

Annual Report

2022 / 2023



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Biolinks Alliance is proud to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the places where we live and work. We recognise and respect the enduring relationship they have with their lands and water, and we pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

*Front cover: Biolinks Alliance team members at Spring Plains Nature Conservation Reserve (NCR), on Taungurung country, where our 138 hectare watershed repair pilot project is underway.
Photo credit: Cameron O'Mara, Biolinks Alliance Heathcote Local to Landscape Facilitator.
This page: Swift Parrot. Photo credit: John Barkla*

Biolinks Alliance restores and reconnects large landscapes across Central Victoria by partnering with and building the capacity of environmental groups and networks.

We make sure the significant momentum for community-driven conservation on public and private land in Central Victoria is supported, coordinated and amplified.

Message from Chair

It has been another successful year for Biolinks Alliance, with a diverse range of projects underway, a growing team, and many initiatives happening on the ground with our Network Member conservation groups and communities across Central Victoria.

As Board members, we are much engaged with balance sheets and board reports and when we get the chance to experience the on-the-ground activities and initiatives in person, it's inspiring to see what change an organisation of Biolinks Alliance's size can realise.

It's useful to have opportunities to be refreshed on the overall 'what' and 'why' of the organisation, and I always look forward to hearing staff members talk about what we are doing, our philosophy and vision. A highlight for me this year was a segment featuring Dr Sophie Bickford, Biolinks Alliance's Executive Director, talking about our organisation on [ABC's Gardening Australia program](#).

If you have not seen Sophie on this program, I urge you to view it online. Sophie communicates with the deep knowledge and passion we know she holds for our work. With eloquence, she shares the special value of our habitats and remnants in Central Victoria, and the importance of working to increase connection, resilience and restore the ecological functions of our landscapes.

In one of many memorable moments, Sophie explains landscape fragmentation and the lack of connectivity: *"it's a bit like an animal in the zoo - it's pretty to look at but it's not very functional; it's not really going to be able to survive well into the future."*

Importantly, as this Annual Report demonstrates, we're not just about the talk but the doing. One highlight amongst many this year has been the start of on-the-grounds works for our Spring Plains Watershed Repair pilot project - the culmination of several years of planning, fundraising and liaison with many invested stakeholders and partners.

Other important activities have focussed on building Biolinks Alliance's engagement with our Central Victorian communities, and working with Network Members and other partners on collaborative projects, such as our Glideways initiative in Central Victoria.

I would like to thank Sophie and the Biolinks Alliance staff, as well as my fellow Board members for their work throughout the year. We've grown considerably over the past few years, which is exciting but also brings with it big challenges to maintain necessary resources to keep our model financially sustainable. This is a key focus for the Board in the year ahead.

Thank you, as always, to our valued donors and philanthropic trusts, funders, Network Members and partners, volunteers and collaborators without whom our work would not be possible.



Brendan Sydes
Chair



Message from Executive Director

Our year of on-the-ground activities to repair nature at large scales and speed, as well as supported knowledge sharing events, continues to strengthen the foundations for strongly connected communities across Central Victoria committed to cutting-edge conservation.

This year we were able to bring our Network Member organisations and landholders together much more readily, not just with Covid-19 behind us, but also due to moving into our first bricks and mortar space.

Sincere thanks to the Shelmerdine-Moffat family for generously gifting us the use of office, events and storage space at their Tooborac property, on Taungurung country.

A strong attendance (36 community conservation leaders from 15 of our Network Member groups) at our two-day annual forum with them in October last year, enabled us collectively to reflect and plan what we can do through working together. The quality of thought and ambition was phenomenal and is set to guide Biolinks Alliance for years to come.

The forum outcomes informed a mid-way update of our Biolinks Alliance Strategic Plan, *Passage to the Future*, and an organisational monitoring and evaluation framework. RMCG helped us and our Network Members to expand upon our theory of change, define short and longer term outcomes, and develop measures for them.

Our events continue to engage new people in conservation and promote awareness of functional, innovative and large-scale nature repair approaches. We held an in-demand expert panel event in May, exploring whether the topical conservation approach, 'rewilding', can solve wide-spread environmental challenges in Central Victoria.

Backed by our Ecologists' expertise, our innovative landscape repair pilot projects progressed this year, demonstrating new ways to accelerate ecosystem restoration to have a chance against climate change. Thank you to our Project Coordinators for their unwavering commitment to community involvement in the delivery of these projects. It's through this community involvement these projects will have ripple effects, encouraging broader uptake in the region.

Our wise and generous supporters continue to enable our work. Private philanthropy is more important than ever

and I extend my deepest thanks to our donors, as well as volunteers, for their ongoing loyal support. We hoped with Australia's adoption of international 30 by 30 Nature Targets there would be more favourable policies and funding available for restoration, but (unfathomably) it's yet to be forthcoming.

It's challenging to maintain the valuable leadership, expertise and service we bring to a new type of inclusive nature conservation, but we continue to strive to build partnerships and income models required for a sustainable future for our organisation.

Sincere thanks to our Board of Directors who freely give so much of their time and experience to the oversight and strategic direction of Biolinks Alliance. Thank you also to our Operations team for their incredible dedication, talent and efforts.

I'm proud of all we achieved in 2023. Collectively, we must continue to do more for the survival of our native wildlife and for future generations. At Biolinks Alliance, we persist in building new tools and capacity to seed and lead more urgent and scaled-up restoration across Central Victoria's landscapes.



Dr Sophie Bickford
Executive Director



Our Story

At Biolinks Alliance, we are resolute that we can still change the future for our creatures and landscapes in Central Victoria from tragedy to restoration - if together we act now.

