



The Victoria Naturally Alliance – a shared vision

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ballarat's bush champions lead charge in saving our environment

The Ballarat Environment Network today joined forces with nine of Victoria's peak conservation groups to launch *Ballarat's Bush Champions*, a book celebrating individuals and community groups protecting and restoring the region's natural environment.

Launching the book at Ballarat's town hall today the network's executive officer Hedley Thomson said the eight stories contained in the publication are just a small sample of the hundreds of similar stories taking place throughout the region.



"These stories show the dedication that people in the Ballarat region have towards looking after their natural environment," Mr Thomson said.

"They show people from all walks of life giving up precious time and energy to care for our natural environment and the thousands of species of native plants and animals for which it provides vital habitat.

"However, these fabulous stories also highlight the need for a much greater commitment from community and government, at all levels, to caring for our bush. It's a matter of choice and the choice can and must be made if Victoria is to have a healthy, living natural environment into the future.

"An astounding 44 per cent of Victoria's native plants and 30 per cent of our native animals are either extinct or threatened with extinction. Clearly, we're still not doing enough. The State Government's white paper on land and biodiversity provides the ideal opportunity to turn this around."

Ballarat's Bush Champions is a joint project between the Ballarat Environment Network and the Victoria Naturally Alliance, a coalition of nine environment groups that includes the Victorian National Parks Association, Australian Conservation Foundation, Greening Australia and Trust for Nature.

The alliance's biodiversity campaigner Karen Alexander said the stories reflect what she's known for years, that local communities across regional Victoria are leading the way when it comes to protecting and restoring the natural environment.

"These are wonderful stories and show that given the chance individuals and organisations like the Ballarat Environment Network can kick some remarkable goals for our natural environment," she said. "But there's a limit to how much they can and should be expected to do on their own.

"Like the rest of Victoria this region is suffering huge environmental stresses. Large-scale habitat loss, weeds, feral animals, and now climate change are all taking a toll on our native plants and animals.

"The Ballarat region alone is home to at least 45 of Australia's most threatened species, including the southern brown bandicoot, swift parrot and growling grass frog. We need the State Government to get behind the spirit shown by Ballarat's bush champions and commit to massive boosts in funding for environmental restoration."

Ballarat's Bush Champions

Ballarat's Bush Champions is available as a free download from the Victoria Naturally Alliance website – www.victorianaturally.org.au. The individual stories can also be [read online](#).

Media contacts

For further comment from the Victoria Naturally Alliance contact Karen Alexander on 0439 306 829. For more information about the Ballarat Environment Network contact Hedley Thomson on 0438 660 501.



The Victoria Naturally Alliance wants to see Victoria's native plants and animals protected from threats including climate change and habitat loss. For more information go to www.victorianaturally.org.au.