

# Annual Review

Protecting, Promoting and Restoring  
Wilderness 2009-2010



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY





This booklet provides a summary of how your Wilderness Society, working with government, scientists, community and other conservation groups, has successfully protected Australia's wilderness and wildlife, and how your donations in the past financial year have resulted in some great outcomes for the natural environment.

As you read through the following pages, we hope that you will take immense pride and satisfaction in the part you have played in these great steps towards the long-term health of Australia's environment.

These successes are only possible thanks to the generosity and participation of members and supporters like you. With your ongoing support, we will continue our work to protect the natural world for future generations.

*Thank you*

**Cover image:** Serpentine River, QLD. Photo | Kerry Trapnell  
Florence Falls, Litchfield National Park, NT. Photo | Ricardo da Cunha

# River red gums

Home to almost 300  
threatened and endangered  
plants and animals

03.

Home to almost 300 threatened and endangered plants and animals, our river red gum forests rely on seasonal flooding to remain healthy. But pressure from irrigation schemes and drought have meant these floods have not been occurring. Furthermore, the health of these rivers has been under immediate threat from logging and overgrazing. In some places up to 75% of red gums are stressed, dead or dying.

In the past year you have helped to:

- Protect more than 200,000 hectares of precious red gum forests in the Murray region spanning NSW and Victoria. This includes 107,000 hectares in the Riverina – a historic conservation outcome for NSW, with a greater proportion of State Forest lands protected than in any previous forest decision.
- Protect the Barmah-Millewa forest – the largest red gum forest left in the world, and a Ramsar-listed wetland of international significance.
- Deliver a network of national parks along the two major rivers, forming the backbone of a corridor from Kosciuszko to the Coorong – vital to allow native animals to adapt to a changing climate.
- Protect 100,000 ha of River Red Gums along the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens rivers in northern Victoria.
- Achieve significant outcomes in NSW and Victoria for Indigenous Traditional Owners, allowing for joint management of the Millewa Forests by the Yorta Yorta people and the transfer of two major forest groups to Traditional Owners as Indigenous Protected Areas.
- Offer much needed protection to some of Australia's most endangered wildlife, including the Barking Owl, the Fishing Bat and the iconic Murray Cod. These forests contain some of the last known breeding sites in the state for the nationally threatened Superb Parrot.





Queensland is fortunate to retain some of the healthiest natural river systems on Earth.

Queensland is fortunate to retain some of the healthiest natural river systems on Earth. They underpin regional economies and support unique and diverse wildlife. Free of dams, weirs, polluting irrigation schemes and industrial development, the natural and cultural values of these rivers remain largely intact. Land clearing, feral animals and irrigation development are all major threats to river systems.

Thanks to your support, in the last year we have seen:

- The mighty Wenlock River protected under Queensland's Wild Rivers Act, safeguarding it from future destructive development. The Wenlock is home to more fish species than any other Australian river and has some of Australia's best crocodile breeding habitats.
- Strip-mining kept well away from the special Coolibah Springs on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve, established in memory of the "Crocodile Hunter", by creating a protective buffer zone.
- The proposed protection of the Cooper Creek, Georgina and Diamantina rivers under the Queensland Wild Rivers Act. These Channel Country rivers provide life-giving floods through a vast swathe of outback stretching across Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales, making them essential bird breeding sites.
- The rejection of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam, that would have devastated south-east Queensland's Mary River, as well as causing significant social and economic impacts.

## Indigenous Conservation Program

Contemporary conservation principles, along with Indigenous ecological knowledge, are creating new ways to address environmental issues.

Your support has helped to achieve some important milestones in the journey towards land justice:

- The protection of NSW and Victorian red gum forests includes significant outcomes for Indigenous Traditional Owners, like joint management of the Millewa Forests by the Yorta Yorta people and including the transfer of two major forest groups to Traditional Owners as Indigenous Protected Areas. This is an exciting development which could provide a blueprint for all future new national parks.
- The creation of the 42,000-hectare Alwal National Park on Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land, offering protection to the endangered Golden Shouldered Parrot. This is part of the new model of national parks on the Cape, which sees the land owned by the Traditional Owners, and jointly managed with the Queensland Government.
- Queensland's Indigenous Wild River Rangers won silver in the 'Green' category of the Premier's Awards for Excellence. There are now forty Wild River Rangers employed across Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf

of Carpentaria, with another ten to follow soon. As a direct result of advocacy by the Wilderness Society in 2006, the Queensland Government promised to create 100 ranger positions in local communities, with the twin goals of conservation and employment for Indigenous people, often in remote areas.