With the global biodiversity and climate emergencies intensifying, Biolinks Alliance remains dedicated to supporting community-driven, large landscape restoration that creates genuine, lasting change for our native plants and animals.

Central Victoria has as many native species as the whole of Europe – despite Victoria being the most cleared state in Australia. We still have time to prevent further extinctions and protect our unique ecosystems by urgently and collaboratively working together.

The scale and speed we are working with our network of conservation groups, our Network Members, who extend from the Grampians across to the Australian Alps, and from the Dividing Ranges to the Murray River, continues to build. Together, we are co-creating and partnering to deliver projects that encompass the latest ecological restoration methods to help save our wildlife.

Local to Landscape conservation approach

We are also delivering our innovative large landscape repair pilot projects that are part of our Local to Landscape conservation approach, bringing to life a community's vision for repairing the landscapes in which they live.

“We believe large landscape, grassroots conservation backed by ecological expertise, strategy and leadership is one of the the quickest and most effective pathways to repairing our environment.”

Dr Sophie Bickford, Biolinks Alliance Executive Director

Working in collaboration with governments, communities, landholders and Traditional Owners, our Local to Landscape repair projects can extend across all tenures, land types and land uses and use our evidence-based, scientific methods. Notably, the learnings and successes can be shared with communities across Central Victoria so our environment as a whole can be better restored and protected.

But, our work doesn't stop there. Our high-calibre events, including symposiums, expert speaker panels and webinars, continue to create a sound foundation of knowledge, context and understanding across Central Victorian communities of the innovative conservation repair methods available to all of us.

Although our global environmental challenges continue to mount, we are steadfast in our commitment to conservation that is driven by communities and is focused on urgently reconnecting our important natural places in Central Victoria for future generations.

Local to Landscape

Empowering Central Victorian communities to create climate resilient landscapes.

A conservation approach fostering community-lead, large-scale landscape restoration.



Our Impact

Backed by our expertise and conservation leadership - we collaborate with communities, landholders, farmers and government to together build a brighter and more climate resilient future for our native wildlife in Central Victoria.

42

Properties

Assessed with ecological guidance given across more than 6500 hectares.



3

Innovative large landscape pilot projects

Underway based on cutting-edge science that targets conservation issues specific to Central Victoria, with learnings to be shared.



11

Conservation projects

We're leading or partnering with communities and our networks, helping to make critical change for our environment.



441

Volunteers

Doing citizen science, supporting our events and amplifying our operations, helping us do more meaningful work and reach more people.



18

High-quality events

Challenging conventions on conservation issues facing Central Victoria, and educating and mobilising people to take action for our environment.



701

Registrations

For our knowledge sharing events, raising awareness with our stakeholders of the science behind our work and how they can get involved.



30%

Growth of newsletter subscribers

Creating awareness with more people about our bottom-up conservation activities and how they can get involved.



Spring Plains Watershed Repair Pilot Project

Our novel 138 hectare large-landscape repair pilot project in the Spring Plains Nature Conservation Reserve (NCR) near Heathcote, Victoria is a first of its kind in Victoria.

This pilot project, on Taungurung country, looks to restore the health of a catchment in Box Ironbark Forest, using a combination of innovative ecological repair techniques. As a pilot project within the Heathcote Local to Landscape plan, it forms part of a larger, long-term strategy for ecological restoration of the region.

Spring Plains NCR is an important migratory stopover for critically endangered Swift Parrots. This pilot project aims to increase productivity of the forest, ensuring more regular and abundant flowering in the trees that Swift Parrots and many other species rely on for sustenance.

Backed by three years of planning, obtaining approvals and philanthropic funding, and consultation including with government, Traditional Owners, private sector and the community - this pilot project utilises the latest scientific thinking and methods.

The combination of ecological repair techniques being used include:

- Contour ripping using a Yeomans-style plough for improved soil water infiltration
- Leaky weir ponding for gully hydration
- Dense regrowth thinning to help re-age the forest
- Direct seeding of native grasses for improved soil biology and understory health

Together, these methodologies look to increase the watershed absorbency of the catchment, making it less 'leaky' while enhancing productivity.

This project paves the way for a new approach to building climate resilience and restoring biodiversity in goldfields landscapes at increased scale and speed. Biolinks Alliance will share and help adapt this approach for use in other landscapes across the region.

Innovative, scientifically backed on-the-ground works

138

Hectares

Of Peters Gully within Spring Plains Nature Conservation Reserve (NCR) on Taungurung country under restoration.



660+

Hours

Across 359 volunteers contributing to the success of this project so far.



70

Kms

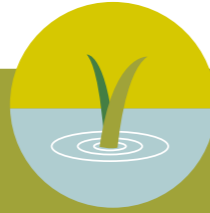
Worth of rip lines complete along the contours of the woodlands using a Yeomans-style keyline plough (approx).



21

Ponds

Installed along the Peters Gully creekline, designed to catch water during high rainfall periods and slow down the flow of water.



76+

Hectares

Of ecological thinning underway.



Innovative Large Landscape Repair Projects

Our nature repair projects continue to build the capacity of our Network Members and local communities to develop conservation priorities and initiatives in landscapes where they live, on Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Djab Wurrung and Jardwadjali country.

Glideways in Central Victoria

Guided by Biolinks Alliance's expertise and conservation leadership, we are fortifying the collective efforts of a number of Central Victorian conservation organisations to ensure gliders and phascogales can continue to exist in our region.

