

Speakers: Connecting People, Connecting Nature Conference
18-19 October, Queensland Multicultural Centre, Brisbane

Welcome and context setting



Gary Howling
Chief Executive Officer of Great Eastern Ranges

With a long involvement in connectivity conservation, Gary's work is grounded in a passion for conserving wildlife migration across eastern Australia – a topic he considers one of the great untold stories in global ecology. Since joining the Great Eastern Ranges team as one of its original members in 2007, Gary has been a leader in providing specialist connectivity conservation advice, and was instrumental in initiating a series of large-scale spatial analyses that highlighted the importance of maintaining networks of interconnected habitats that support ecological and human well-being.

Opening address



Dr Fiona Fraser
Australian Government Threatened Species Commissioner, Biodiversity Conservation Division, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

As the Threatened Species Commissioner Fiona's role is to champion the implementation of strategies and practical conservation actions to recover our most imperilled plants and animals. Using the principles of science, action and partnership, Fiona works with First Nations people, conservation organisations, governments, communities and the private sector. Fiona has a PhD in threatened species and fire ecology in northern Australia. She has worked for the Australian Government for over a decade playing lead roles in Indigenous caring for country and natural resource management, international environment policy and co-led the bushfire wildlife recovery response. Before joining the public service, she worked with First Nations organisations in northern Australia on caring for country programs and joint management of protected areas.

Keynote 1:
The global status of connectivity conservation



Dr Gary Tabor
Founder and President of the Centre for Large Landscape Conservation,
Chair IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group

Dr Gary Tabor is an American environmentalist with over 30 years' experience working on behalf of connectivity conservation initiatives internationally. This has included co-founding a number of foundations, such as Yellowstone to Yukon and the Centre for Large Landscape Conservation. Tabor is known for his role as a catalyst in forwarding progress through large landscape conservation, pioneering the fields of Conservation Medicine and EcoHealth, and advising agencies and organisations about contemporary environmental issues.

Keynote 2: How connectivity conservation can help meet our international climate, biodiversity & health goals



Prof Brendan Mackey
Director of the Climate Action Beacon at Griffith University

Prof Mackey has published extensively on the science of connectivity conservation including landmark reports, book chapters and journal articles. He served on the IUCN Council from 2009-2016 and was a Coordinating Lead Author for the IPCC 6th Assessment Report on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation. Brendan is Director of the Climate Action Beacon at Griffith University, Queensland.

Delivering Nature-based Solutions through connectivity



Virginia Young
Board Director, Great Eastern Ranges

Virginia contributes to an international research project on primary forests lead by Griffith University, working to increase understanding of the linkages between climate, biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. Her voluntary roles include, Chair of Gondwana Link and Board member of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative – collaborative, ‘connectivity conservation’ programmes that deliver robust, integrated climate and biodiversity outcomes. A past president of the Australian Committee of IUCN, she continues to support the work of IUCN through involvement in the IUCN Task Force on ‘Primary Forests including Intact Forest Landscapes’ and the World Commission on Protected Areas Climate Change Specialist Group.

The importance of First Nations involvement in caring for Country



Rachael Cavanagh
Community Partnerships and Stakeholders Engagement Manager, Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation

Rachael Cavanagh is a Minyungabul wajung. She is the Community Partnerships and Stakeholders Engagement Manager and a member of the executive team at Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation. Rachael has 20 years' experience in the environmental sector. Alongside her professional expertise, Rachael is also an advocate for First Nations rights and is a valued member of the communities she works alongside.

Improving biodiversity offsetting for threatened species and communities



Prof Martine Maron
Professor of Environmental Management at the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Queensland

Martine Maron's research group works on problems in environmental policy and conservation ecology, particularly the conservation and recovery of Australia's threatened birds and woodland bird assemblages, and biodiversity offset policy. Martine chairs the IUCN's Impact Mitigation and Ecological Compensation Thematic Group and is currently President of BirdLife Australia.

The essential role of NRM organisations in connectivity conservation



Stephen Robertson
Chairman, NRM Regions Queensland

Stephen Robertson is a consulting expert in environmental sustainability and natural resource management and was elected inaugural Chair of Healthy Land and Water in 2016. Prior to joining Healthy Land and Water, Stephen was a member of the Queensland Parliament for 20 years, serving as a senior Government Minister for 13 years. Stephen is highly regarded for his insight and ability to identify emerging challenges and develop strategies to effectively deal with them. He is passionate about community engagement and collaboration and is dedicated to finding science-based solutions to environmental issues affecting South East Queensland and beyond.