Mitchell River, Wet Season. Photo | Kerry Trapnell



Boys fishing, Hopevale. Photo | Kerry Trapnell



**Western Australia**

Current campaigns: Protecting WA's great wild places – the Kimberley, Great Western Woodlands and our unique marine environment.

**Queensland**

Current campaigns: Protecting Cape York's pristine rivers and World Heritage values, supporting Indigenous conservation initiatives and seeking Wild Rivers protection for the 'Channel Country' rivers of the far west.

**Northern Territory**

Current campaigns: Working to protect our Top End Sea Life in marine sanctuaries in a highly productive collaboration with the Australian Marine Conservation Society and Environment Centre NT.

**South Australia**

Current campaigns: Saving the Murray River, lower lakes and Coorong; protecting SA's exquisite marine environment; protecting parks from mining – such as Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary in the northern Flinders Ranges and advocating for Wilderness Protection such as The Simpson Desert.

**New South Wales**

Current campaigns: Ensuring the long term protection of the Williams River and associated Ramsar-listed wetlands. Developing a program to protect the far west of NSW beginning with the rivers of NSW.

**Victoria**

Current campaigns: Protecting Victoria's high conservation value forests, developing a comprehensive response to fire and safeguarding the remaining forests and bushland of the Central Uplands.

**Tasmania**

Current campaigns: Working to protect native forests and prevent Gunns' polluting pulp mill, developing Wild Island landscape scale conservation plan.

**National Indigenous Conservation Program**

Current campaigns: Supporting the creation of Indigenous Protected Areas, Aboriginal owned or managed national parks, ranger programs and other natural and cultural resource management initiatives.

**WildCountry Small Grants**

The WildCountry Small Grants Program is run in partnership with the Dara foundation and aims to assist communities living within healthy, intact country and support protection and restoration of land to ensure that biodiversity can continue to flourish. In 2009-10 there were nine projects funded through this and a further eight have been awarded for 2010-2011.

**KEY**

● Campaign Centre/Office

● Landscape program areas

● Marine Campaign areas

--- Commonwealth water initiative

Note: Not to scale, indicative boundaries only



Australia's forests are home to more than half our native plants and animals

Australia's forests are home to more than half our native plants and animals, yet today less than eight percent of old growth forests remain standing. Many are unprotected and under relentless pressure from the woodchip industry or clearing for plantations.

In the last year, your support has helped:

- Protect 45,500 hectares of forests in East Gippsland, including icons such as Goolengook and part of the Yalmy River forests. However, this announcement represents only a partial delivery of Labor's 2006 election promise to preserve Victoria's old growth forests and the work continues.
- Make Gunns Ltd end the use of the controversial poison 1080 - which causes native animals who ingest it to suffer painful deaths - in all its forestry operations.
- Delay Gunns Ltd building their polluting pulp mill in Tasmania's Tamar Valley. This chlorine-bleaching mill would be a disaster for the environment, communities and the economy. Whilst Gunns has stated publicly the mill will be 100% plantation fed from startup, they have a wood supply deal with Forestry Tasmania for at least 1 million tonnes of native forest wood

every single year for the next 20 years! The State Government used a flawed assessment process to approve the mill. So far over 20 leading banks and paper companies have refused to fund the project and funding has not been secured.

### Climate change

During 2009-10, your support helped to:

- Commission leading edge research to establish the carbon storage capacity of forests and woodlands.
- Lobby for the removal of international barriers for the protection of carbon stores in forests across the world.
- Let the Wilderness Society play a leading role in pushing the important role of native forests in the climate debate by setting up the Ecosystems Climate Alliance at the international climate negotiations.

Australia has more marine territory than any other country, but only a tiny amount of our marine environment is fully protected

Australia has more marine territory than any other country, but only a tiny amount of our marine environment is fully protected. Research has found that a shocking 90% of the world's big fish have been fished out, and commercial fishing is likely to disappear within 40 years according to a UN report. On top of this, pollution and climate change are taking their toll – with more than two thirds of the world's coral reefs already dead or dying.