[Glideways in Central Victoria](#) is part of the larger Great Eastern Ranges Glideways initiative that stretches along the east coast of Australia.

Kangaroo Creek

Biolinks Alliance and Malmsbury Landcare Network are collaborating to [protect and enhance Greater Glider habitat](#) adjacent to the Wombat State Forest. Works have included weed control, nest box installation and spotlighting surveys on private properties.

Northern Grampians

This project is being developed by Project Platypus in partnership with Biolinks Alliance, and aims to establish an understanding of Squirrel Glider distribution in the Northern Grampians region (specifically between Dadswells Bridge and Stawell) and reconnect fragmented glider habitat.

Seymour Biolink for Gliders

This is a collaborative, multi-stage project currently spearheaded by Seymour Urban Landcare and the Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative in partnership with Biolinks Alliance and BEAM Mitchell Environment Group. It builds on work carried out by Strathbogrie Ranges Conservation and Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group.

*An endangered Squirrel Glider recorded on a property in Seymour, on Taungurung country.
Photo credit: Chris Pocknee, Biolinks Alliance Landscape and Biodiversity Conservation Ecologist.*



Heathcote Local to Landscape

We are partnering with Heathcote community members to deliver ecological repair projects and initiatives across the region's forests, woodlands and waterways. [This initiative](#) includes pilot projects that are based on the latest thinking and use innovative and scientifically sound ecological approaches.

Large Old 'Hero' Trees Pilot Project

We are raising the profile and empowering the Heathcote community to [protect Large Old \(native\) Trees](#) that are vital landscape connectors, providing habitat and food sources for threatened birds, mammals and reptiles.

Spring Plains Watershed Repair Pilot Project

[As a first of its kind project in Victoria](#), we are restoring the health of a box-ironbark forest in the Heathcote region using a combination of innovative ecological repair techniques.

"Firstly, let me say I was completely gobsmacked by what you have achieved on Snipe's Creek. And all of that in such a short time. I knew the outcome would be good but you have far exceeded my wildest dreams, so thank you and please keep up the outstanding work. You have rekindled my enthusiasm for trying to make a difference for the benefit of the environment."

Greenhill to Black Hill Landholder

*Snipes Creek Repair Pilot Project on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung country.
Photo credit: Cameron O'Mara, Biolinks Alliance Heathcote Local to Landscape Facilitator*



Building Ecological Knowledge and Awareness

Across the year, we utilised events to contribute to vital conversations about ecological repair and to mobilise people to take action across Central Victoria for our environment.

From hosting in demand webinars, an expert panel and a symposium, to presenting at other high profile conservation events, and appearing on programs such as ABC's Gardening Australia - we helped build awareness and knowledge.

Rewilding Central Victoria - expert panel event

[This free community event](#), attracting more than 120 people, brought together an eminent panel of experts and thinkers to discuss what rewilding could look like in Central Victoria, why it hasn't been taken up widely so far and what potential does it have to restitch the natural fabric of life, so it can support future generations.



A podcast and video of this event can be found at: biolinksalliance.org.au/rewildingpanevent

Biolinks Alliance wishes to thank the panellists for kindly participating in this event, including:

- Darren Grover, Head of Healthy Land and Seascapes - WWF Australia
- Dr. Tristan Derham, Research Associate - University of Tasmania
- Amos Atkinson, Cultural Fire Practitioner
- Chris Hartnett, Threatened Species Program Coordinator - Zoos Victoria
- Paul Foreman, Conservation Strategist and Ecologist - Biolinks Alliance

We also would like to thank Will Burrell and Macedon Ranges Shire Council for their support of this event.

"Great to see a big turn-out to the event. I enjoyed the focus upon landscape-scale actions and outcomes, and it definitely got me thinking about how the land that we manage fits within the broader landscape and which neighbours we should be talking to about potential broader habitat benefits."

Attendee at Rewilding Central Victoria - expert panel event.

Treasures of the Land Time Capsule

As part of an education initiative with Kyneton Primary School, we asked students to consider the value of animals and plants around where they live by asking the question, "What do you treasure about this place?".

Students created artwork to bury in a time capsule, accompanied by mapping we undertook of the significant Large Old Trees in the local region and the Greenhill to Black Hill initiative's vision. The time capsule is set to be opened in 2072.

Thank you to local artist Jason Waterhouse, the Albert and Barbara Tucker Foundation, Macedon Ranges Shire Council and the Kyneton community for their support of this initiative.

Snipes Creek riparian planting days

Continuing our partnership with Kyneton Primary School, we also held two riparian planting days with students at Snipes Creek. This was part of our Snipes Creek Rehabilitation Pilot Project in our Greenhill to Black Hill Local to Landscape initiative. These activities were supported by the Earthwatch Kids Teaching Kids Bush Blitz program and Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Large Old 'Hero' Trees education program

Teaching students to identify eucalypt species, how to measure the age of eucalypt trees, and the benefits of these hero trees for the environment and arboreal species, we rolled out our Large Old 'Hero' Trees education program at Holy Rosary Primary School in Heathcote.

Empowering the next generation in environmental stewardship

3
Schools
Involved in our nature repair work.

90+
Kids
Involved in Biolinks Alliance conservation activities.

A Kyneton Primary School student at a riparian planting day at Snipes Creek, on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung country. Photo credit: Andrew Craig.



Partnerships and Brokering

Bottom-up conservation is driven by communities and elevated through partnerships with governments, landholders, Traditional Owners, education institutions, philanthropic trusts, and other conservation organisations. Nurtured overtime, these partnerships develop a groundswell of innovation through shared knowledge and experience.

