



For life on Earth

The current mass extinction of the world's flora and fauna is creating a lonelier planet. Australia is a major culprit - we have the worst record of mammal extinctions over the last 200 years. Victoria is facing an extinction crisis, with 44% of our native plants and 30% of our wildlife extinct or threatened.

Widespread loss of habitat and degradation of our air, water and soil are undermining nature's ability to adapt to our rapidly changing climate. Global warming is unleashing massive changes, stressing the already delicate balance of life and threatening our economic well being and water security. The impacts on nature and humanity will be devastating unless we take action.

A new vision is needed

Solutions need to be as big as the problems, and as Australia's most cleared state, the challenge in Victoria is even more urgent. Securing our future starts with protecting our forests, one of the world's biggest carbon stores; protecting wildlife habitat; restoring environmental flows into rivers; improving bushfire management; removing threats like woodchipping and feral animals; and replanting large areas.

Hope

In response, The Wilderness Society launched the Victorian WildCountry Campaign. Drawing upon cutting edge science from the WildCountry Science Council, this is a new vision to reduce climate change; restore and re-link nature; and protect wildlife in Victoria.

Wild Country

Wild Country

Real action on climate change

While National Parks and large wilderness areas play a critical role, they alone will not guarantee the survival of wildlife if they are islands in a sea of destruction. We need a different vision for the future.

The CSIRO expects climate change to make Victoria warmer and drier, increasing the threat to wildlife and placing pressure on water availability and the agricultural systems which underpin our way of life.

There are two things we must do:

1. Limit the **amount** of climate change to under 2°C globally;
2. Reduce the **impact** of climate change by preparing now for whatever climate change does happen.

1. Reduce the amount of climate change that will occur

Reducing emissions from fossil fuels is critical, but just as important is the protection of native vegetation (especially our forests) as carbon banks.

Logging Victoria's native forests contributes to dangerous change in two ways;

1. **Woodchipping destroys carbon banks** – Victoria's native forests are one of the world's largest carbon banks. Protecting them is critical to reducing climate change because they capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) and store it safely in the trees and soil. The bigger and older the forests are allowed to grow, the more carbon is safely stored in them and the surrounding ecosystem.
2. **Woodchipping increases carbon pollution** – Logging and soil disturbance from machinery releases dangerous CO₂ into the atmosphere. 75% of the wood removed by logging ends up as woodchips to make paper, which releases its carbon within 3 years.

Tragically Victoria's forests are being destroyed at a rate equivalent to 14 MCGs every day. This is despite the fact that we don't need to log native forests for woodchips – Victoria has Australia's largest plantation resource, more than enough to meet our needs.

2. Reduce the impact of climate change

1. **Protecting what's left** – protecting native vegetation both as carbon banks and habitat for wildlife in parks and reserves, including forests, grasslands, wetlands, coastal areas, oceans and reefs;
2. **Reconnecting nature** – creating biolinks by replanting areas with native vegetation. This will allow wildlife to survive climate change by giving them room to migrate and find refuge in new habitat, thereby avoiding extinction.
3. **Removing threats to nature, especially:**
 - feral animals such as deer, foxes and cats which kill and outcompete wildlife and destroy their habitat;
 - feral plants such as introduced salinity pasture grasses which escape into and destroy natural areas;
 - ending woodchipping in native forests and moving logging for woodchips into plantations.





Case study: A bushfire action plan which protects people, property and nature.

While fire is a natural part of the Australian landscape, current fire management practices do not imitate nature. A massive increase in 'hazard reduction burning' and 'fire breaks' is destroying nature, pushing wildlife closer to extinction and in many cases increasing the fire risk to people and property by making areas more fire prone.

With the onset of climate change, mega-bushfires that burn massive areas are expected to occur more often. That's why The Wilderness Society has developed a 6-point plan to reduce the bushfire risk and help protect people, property, wildlife and their habitat.