Session intro and context setting



Lynn Baker
Ecologist, Researcher and Partner of Canines for Wildlife

As an ecologist with a focus on threatened species, Lynn has championed partnerships for connectivity conservation including the GER, Jaliigirr and Border Ranges Biodiversity Alliances and Northern Rivers Fire and Biodiversity Consortium. She has worked with Aboriginal elders, rangers and communities across Australia supporting the implementation of culturally appropriate land management. For the past eight years Lynn has specialised in working with scent detection dogs for threatened and pest species research, community education and conservation programs. She is currently a partner with Canines for Wildlife.

Animating the carbon cycle through rewilding



Magnus Sylvén
Co-Director, Global Rewilding Alliance

Magnus Sylvén co-founded the Global Rewilding Alliance in 2020 and has been acting co-director since January 2021. Magnus is an animal ecologist (PhD) by training and has worked for the Swedish Government (research), WWF (International & Sweden), Rewilding Europe and the WILD Foundation, and as an independent consultant since 2007. Magnus is passionate about wildlife and has an interest in the interface between conservation, climate and what drives change in society. Magnus co-authored the Global Charter for Rewilding the Earth: Advancing nature-based solutions to the extinction and climate crises, with its 12 guiding principles, which serves as the foundation for the Global Rewilding Alliance with its 130+ members spread across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America and North America. Magnus works closely with the Great Eastern Ranges as part of global core group in the promotion of the rewilding concept worldwide.

Extending biodiversity indicators to better inform connectivity planning at local to global scale



Dr Simon Ferrier
Chief Research Scientist, CSIRO Land & Water and Honorary Fellow, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Before joining CSIRO in 2008, Simon Ferrier spent more than 20 years working with NSW government agencies, where he pioneered a wide range of approaches to modelling biodiversity across space and time, and of techniques for employing such models in conservation prioritisation, land-use planning, and natural resource management activities across that state. More recently, Simon and his CSIRO team have been developing a new generation of macroecological approaches to biodiversity modelling, scenario analysis, and decision support and applying these techniques at regional, national and global scales.

The role of rivers and wetlands in continental connectivity



Prof Jamie Pittock
Professor at the Fenner School of Environment & Society, Australian National University

Professor Jamie Pittock worked for environmental organisations in Australia and internationally from 1989-2007, including as Director of WWF's Global Freshwater Programme (2001-2007). His research focusses on better governance of the interlinked issues of water management, energy and food supply, responding to climate change and conserving biological diversity. He researches on irrigation in Africa, hydropower and food production in the Mekong region, and sustainable water management in the Murray-Darling Basin. Among other roles, Jamie is a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and chairs the Eminent Scientists Group of WWF Australia. He is President of Friends of Grasslands.

Connecting people with the land as a vehicle for positive environmental and social transformation in New Zealand



Eamon Nathan
Pou Manatū (General Manager) of Reconnecting Northland

Eamon is passionate about leadership that shifts from assuming the sovereignty of humans to acknowledging the mana (spiritual power) of nature to build more cohesive and resilient communities. Eamon currently holds the position of Pou Manatū (General Manager) with Reconnecting Northland, a programme with the goal of achieving large-scale ecological wellbeing to support livelihoods of Northland peoples. Eamon will share insights and stories about the role of the migratory pīpiwharauoa (shining bronze cuckoo) as an indicator of seasons, availability of food sources and source of inspiration.

Reducing barriers to wildlife movement



Dr Rodney van der Ree
National Technical Executive at WSP Australia and Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne

Dr Rodney van der Ree has international recognition for his expertise in urban ecology and transportation ecology and has worked across Australia and internationally, including Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. He published the international award-winning “Handbook of Road Ecology” (Wiley, 2015) and founded www.TransportEcology.info in 2021. He has sat on expert advisory committees for the Victorian, Swedish, and New Zealand transport agencies and has >80 refereed scientific publications.

Exploring climate ready, nature-based solutions



Tim Cronin
Senior Manager, Landscape Restoration and Protection, WWF - Australia

Tim has spent over 15 years working at the intersection of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, the last ten years at WWF-Australia. Tim currently leads WWF’s Healthy Land and Seascapes department, which includes the Species, Landscapes and Oceans programs, covering Australia and the Asia Pacific region. WWF develops integrated responses to complex environmental problems that tend to involve a combination of on-ground innovation, market transformation and policy reform. Tim has led programs focusing on bushfire recovery in South East Australia, indigenous-led natural resource management Myanmar, peatland restoration in Indonesia, illegal logging trade policy and responsible sourcing of palm oil.