Treasures of this Land art auction

Treasures of this Land was an art exhibition, auction and legacy building project held in November 2022. Showcasing creative responses to the natural wonders of the Macedon Ranges, it was a highly successful fundraiser, involving over 200 members of the local community.

The exhibition featured artworks from over a dozen nationally and internationally acclaimed artists, as well as wares and pieces from artisans and specialists in their fields. Over 51 items were donated and sold - a testimony to the calibre of items and enthusiasm of guests.

Influencing Central Victorian conservation planning

Working with Birdlife Australia - we continue to participate in the Temperate Woodland Bird Conservation Action Plan Steering Committee to support the implementation of a plan for woodland birds conservation across Victoria.

We also have worked closely with the City of Greater Bendigo and the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, providing strategic and ecological input into their new organisational biodiversity strategies.

Spring Paddock Watershed Repair Project

A collaboration between Bush Heritage Australia (BHA) and Biolinks Alliance, this project looks to build resilience to climate change by scaling-up measures that repair the hydrology of the landscape, making it more absorbent and productive. The project aims to demonstrate how to repair environmental damage in an agricultural landscape and why the approach is urgently needed more broadly in the region.

Yam Paddock Project

Led by La Trobe University and Dja Dja Wurrung, and partnering with the Sallis Foundation and HMS Trust, we are supporting Dja Dja Wurrung women in cultural practices across private property in Central Victoria. *This project* looks at the role of cultural fire in Aboriginal food production, which in time will increase the opportunities for the use of fire as an ecological management tool of precious and highly endangered native grasslands.

Artists Daniel Butterworth, Peter Cole and Karan Hayman, who donated their art to raise funds for the Greenhill to Black Hill Local to Landscape initiative. Photo credit: Kara Finlay, Greenhill to Black Hill and Kangaroo Creek Project Coordinator.



Our Partners

Government

City of Greater Bendigo
DEECA
Goulburn Broken CMA
Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Mitchell Council
North Central CMA
Parks Victoria

Philanthropic Trusts and Foundations

Brian D Newman Foundation for the Environment
Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal
HMS Trust
Ian Potter Foundation
Ross Trust
Sallis Foundation

Educational institutions

Holy Rosary School Heathcote
Kyneton Primary School
Latrobe University
Seymour College

Conservation, Community and Professional organisations

Amos Atkinson
BEAM
Birdlife Australia
Bush Heritage
Cassinia
CPMG
Earthchat
Earthwatch Australia
Great Eastern Ranges
Greenhill to Black Hill Community Group
Heathcote Steering Committee
Hughes Creek Landcare
Inhaus
Kyla Brettle
Landcare Victoria
Project Platypus
SWIFFT
Taungurung Land and Water Council
Upper Hopkins Land Management Group
Wanda Millicer
WIRES
WWF Australia

Yam Daisy
Photo credit: Georgia Gross, Senior Communications Manager.