The Wilderness Society's 6-point bushfire plan

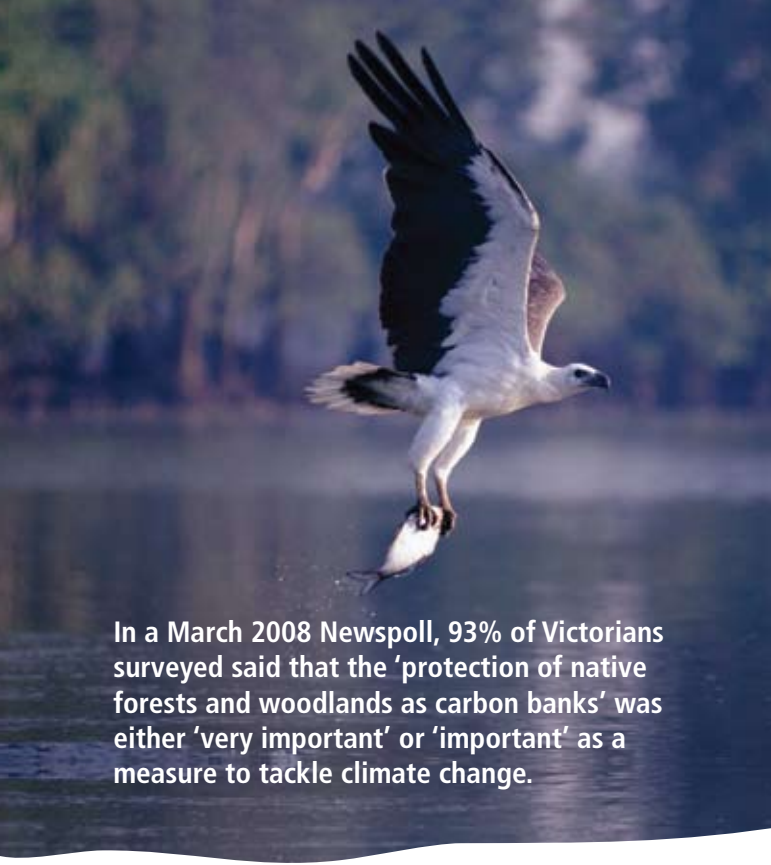
1. Improve aerial surveillance to detect bushfires as soon as they start.
2. Ramp up hi-tech, quick response capability including more 'Elvis' helicopters to fight bushfires as soon as they ignite.
3. More research into fire behaviour and the impact of fire on wildlife and their habitat.
4. Around towns and urban areas - prioritise the protection of life and property with fuel reduction and fire break management plans.
5. In remote areas and National Parks – prioritise the protection of wildlife and their habitat through scientifically-based fire management plans.
6. Make native forests resistant to mega-fires by protecting old-growth forests, rainforests and water catchments from woodchipping and moving logging into existing plantations.

Scientific research demonstrates that clearing and logging dries out landscapes, thereby making them more fire prone. Conversely as logging is reduced and forests recover they hold and store more moisture, increasing their fire resistance.



ABOVE TOP: A firefighter douses the flames at the fire front near Mansfield, December 2006. Bushfire management by the Victorian Government needs to change to protect people, property and wildlife. AAP

ABOVE TOP: Fewer than 1,000 Leadbeaters Possums (Victoria's faunal emblem) remain. They are threatened by logging and inappropriate fire management. FREDY MERCAY / ANTPHOTO.COM



In a March 2008 Newspoll, 93% of Victorians surveyed said that the 'protection of native forests and woodlands as carbon banks' was either 'very important' or 'important' as a measure to tackle climate change.