Using soundscapes to monitor change at the continental scale



Prof David Watson
Professor in Ecology, Charles Sturt University

Professor Dave Watson leads a group of researchers working at the interface between community ecology and landscape-scale restoration. In addition to distributional dynamics, Dave’s team develops new ways to estimate biodiversity, pioneering the use of results-based stopping rules to standardize diversity estimates and collaborating with computer scientists to detect species automatically from long-duration recordings. Having recently established the Australian Acoustic Observatory with a team of other researchers, Dave’s current research extends to sandalwood management in the western desert, wildlife conservation in agricultural landscapes, and mistletoe ecology and evolution worldwide. Ongoing projects include the development and manufacture of future-proof nest boxes (using 3D-printed plastics), working with landholders to maximise Carbon sequestration in on-farm habitats, and using strategic interventions to keep common species common.

Session intro and context setting



Jimmiel Mandima
Vice President for Global Programs at the International Fund for Animal Welfare

Jimmiel Mandima has worked in wildlife conservation for close to 30 years, the majority of which were spent in the field working with governments, civil society, local communities and private sector stakeholders at national, regional and continental levels in sub-Saharan Africa to implement landscape conservation programs. He thereafter worked on the nexus of government relations and strategic partnerships in Washington DC, engaging with NGOs, US government agencies, and international organizations—including the Global Environment Facility, UN agencies, and the World Bank Group. Today, Jimmiel serves as IFAW's Vice President for Global Programs and Institutional Giving, leading the organization's Conservation and Rescue program efforts across 40 countries partnering with diverse stakeholders around the world.

The Great Eastern Ranges initiative - creating corridors of effort



Bob Debus AM
Chair of Great Eastern Ranges

Bob Debus worked as a lawyer, publisher and then broadcaster for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, followed by eighteen years as a member of the State Government of NSW and the Commonwealth Government of Australia. From 1989 to 1994 he served as the National Director for the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign. During his time in Government, Bob held numerous ministerial portfolios including Federal Minister for Home Affairs, State Attorney General and State Minister for Emergency Services. As NSW Environment Minister from 1999 to 2007 he succeeded in expanding the national park estate to 1.8 million hectares and took a leadership role in the development of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative. Upon retirement from the Australian Parliament, Bob became the Chair of a National Advisory Group which guided the development of the National Wildlife Corridors Plan, a strategy adopted by the Australian Government in 2012.

The many hands of connectivity conservation in Queensland's south east



Liz Gould
Principal Scientist, Healthy Land & Water

From backyards to bioregions and beyond, Liz Gould has been enjoying and connecting with nature her whole life. Through various roles over 30 years with state and local governments and corporate and community organisations, Liz has gained substantial knowledge of a wide range of natural resource management issues, specialising in wildlife habitats, conservation connectivity and threatened species and ecosystems. Liz believes in the power of communities and individuals to drive the changes needed to conserve nature. Liz has managed small and large scale projects and programs and currently runs several conservation initiatives with Healthy Land and Water. Liz holds voluntary positions as Director with the Great Eastern Ranges and Chair of Kholo Creek Catchment Group and is a former member of the Gondwana World Heritage Area Technical and Scientific Committee.

Employing a One Health lens to farming



Dr Robyn Alders AO
Chair of Upper Lachlan Branch of NSW Farmers Federation and Senior consulting fellow at Chatham House Global Health Program

Robyn Alders AO, BVSc, PhD, is an Honorary Professor (Australian National University and Royal Veterinary College, UK) and a Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House Global Health Programme. For over 30 years, she has worked closely with smallholder farmers in resource-limited settings with an emphasis on sustainable, gender-sensitive livestock production in support of food and nutrition security through a One Health lens. In 2012, Robyn returned to Australia and is based on her merino sheep farm (and transitioning to regenerative management) on the NSW Southern Tablelands. She is Chair of the Upper Lachlan NSW Farmers' Association Branch.

Securing a future for elephants in India



Vivek Menon

Founder and Director of Wildlife Trust of India, IUCN Councillor, and award-winning wildlife conservationist, author and photographer

Vivek Menon is an Indian wildlife conservationist, environmental commentator, author, and photographer with a passion for elephants and birds. He is the Founder and Executive Director of the Wildlife Trust of India, author or editor of ten wildlife books and hundreds of articles on natural history. In India, he plays a role in advising the Government on natural heritage conservation as a part of several national committees as well as having been part of the Indian delegations to CITES, UNESCO and CMS. Internationally, Menon is the current Councilor of the IUCN, Member of the IUCN SSC and Chairperson of its Asian Elephant Specialist Group. He is also the Chairperson of the Amphibian Survival Alliance Global Council.