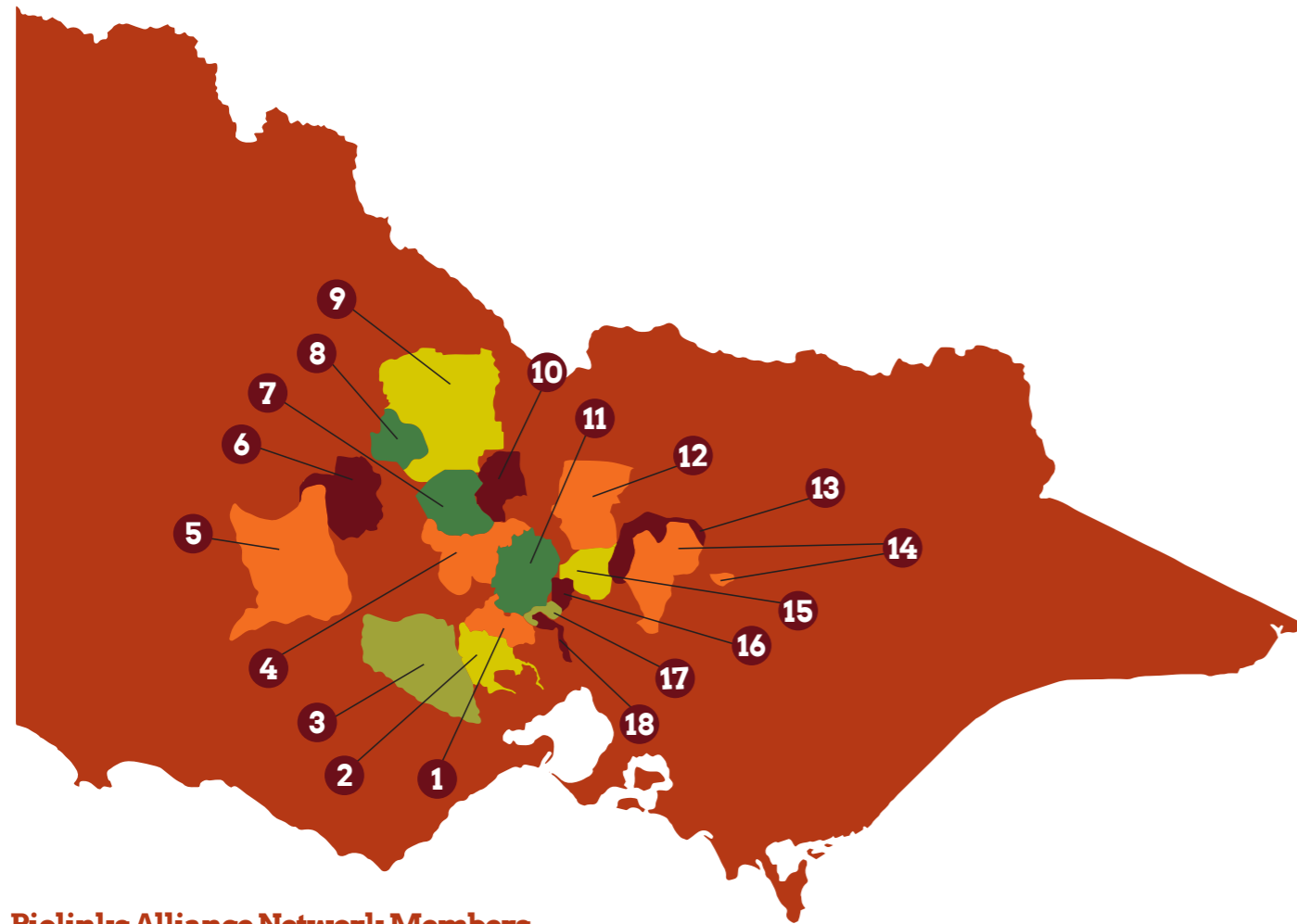




*Shot from above our office on Taungurung country.
Photo credit: Cameron O'Mara, Biolinks Alliance Heathcote Local to Landscape Facilitator.*

Our Network Members

Biolinks Alliance is a network organisation with 18 Network Members. This includes Landcare networks, conservation management networks and 'umbrella' environment groups, all of which are focused on community-based conservation across Central Victoria.



Biolinks Alliance Network Members

Our Network Members extend from the Grampians across to the Australian Alps, and from the Dividing Ranges to the Murray River.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Wombat Forestcare | 8 Wedderburn Conservation Management Network | 14 Upper Goulburn Landcare Network |
| 2 Moorabool Landcare Network | 9 Loddon Plains Landcare Network | 15 South West Goulburn Landcare Network |
| 3 Ballarat Environment Network | 10 Bendigo and Districts Environment Council | 16 Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network |
| 4 Connecting Country | 11 Upper Campaspe Landcare Network | 17 Federation of Environment & Horticulture Macedon Ranges |
| 5 Project Platypus | 12 Whroo Goldfields Conservation Management Network | 18 Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork |
| 6 Kara Kara Conservation Management Network | 13 Strathbogrie Ranges Conservation | |
| 7 Mid Loddon Landcare Network | | |

Our Network Members support our collective vision for large-scale landscape conservation across Central Victoria.

Through the power of association, our voices are strengthened - enabling us to collaborate, support and advocate for conservation practices that target the environmental issues specific to our region.

Together, we plan, create and deliver projects and initiatives that look to repair our landscapes at scale and at speed - and meet the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Network Member Forum - Are We Ready to Fix the Environment?

Over sixty Network Member representatives from 15 Landcare and conservation networks came together at our annual Network Member Forum in October 2022. This event, dedicated solely to our Network Members, enables us to further build our collaborative and collective thinking.

The theme was, *Are we ready to fix the environment?*. The two-day forum involved a mix of presentations, workshops, table discussions and even a walkshop in the beautiful Wellsford State Forest, outside Bendigo, on Dja Dja Wurrung country.

Topics included: Tools for building meaningful collaborations and strategic action, and Advancing science-based ecological goal setting for large landscape conservation, with presentations from keynote speakers from across the sector, including Bush Heritage, Australian Environmental Grant Writers Network and RMCG.

"The whole program was useful as it was a chance to collaborate, network, gain insight and perspective from other projects and practitioners."

Attendee at Network Member Forum.

Dr Sophie Bickford, Biolinks Alliance Executive Director, presenting at our 2022 Network Members Forum in Bendigo on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung country. Photo credit: Kara Finlay, Greenhill to Black Hill and Kangaroo Creek Project Coordinator.



Our Board



Brendan Sydes - Chair

Brendan is an environmental lawyer with a background in not-for-profit management, policy advocacy and law reform. He was a principal lawyer and CEO at Environmental Justice Australia from 2005 to 2020. Brendan currently works as a Biodiversity Policy Adviser to the Australian Conservation Foundation and as a legal and policy consultant. He is a Senior Honorary Fellow of the University of Melbourne Law School where he teaches environmental law. Brendan is President of the Committee of Management of Connecting Country, a local landscape restoration program active across Mount Alexander Shire, and a member of the Research and Conservation Committee of Birdlife Australia. Brendan's paid and voluntary work is focussed on the need for landscape scale restoration to address the legacy of past losses and as a critical contribution to the urgent challenge of addressing climate change.



Peter Evans - Secretary

Peter is an experienced business manager, consultant and non-executive director working to build sustainably successful organisations. Peter joined Biolinks as Secretary in 2019 to contribute to Central Victoria achieving balance between its natural environment and human use. Peter trained as an electronic engineer and holds an MBA and Master of Leadership from Deakin University. He is the Principal of Tunaungana Consulting, Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia and Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Pat Scanlon - Treasurer

Pat is a qualified chartered accountant who has over 20 years international and Australian experience in financial accounting, reporting, internal controls and professional services. His experience ranges from not-for-profit organisations, small and medium sized organisations and large organisations both in the public and private sectors. Pat currently works as a senior manager for a consultancy in Melbourne CBD.