WildCountry vision for Victoria

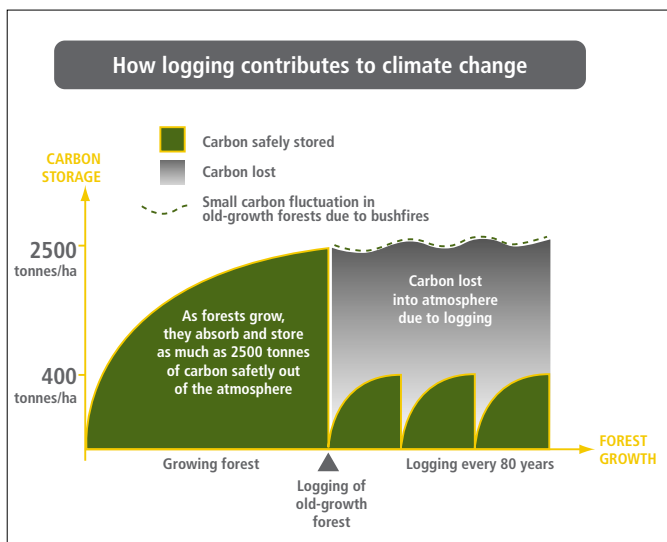
EXISTING BIOLINK: GREAT SOUTHERN SANCTUARY

- * Protect red gum wetlands, woodlands and native grasslands.
- * Control ferals (esp. deer, foxes, salinity pasture grasses).
- * Adopt bushfire management which protects people, property and wildlife.
- * Collaborate with Greening Australia's Habitat 141 program to re-connect areas by replanting native vegetation.

FUTURE BIOLINK: MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

- * More marine protected areas.
- * Remove threats:
 - over fishing.
 - inappropriate coastal development.
 - feral animals (eg: Pacific Seastar, Japanese Kelp, Broccoli Weed).