Engaging landholders to create corridors for koalas



Linda Sparrow

President of Bangalow Koalas

Linda Sparrow has been President of Bangalow Koalas from the inception in April 2016. Raised in the Blue Mountains, Linda grew up with the bush in her back yard and a love for nature and animals. Bangalow Koalas' mission is to plant 500,000 trees by the end of 2025, with a long-term goal of 1 million by end of 2030. The goal is to help communities restore and create an extensive wildlife corridor that connects existing sections of fragmented koala habitat with new habitat, creating a corridor from Byron Bay and surrounds, heading westward to Tenterfield, north to the Queensland border and south towards Grafton NSW.

Working on Country in Gondwana Link



Keith Bradby

CEO of Gondwana Link

Keith is currently CEO of Gondwana Link, which he was instrumental in establishing in 2002, and is also Deputy Chair of the National Landcare Network. He is a long-time advocate for the ecological values of south-western Australia and the strength of grass roots work. As a community based activist in the early 1980s he helped halt the clearing of some 3 million hectares of public land for marginal agriculture and as a concerned local was involved with establishing some of Australia's earliest Landcare groups and Australia's first activated Biosphere Reserve program. Keith has consulted to emerging large landscape efforts in New Zealand, southern Africa and Mexico.

Creating bush corridors on the north coast through assisted natural regeneration



Alan Goldstein

Projects/Grant Manager, Goonengerry Landcare Group

Alan is a passionate advocate for our natural environment who has been restoring a 30 hectare ex-dairy farm into a functioning rainforest over the last 25 years, while assisting others to learn to do the same. He believes that strong connected local communities are a vital part of the way to achieve sustainable, healthy & connected ecosystems solutions, allowing us and the planet to adapt to our changing climate.

Session intro and context setting



Dr Rebecca Spindler

Executive Manager of Science and Conservation, Bush Heritage Australia

Rebecca has been engaged in the Australian and international conservation science sector for over 20 years with experience in USA, China and South America when working for the Smithsonian Institution and in Australia in government and non-government agencies. After 10 years as Head of Science and Conservation at Taronga Conservation Society she joined Bush Heritage Australia as Executive Manager, Science and Conservation. Her team guides conservation and knowledge building strategies, facilitates inclusive planning and generates collaborative approaches to science, conservation action and best practice impact reporting. Rebecca is a co-founder of the Conservation Futures project with Prof Brendan Wintle from University of Melbourne.

What's the risk?



Mick Callan

Director and Principal Terrestrial Ecologist,
Habitat Innovation & Management

Mick Callan is recognised as one of Australia's leading experts in hollow dependent fauna. Mick is one half of the technical design team who have developed Habitech Nest Boxes. Mick has a history of implementing award winning environmental projects including and has worked in private consulting, as well as with both State and Local Government agencies. Mick has specialist skills in Ornithology and is a recipient of Birdlife Australia's Gavin Jackson Memorial Prize for his academic achievements in ornithological studies, as well as his dedication to the field of ornithology.



Carl Tippler

Director and Principal Aquatic & Riparian Ecologist,
Habitat Innovation & Management

Carl Tippler is acknowledged as an innovative leader in aquatic and riparian ecosystem monitoring and management. Carl is one half of the technical design team who have developed Habitech Nest Boxes. Carl has in-depth knowledge of the development and application of landscape scale ecological and waterway planning, biodiversity monitoring frameworks, ecosystem health guidelines, ecological impact assessment and adaptive ecological management. Carl is a former recipient of the NSW and Australian Urban Landcare Award and winner of the NSW and VIC Stormwater Association Award for Innovation.

Developing social enterprises that care for Country while returning economic benefits



Shilo Villaflor

Regional Manager, Aboriginal Carbon Foundation

Shilo Villaflor is a proud Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander woman. Her great Grandmother was a descendant of the Wagiman Peoples (NT). She has historical & traditional ties to the Torres Strait & Cape York Peninsula. For 20 years Shilo worked in Native Title in Cape York and is committed to real change and empowerment in Aboriginal communities. Shilo established close working relationships in Cape York & formed treasured family bonds whilst assisting in their legal fight to get their Native Title rights & interests recognised. Joining the AbCF in April 2019 was a stepping stone from Native Title into continued work with Traditional Owners to be able to create a real income stream once land has a consent determination of native title. Making real change in peoples' lives, alongside working with pastoralists and farmers to assist keeping people on their land through possible carbon projects is an aspect of the business Shilo is passionate about and committed to.