Jennifer Rolland - Vice Chair

With a PhD in Immunology and a long career in biomedical science research and education, Jennifer values scientific-based knowledge and well-structured research programs to inform optimal strategies for the protection of our natural areas and wildlife. She regularly volunteers for several environment restoration and monitoring projects around the country. With her partner, she enjoys and manages a Trust for Nature-covenanted bush property in Western Victoria. Through all these activities, she sees the critical need for coordinated landscape-scale action to meet the huge challenges facing our natural environment, such as provided for community conservation groups in Central Victoria by Biolinks Alliance.



Gayle Osborne - Member

Gayle lives on a bush block in the Wombat State Forest and is a founding member of Wombat Forestcare, a group established in 2006 for the protection of the environmental values of the Wombat Forest. She is the convenor of Wombat Forestcare, which was instrumental in lobbying the State Government for a Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) investigation into a number of state forests in the Wombat and Mt Cole areas.



Brian Walters AM SC - Member

Brian Walters is a former barrister. He practised as a silk from 2001-2021. In 1981, he co-founded Wild, Australia's wilderness adventure magazine, and served as a director for 25 years. He was a board member of Liberty Victoria for over ten years, serving as president from 2004-2006. He has worked with many environmental groups. In 2017 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia 'for significant service to conservation through environmental protection law, and to human rights advocacy'. He is now a writer.

*Biolinks Alliance Ecologist Paul Foreman with a landholder in Cobaw, Victoria.
Photo credit: Sandy Sheltema.*



Our Staff



Dr Sophie Bickford
Executive Director

Sophie is a conservation ecologist deeply motivated to apply her expertise to real world ecological-social problems. After completing her PhD at The University of Adelaide, Sophie spent 7 years researching distribution patterns of biodiversity at the CSIRO Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research. She was appointed a Lecturer in Biogeography at Monash University in 2007. Sophie worked for Carbon Planet as their Chief Scientist, developing methodologies for conserving ecological-services using climate (carbon) and biodiversity markets. As Executive Director of Biolinks Alliance since 2010, she relishes the challenge of growing an emerging organisation to implement large-scale and tenure blind conservation in Victoria.



Dr Paul Foreman
Ecologist and Conservation Strategy

Paul is an ecologist and botanist with over 30 years of experience in a range of technical, strategic and management roles across Victoria and Australia. Paul has worked in State and Local Government, as well as Trust for Nature and Bush Heritage Australia, and established his own consulting business in 2009. He recently completed his PhD, researching the role of Aboriginal burning in grasslands and was the inaugural Chair for Biolinks Alliance.

“Our team has the scientific expertise and leadership to support the development of conservation strategies, policies and projects that restore our ecosystem across Central Victoria at speed and at scale - enabling it to thrive into the future.”

Dr Sophie Bickford Biolinks Alliance Executive Director



Chris Pocknee
Landscape and Biodiversity Conservation Ecologist

Chris is an ecologist with a passion for understanding the threats facing native fauna and ecosystems, and how we can address these issues. Chris completed his Master of Science at the University of Melbourne in 2017 before undertaking an internship with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in NSW. Chris has recently submitted his PhD thesis at the University of Queensland, where he studied the impacts of fire and feral cats on the endangered northern bettong.



Cameron O'Mara
Heathcote Local to Landscape Facilitator

Having worked professionally in bushland management for six years, Cameron is now applying the knowledge and skills gained in this field to larger scale landscape restoration projects. Managing environmental projects across the Mornington Peninsula Shire and City of Monash has allowed Cameron to see the broader picture of how ecological restoration should look. Bringing an interest in environmental anthropology through study at Deakin University, Cameron understands the values people hold can help us see how we all relate to our natural environment.



Sarah Smith
Network Member and Operations Manager

With over 20 years working for not-for-profits and start-up businesses, Sarah brings extensive experience in operations, customer service and project management. Sarah is passionate about regenerating landscapes and has studied Conservation and Eco-system Management. Utilising her background in strategy, stakeholder engagement and systems development, she is focused on empowering and enabling collaboration with our Network Members.



Georgia Gross
Senior Communications Manager

Georgia has a background in journalism and 15 years marketing communications experience in a multitude of sectors, including sustainability-focused enterprises, government and large not-for-profits both across Australia and the Asia Pacific. With a commitment to delivering tangible and sustainable results and a focus on developing sound stakeholder relationships, Georgia believes in the vital importance of creating strategic and compelling communications and content that supports, involves and mobilises people to act.



Ellie McKenna
Relations Manager

Ellie joined the Biolinks Alliance team in 2019, after volunteering with the organisation. With a background in administration, customer relations and events, Ellie focuses on developing mutually beneficial supporter relationships that are driven to deliver on the ground impact for our environment. Throughout her career, Ellie has been involved in a variety of projects from grassroots to corporate and international events. Growing up on a farm in the Macedon Ranges, she holds a deep connection to the Central Victorian landscape and its communities.



Sasha Dobson
Programs Manager

With ten years experience in agencies and production houses, Sasha's career has ranged across operations, team leadership and project management. Her experience working for and alongside some of Australia's best creatives has provided her with exemplary business efficiency, process and management skills. Sasha has delivered award-winning projects for top tier clients both across Australia and internationally.



Kara Finlay
Greenhill to Black Hill and Kangaroo Creek Project Coordinator

As a project manager and coordinator, with skills and expertise gained from a career in the United States and Australia, Kara has produced results for complex projects with multidisciplinary teams. With an eye for detail and excellent interpersonal and planning skills, Kara has worked across many sectors, including the arts, local government, not-for-profit, conservation and built environments.



