



Wettenhall
ENVIRONMENT TRUST

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Front cover photo:

Mount Roland Landcare Project:

Culverts for Crayfish: Creating Safe Corridors for Tasmania's endangered Giant Freshwater Crayfish

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