Ecological restoration and human health: let's identify and strengthen the linkages



Dr James Aronson

Co-founder of the Ecological Health Network and Senior Scientist Emeritus at the Center for Conservation and Sustainable Development, Missouri Botanical Garden

James Aronson is senior scientist emeritus, Missouri Botanical Garden, Center for Conservation and Sustainable Development and co-founder of the Ecological Health Network, which focuses on studying and strengthening linkages between ecosystem health and human health and wellbeing through ecological restoration and allied restorative activities. From 1992–2016, he was researcher at the CEFE, CNRS laboratory in Montpellier, France. He has participated in ecological restoration and rehabilitation projects in many parts of the world and written many widely cited papers and co-authored or co-edited many textbooks on restoration ecology. He served as a Board member of the Society for Ecological Restoration, and as editor-in-chief of SER's book series on the Science and Practice of Ecological Restoration published with Island Press.

Using reproductive science for species conservation



Dr Justine O'Brien

Manager Conservation Science, Taronga Conservation Society Australia

Dr Justine O'Brien is a reproductive biologist with more than 20 years' experience in wildlife research, specialising in strategies that enhance natural and assisted breeding efforts, for maintaining population genetic diversity and reproductive health. Justine is the Manager of Conservation Science at the Taronga Conservation Society Australia where she supports a multidisciplinary team and works closely with government and non-government organisations to undertake and embed rigorous science in programs conserving biological diversity and ecological processes.

Encouraging commercial models to fund conservation and restoration



Dr Jody Gunn

CEO of Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA)

Jody Gunn is committed to the conservation of land, water and culture at national and international scales. She is a conservation scientist with executive level management experience spanning over two decades. Jody's career has included academia, non-government and government organisations, with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Melbourne, Australia and a PhD from Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, UK.

Empowering young people to save the natural world



James Forbes

CEO of Jane Goodall Institute Australia

Prior to joining the Jane Goodall Institute Australia as CEO in 2018, James held senior marketing and fundraising roles with the Nature Conservation Trust of NSW Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, and WWF-Australia. Since joining JGIA, he has led its growth as a driver of youth environmental education, doubling the size of the organisation and reaching around 135,000 young people each year with the signature Resource Box for Schools Program. He is the co-author of a peer reviewed paper, 'Monitoring and evaluating the social and psychological dimensions that contribute to privately protected area program effectiveness' and in 2019 James was appointed to the Board of the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group.

Community-led resilience planning



Dr Melissa Jackson
Transdisciplinary Research Fellow, Griffith University

Melissa Jackson is a transdisciplinary researcher and 'pracademic' specialising in sustainable, inclusive and just responses to climate change and sustainable development. Her recent research focuses on the theory and practice of transformative governance of water in Indigenous communities across remote Australia, focusing on the Torres Strait Islands. Melissa also researches questions relating to applications of systemic thinking, futures thinking collaborative learning and governance for sustainable development, community engagement, stakeholder engagement, facilitation and capacity building for climate resilient futures. She has extensive experience in research and project management, strategy and policy development in relation to climate change mitigation and clean energy, sustainable water, waste, food and climate adaptation.

Our hosts and sponsors

Conference Host



Great Eastern Ranges

The Great Eastern Ranges (GER) brings people together to protect, connect and restore healthy landscapes across 3,600km of eastern Australia. Since 2007, we have been working with our partners to stem the loss of native wildlife and their habitats, provide natural solutions to the climate crisis, protect precious resources, and ensure thriving, resilient landscapes and ecosystems for nature and people. By working together and supporting efforts in the highest priority places, we can achieve something far greater than the sum of our parts – securing the future of one of the world's great landscapes and the wildlife and communities that live within.

Rainforest Sponsor



International Fund for Animal Welfare

IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. Working in more than forty countries, IFAW rescues, rehabilitates and releases animals, and restores and protects their natural habitats.

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The Ian Potter Foundation is a major Australian philanthropic foundation that supports and promotes excellence and innovation. The Foundation was established in 1964 by Australian financier, businessman and philanthropist, Sir Ian Potter (1902 – 1994).

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Habitat Innovation & Management

Recognised leaders in ecosystem management and monitoring. Habitat Innovation and Management provide innovative and practical solutions to create natural systems where Australia's biodiversity and people will thrive. Designer of the revolutionary Habitech™ Modular Nest Boxes which provide critical habitat for Australian fauna.

Flannel Flower Sponsor



Healthy Land and Water

Healthy Land and Water is the peak environmental group for South East Queensland. For over 20 years it has been dedicated to investing in and leading initiatives to build the prosperity, liveability, and sustainability of our 'future region'.