Wanda Millicer
Bookkeeper

Wanda has been part of the Biolinks Alliance team for close to 4 years - bringing her 20 year experience as a bookkeeper and BAS Agent, and a keen eye for detail and engaging manner. Wanda has volunteered with numerous Landcare and Friends groups in Central Victoria, and has a deep passion for conservation and sustainability.

Thank You

Thank you to our generous supporters who enable us to help restore and protect Central Victoria's ecosystems. Without you, we could not move at the pace and scale we need to save our environment.

Donors

Adriana Corona Moth, Amanda May, Angela and Andrew Wood, Anthony Hyde, Barbara James, Benjamin Yap, Bernadette Gould, Bill Cook, Bindy Gross, Brian Snape, Bronwen Willis, Cassinia Environmental, Chris Johnston, Christiane Jaeger, Danielle Anzai, Deanna Smith, Denis Gibson & Jeff Appleton, Di Foggo, Di Pearton, Ed Hyde, Eliza Tree, Elizabeth Peck, Fitzgerald Frisby Landscape Architecture, G&V Hardwick, Gayle Osborne, Geoff Van Den Boogard, Georgia Gross, Gill Rosier, Gio Fitzpatrick, Graham Connell, Holly Weston, Ian Darnton-Hill, Ian Onley, Ila Brown, Iris Bergmann, Isaacson-Davis Foundation, Jacques Botes, James McGinlay, Jennifer & Stephen Charles, Jennifer Anderson, Jennifer Rolland, Jenny Zimmerman, Jo Stewart, John Barkla, Jye Tebble, Kerrie Jennings, Lachlan Milne, Leon Metzeling & Julia Reed, Lincoln Kern, Linda Bradbury, Lindy Shelmerdine, Lisa Cox, Louise Barton, Lucina Howson, Lucy Zimmerman, Lynn Evans, Mandy Gange, Margot McDonald, Mark Hall, Mark Toohty, Matthew Luttick, Maureen Sladdin, Megan Sharkie, Pam Munro-Smith, Paul Binns, Penelope & Hilary Roberts, Quercus Fund, Revium, Rob Youl, Roger Cook, Ross Goldingay, Sally Carr, Sally Rogers, Sarah Smith, Stephanie Stribley, Sue Holmes, Tania Nally, Tanya Castleman, The Alf & Meg Steel Foundation, TREC, Trevor Spiers, Wildlife Unlimited, Will Burrell, Will Jones, Yovie Saputra

Ambassadors

Brian Snape

In kind supporters

Alistair Rayner, Amanda Marburg, Amos Atkinson, Andrew Joyner, Animus Distillery, Annette Reeves, Cameron Robbins, Chris Hartnett, Chris Joyner, Daniel Butterworth, Daniel Young, John Barkla, Darren Grover, David Moffatt, Eva Thieu, Flynn Silver, Gardening Australia, Genevieve Wearne, Geoff Murray, Graham Connell, Helen M Cole, Ian Drummond, Jane & Ray Lacey, Jason Waterhouse, John van Tiggelen, John Walter, Karen Hayman, Kelsey Macdonald, Kieren McGrath, Kyneton Ridge Estate, Lindy Shelmerdine, Lizzie Matthews, Lucie Howson, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Margie Jenkin, Marita Davis, Mark Howson, Matt Butterworth, Matt Wright, Meg Mathews, Michael Sermershein, Mount Williams Advanced Trees, Oliver Cole, Paul McCarthy, Peter D Cole, Phil Wilkinson, Piper Street Wine Co, Rob Law, Sam Slicer, Steven Lynch, Stuart Fraser, Tania Nally, The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Tim Jones, Tristan Derham, Vanessa Lucas, Waminda Packer, Wendy Radford, William Nuttall

"I choose to volunteer with Biolinks Alliance as I want to be confident my donation of time and expertise is contributing to measurable improvement to my local environment."

Tania Nally, Biolinks Alliance donor and volunteer

Treasurer's Report

Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance (CVBA) Treasurer's report – year ended 30 June 2023

I am pleased to present the attached CVBA financial report for the financial year ended 30 June 2023.

The financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (the Act). This report has been prepared by me in my capacity as a qualified professional accountant. The Board has determined that the Alliance is not a reporting entity.

Financial summary for 2022/23

The CVBA reported a deficit of \$76k for the 2022/23 financial year (2021/22 – surplus of \$69k), with income of \$717k being offset by expenditure of \$793k.

The main source of income for CVBA came from donations and grants. Other income of \$62k was also received.

Income from private donations totalled \$160k. The unwavering support from Biolinks Alliance's dedicated and generous donors remains the cornerstone of our financial stability, empowering Biolinks Alliance to forge a significant impact continually.

Grant income was \$492k comprised of The Ian Potter Foundation \$150k, RE Ross Trust \$100k, DEECA \$72.6k, Parks Victoria \$50k, Latrobe University \$45.6k, North Central Catchment Management Authority \$22.3k, Bush Heritage Australia \$19k, WIRES \$17.7k, Macedon Ranges Shire Council \$7.1k, Australian Communities Foundation \$5k and Kyneton Primary School \$2.7k.

Major items of expenditure were as follows

- Salaries and wages (including superannuation) of \$446k
- Project Expenses \$152k
- Contractor Expenses of \$71k
- Low Value Equipment of \$25k
- Staff Mileage of \$12k
- Venue and Equipment Hire of \$11k
- Advertising and marketing of \$11k
- Accounting fees of \$10k
- Software and IT of \$6k
- Workcover of \$6k
- Catering of \$6k

Closing funds at 30 June 2023 were \$442k (2022: \$551k) and net assets (total assets less liabilities) totalled \$433k (2022: \$509k)

However, it should be noted that as of 30 June 2023 there was approximately \$378k to be spent in future years on current projects.