Existing National Parks
Existing Marine Parks

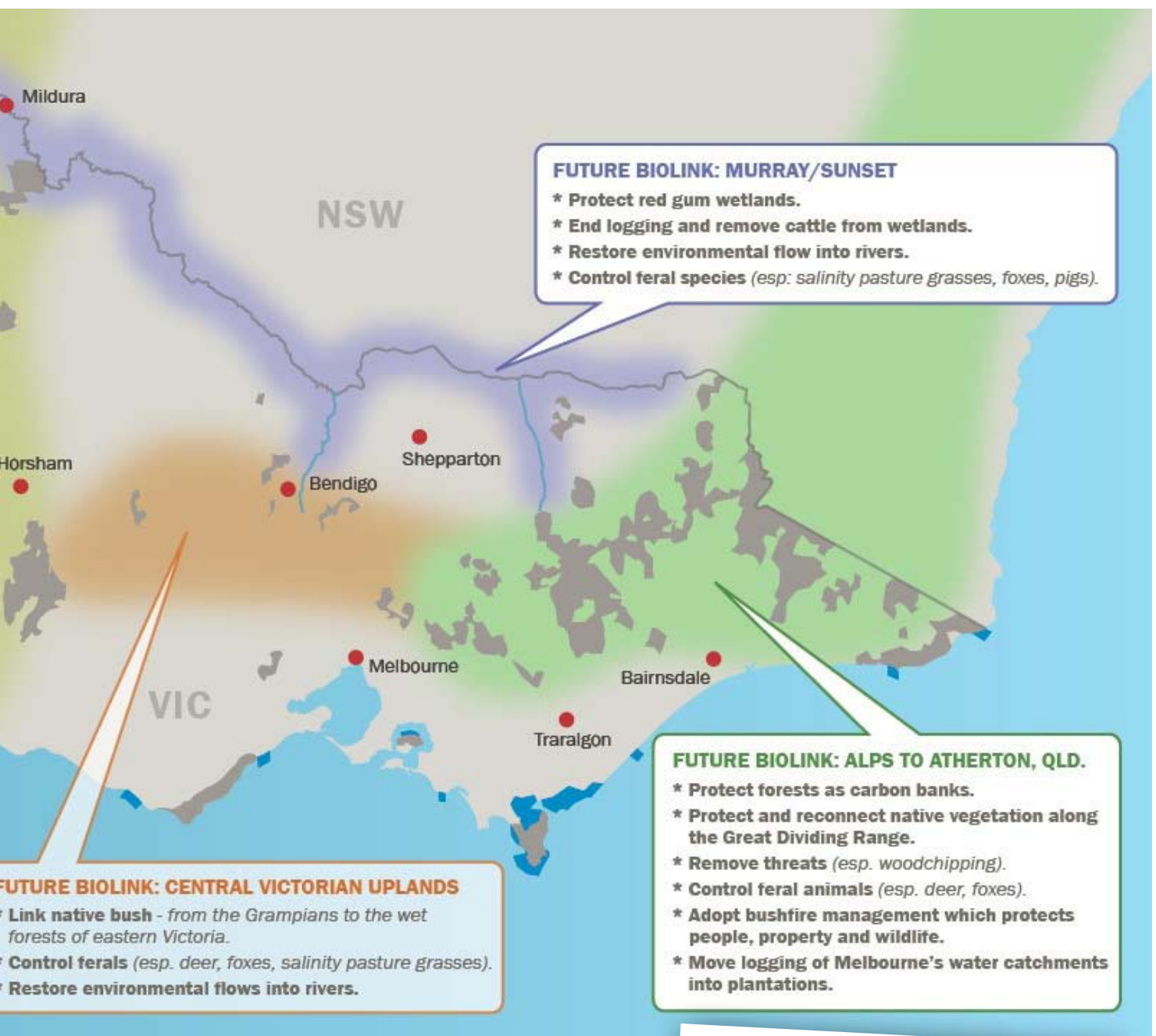


4. Restoring the flows of nature (ie. protecting ecosystems) – improve management of National Parks and other areas so that they can better cope with the impacts of climate change, especially:
- adopting bushfire management which protects people, property and wildlife
 - increasing environmental flows into rivers
 - reintroducing dingoes (Australia's top order predator) into their natural habitat to help restore the balance of nature.

If we achieve these three goals we will have come a long way towards implementing our WildCountry vision for Victoria. Realising this vision also requires us to draw on indigenous knowledge about how to protect nature and wildlife.



Co-operative work with indigenous communities can benefit nature and all Australians. For example The Wilderness Society is working closely with Murray and Lower Darling Region Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) to develop strategies which protect nature and meet indigenous aspirations for country.



Case Study: 'The Great Southern Sanctuary'

We have already started working towards our WildCountry vision in Victoria. The Great Southern Sanctuary is an ambitious program to protect and restore nature in western Victoria, southern NSW and eastern South Australia. The project aims to:

Protect – Cobboboonee forests in the south, red gum wetlands and mallee woodlands in the north;

Reconnect – Collaborate with Greening Australia's 'Habitat 141' program to replant areas to create wildlife corridors between National Parks;



Remove – Logging from red gum wetlands and weeds such as salinity pasture grasses;

Restore – Push government to implement bushfire management which protects people, property and wildlife and return environmental flows into rivers.



You can make a difference ...

For more than 30 years, The Wilderness Society and its supporters have succeeded in protecting millions of hectares for future generations, including the Franklin River, Kakadu, Ningaloo Reef, the Daintree rainforests and old-growth forests across the continent.

Visit www.wilderness.org.au/vic

For a letter writing guide to urge political leaders to do more to reduce climate change and protect nature. Our website offers many other ways you can help.

Get active for nature

Come along to our weekly volunteer meetings – call (03) 9038 0888 for details or email jess.abrahams@wilderness.org.au

See for yourself

Come on a full day forest tour – call (03) 9038 0888 for details or visit www.wilderness.org.au/victours

Join us or make a bequest

Call the membership hotline on 1800 030 641 or visit www.wilderness.org.au/join

www.wilderness.org.au/vic



MAIN: Regular flooding is required to keep river red gums alive and maintain the myriad of billabongs, creeks and wetlands on the floodplain.
DAVE WATTS / LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES.

ABOVE: Victorian Environment Minister Gavin Jennings is reminded by young Victorians to protect nature and reduce climate change for future generations.



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Protecting, promoting and restoring Australia's WildCountry