Thanks to your support, in the last year we have seen:

- The promise to establish a marine park at Camden Sound in the Kimberley to protect a portion of the Humpback Whale 'maternity ward'. This is a real opportunity to put in place the first Indigenous owned and managed marine park in WA. It is a positive step in the right direction but this park alone will not protect the whales or the Kimberley.
- A commitment by the SA Government to conserve marine life through the introduction of sanctuary zones within a network of marine parks that meet international and Australian standards. Currently only 1% of South Australia's marine managed waters are protected from

human activities such as fishing and oil drilling, but science tells us that at least half of the area in South Australia's marine parks needs to be managed as sanctuary zones.

- Huge community support for the Save Our Marine Life (SOML) collaboration campaign to protect the incredible waters off the south-west coast of SA and WA. Up to 90% of the species found here live nowhere else on Earth but, unbelievably, less than 1% of their habitat is protected.
- TV advertising and growing community pressure on the NT government to release its strategy to create marine sanctuaries to protect our Top End Sea Life.



The Styx. Photo | Rob Blakers



Humpback Whale. Photo | Annabelle Sandes



Arid landscapes home to some of our most rare and endangered species.

Two-thirds of Australia is arid or semi-arid, with incredibly low rainfall, yet our deserts are far from lifeless. Mallee once covered more than half of the settled areas of southeast Australia but its coverage has been massively reduced in the last 200 years. It is these landscapes in which recent mammal extinctions have been greatest.

The low saltbush and bluebush vegetation of the vast Nullarbor Plain might look monotonous to the untrained eye, but among the scrub are some of Australia's most rare and endangered species, including Australia's largest population of the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat and the endangered Southern Marsupial Mole.

Your support in the last year has helped to achieve:

- The protection of a vast area of the internationally iconic Nullarbor Plain – the largest semi-arid karst cave system in the world, with outstanding natural and cultural heritage values. The Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area (WPA) will cover 900,000 hectares, the same size as the USA's Yellowstone National Park, effectively doubling the size of the WPA estate in South Australia. The spectacular Bunda

Cliffs are protected within the area and connect it to the Great Australian Bight Marine Park.

- The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Wilderness Society and the Goldfields Land and Sea Council, agreeing to work together for the protection of WA's extraordinary Great Western Woodlands (GWW). The GWW contains the largest and healthiest temperate woodland remaining on Earth, covering almost 16 million hectares in southern WA.
- The release of new Australian National University Enterprises research, finding that trees and soils in the GWW store an estimated 950 million tonnes of carbon—equivalent to fifty times the state's annual greenhouse emissions.

A stunning landscape and a marine environment teeming with life

The Kimberley region of northern WA is one of the world's great natural and cultural Indigenous sites, home to a wealth of wildlife and the site of the largest humpback whale nurseries. The far north-west Kimberley is one of very few places in Australia that appears to have retained its complete native fauna species diversity since European settlement. Years of neglect and mismanagement have created major environmental problems - but even bigger threats are now looming over the region, in the form of plans for large scale gas, mining and agricultural industrialisation.

With your help in the last year, we have:

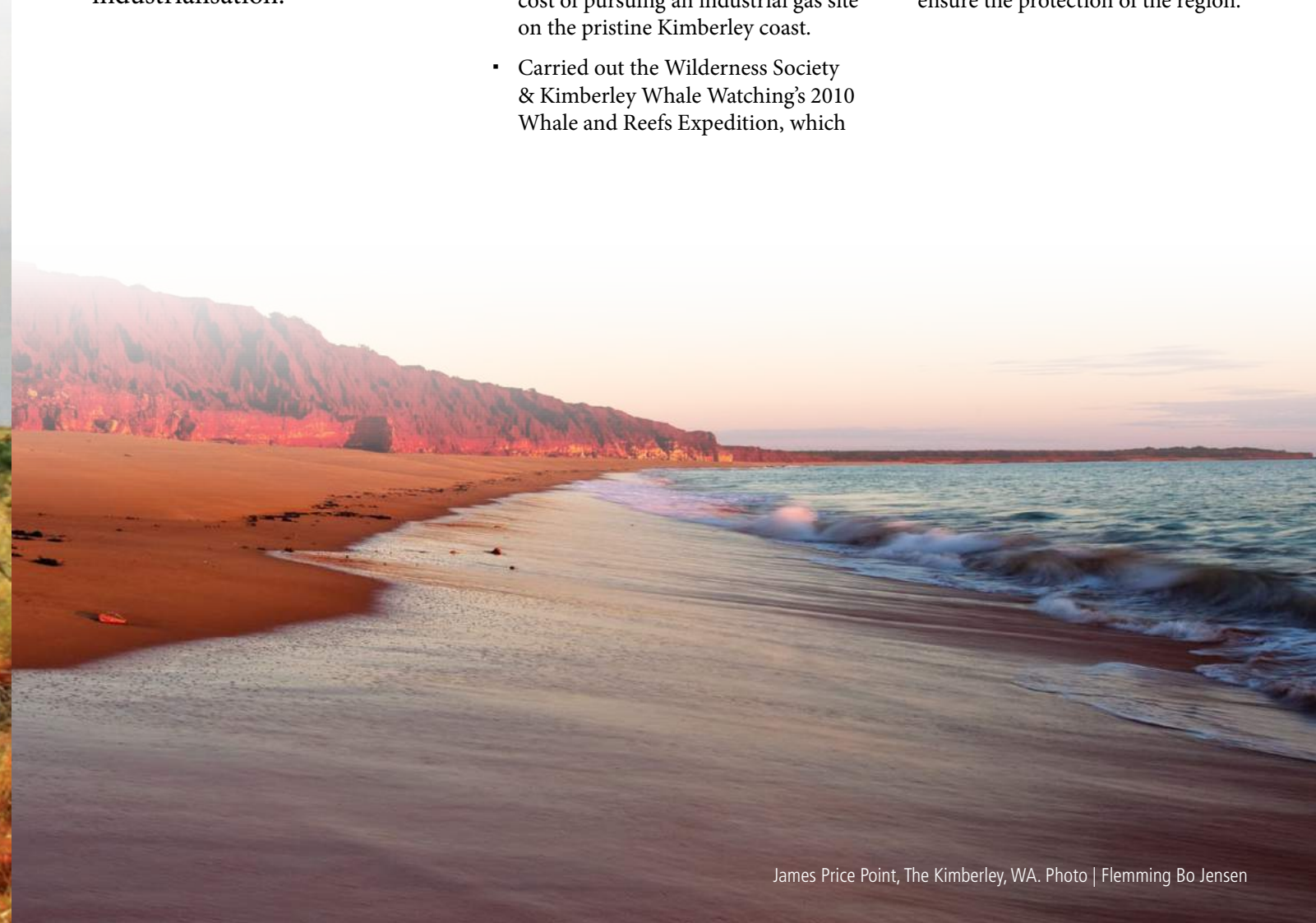
- Successfully persuaded Norwegian owned aluminium corporation Norsk-Hydro NOT to pursue plans for bauxite mining in the Mitchell Plateau region of the north Kimberley, and to return its mining leases to the State Government.
- Secured a Government promise to establish a marine park at Camden Sound in the Kimberley to protect a portion of the humpback whale 'maternity ward'.
- Massively escalated our campaign to protect our precious marine life and whale breeding sites from plans for a major LNG gas processing industry on the Kimberley coast at James Price Point, just north of Broome.
- Testified at Chevron's AGM in the US, informing executives, board and shareholders of the environmental cost of pursuing an industrial gas site on the pristine Kimberley coast.
- Carried out the Wilderness Society & Kimberley Whale Watching's 2010 Whale and Reefs Expedition, which

surveyed new areas of the Kimberley coast, and discovered new breeding grounds off the Adele Islands.

- Sent 6,000 letters to Premier Barnett to say 'Don't fail the whales' and more than 25,000 letters and emails about the Kimberley to key politicians.
- Produced a television advertising campaign highlighting opposition to the proposed LNG industry on the Kimberley coast, which was aired on national TV.
- Held a series of successful summer events in the Premier's electorate of Cottesloe, including a community snorkel, sandcastle competition, and surf circle.
- Commissioned a major CSIRO assessment of the ecological threats to the Kimberley and an assessment of the most cost effective methods to ensure the protection of the region.



Simpson dunes. Photo | TWS SA



James Price Point, The Kimberley, WA. Photo | Flemming Bo Jensen



*To all our supporters, volunteers,  
staff, and our WildCountry Science  
Council for your passion, integrity  
and untiring commitment...*

*Thank you*



**[www.wilderness.org.au](http://www.wilderness.org.au)**

Protecting, promoting and restoring wilderness  
and natural processes across Australia for the  
survival and ongoing evolution of life on Earth.

The Wilderness Society Australia  
For membership, donations and bequests call  
1800 030 641  
57E Brisbane St. Hobart, Tas, 7000  
Email: [info@wilderness.org.au](mailto:info@wilderness.org.au)