At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

Patrick J. Scanlon

Pat Scanlon FCA
October 2023

Balance Sheet

Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance Inc.
As at 30 June 2023

Account	30 Jun 2023	30 Jun 2022
Assets		
Bank		
Expense Account	3,033	1,654
Main Account	123,605	100,730
Public Fund Account	315,357	449,113
Total Bank	441,995	551,498
Current Assets		
Accounts Receivable	3,643	
Prepayments	1,449	0
Total Current Assets	5,092	0
Fixed Assets		
Computer Equipment	7,502	7,502
Motor Vehicle	44,922	0
Office Equipment	0	1,500
Less Accumulated Depreciation on Computer Equipment	(7,502)	(5,386)
Less Accumulated Depreciation on Motor Vehicle	(1,248)	0
Less Accumulated Depreciation on Office Equipment	0	(1,500)
Total Fixed Assets	43,674	2,117
Total Assets	490,761	553,614
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	27,386	6,132
PAYG Withholdings Payable	6,700	15,327
Provision for Annual Leave	14,315	10,687
Provision for Leave in Lieu	1,339	1,339
Superannuation Payable	3,344	7,454
Total Current Liabilities	53,085	40,939
Non-current Liabilities		
Provision for Long Service Leave	4,643	3,421
Total Non-current Liabilities	4,643	3,421
Total Liabilities	57,728	44,360
Net Assets	433,034	509,254
Equity		
Current Year Earnings	(76,220)	69,036
Retained Earnings	509,254	440,218
Total Equity	433,034	509,254

Profit and Loss

Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance Inc.
For the year ended 30 June 2023

Account	2023	2022
Trading Income		
Donations	160,075	126,990
Grant Income	492,034	417,800
Interest Income	3,366	360
Other Income	61,761	7,344
Total Trading Income	717,236	552,494
Operating Expenses		
Accounting Fees	9,833	5,050
Advertising & Marketing	10,691	6,552
Auditing Expenses	2,200	3,938
Bank Fees	159	71
Catering	5,902	2,187
Consulting & Accounting	27	0
Contractors - Other	70,996	73,365
Depreciation	3,365	2,117
Donation Expenses	974	20
Employee Entitlements	4,850	8,782
Events	3,213	565
Freight & Courier	155	0
Fundraising Expenses	4,898	7,827
General Expenses	325	0
Gifts	291	35
Insurance	1,030	1,030
Low value equipment	25,230	0
Meals & Entertainment	344	349
Motor Vehicle Expenses	233	140
Office Expenses	3,110	1,446
Postage & Mail	153	144
Printing & Stationery	583	2,487
Project Equipment	3,134	0
Project expense	152,365	60,285
Software & IT	6,287	4,982
Staff Amenities	310	69
Staff Mileage	11,849	1,842
Superannuation	42,388	26,678
Tea Towels For Resale	0	1,050
Telephone & Internet	1,423	0
Training	3,924	0
Travel & Accommodation	2,184	1,972
Venue & equipment hire	11,151	132
Wages and Salaries	403,700	266,779
Workcover	6,179	3,563
Total Operating Expenses	793,456	483,458
Net (Deficit)/Surplus	(76,220)	69,036

Audit Report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance Inc. for the year ended 30th June, 2023

Scope

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of CENTRAL VICTORIAN BIOLINKS ALLIANCE INC., which comprises the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June, 2023, the Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the Board's assertion statement.

Officers' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Board of CENTRAL VICTORIAN BIOLINKS ALLIANCE INC. are responsible for the preparation of the financial report and have determined that the entity is not a reporting entity and that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members.

The Board's responsibility also includes such internal controls as the Board determines are necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Board's responsibility also includes assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable matters relating to going concern, and using the going concern basis for accounting unless the Board intends to liquidate the entity or to cease operations or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error.

In making those risk assessments the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Board's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Board's internal controls.

An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Board, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Qualifications

It is not practical for the entity to maintain an effective system of internal control over Donations and Fund Raising income until their entry in the accounting records. Accordingly my audit in relation to these cash receipts was limited to amounts recorded.

Recognition of income in accordance with Note 1(f) is dependent upon a review of the contracts which may relate to the awarding of grants and donations. As it is impracticable for me to review all such contracts my audit relies on representations of the Board as to the timing of the recognition of revenue in accordance with this policy.

Audit Opinion

In our opinion, subject to the qualifications noted above, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of CENTRAL VICTORIAN BIOLINKS ALLIANCE INC. as at 30 June 2023, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the reporting requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012*.

Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist CENTRAL VICTORIAN BIOLINKS ALLIANCE INC. to meet the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Dated at Lower Plenty: 13 October, 2023



Fred Gerardson
Chartered Accountant
Registered Company Auditor
Partner

Colville Williams & Co. Pty.Ltd
99 Main Road, Lower Plenty VIC 3093

Cameron O'Mara, Heathcote Local to Landscape Facilitator installing a nest box on a landholder's property in Heathcote.
Photo credit: Chris Pocknee, Landscape and Biodiversity Conservation Ecologist.



Get Involved

Discover more about our work to urgently restore and protect large landscapes across Central Victoria.

Subscribe to our e-newsletter via biolinksalliance.org.au and follow us on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Support our work

We rely on the generosity of our valued donors and volunteers to continue our work. Together, we can reconnect and restore large landscapes.

Click here to [Donate](#)

Click here to [Volunteer](#)



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