



The Connective
– Living Better With Nature –

North Coast Emu Corridor

Building a regional landholder stewardship program to sustain and protect one of the most ecologically significant coastal corridors in NSW

A significant landscape

The Coastal Emu Corridor across the Clarence-Richmond Lowlands is located in a zone where northern and southern, temperate and subtropical ecosystems overlap – resulting in some of the greatest diversity of flora and fauna in Australia and supporting the highest number of threatened species in NSW.

This immensely important coastal corridor comprises large tracts of National Park and State Forest. However, just as important, are the private properties adjoining those areas. Tens of thousands of hectares of country is currently managed by landholders who are proving to be great stewards of the natural environment and caretakers of the habitats within.



Delivering NRM differently

Our objective is to sustain and protect the land across this corridor by engaging, supporting and connecting landholders through innovative programs that adapt and integrate a range of NRM elements.

Our work seeks to embrace the importance of land stewards striving to work in collaboration to achieve far-reaching outcomes that are simply not attainable when working individually or in isolation.

“A great motivation working in the Coastal Emu Corridor is the fact that we’ve got a group of landholders who are so committed to looking after this land and are motivated to do it well into the future.”

Josh Keating - Coastal Emu Alliance

An investment priority

This ecologically significant corridor contains a multitude of committed private land stewards - presenting opportunities for strategic NRM investment where the greatest outcomes can be achieved.

Using the Endangered Coastal Emu as a flagship species, an important collaboration has come together in pursuit of an emu rewilding and landscape-scale ecological restoration program. The Coastal Emu Alliance comprises government, landowners, environment groups and the broader community - all committed to creating an effective and strategic land stewardship program.

A biologically rich corridor

The Coastal Emu Corridor across the Clarence-Richmond Lowlands is recognised as one of the most significant coastal habitat corridors in Australia.

The diverse vegetation communities across the region are in relatively good condition providing valuable habitat for important assemblages of wildlife. Extensive wetlands, rainforest, wet, dry and swamp sclerophyll forests, heathlands and woodlands all provide a variety and abundance of crucial habitat resources.

This expansive coastal wildlife corridor is unique in connecting across public and private lands establishing north-south, as well as east-west linkages for wildlife movements. The extensive coastline conservation reserves of Yuraygir and Bundjalung National Parks are complemented and expanded on by the thousands of hectares of adjoining freehold land which contain unique landforms and intact vegetation communities - providing habitats for an outstanding diversity of flora and fauna.

The Coastal Emu Corridor:

- Supports one of the highest number of threatened fauna species recorded anywhere in NSW;
- Is an internationally renowned biodiversity hotspot with over 1000 species of plants recorded during recent surveys. A remarkable diversity that includes 15 species listed as Endangered and 6 species listed as Vulnerable (TSC Act);
- Has 7 Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC) with complex ecotones in-between;
- Provides year-round foraging resources such as fleshy fruits, nectar and seeds;
- The old growth forests provide habitat for many hollow-dependent fauna – a stronghold for large forest owls, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Glossy Black Cockatoo and many glider species;
- Contains one of the highest diversities of microbats species in NSW with approximately 30 species known – 8 listed as threatened;
- Supports major populations of wetland dependent fauna such as waterbirds, frogs, insects - with a unique range of swamps, billabongs, floodplains and waterways within the nationally-significant Upper Coldstream wetlands;
- Contains a stronghold of a number of dry sclerophyll dependent fauna species that have disappeared from large parts of their historic range in NSW;
- Is a refuge for a number of declining woodland birds; and
- Supports the last population of the **Coastal Emu** - a unique population which once roamed much of the east coast.



Coastal Emu Corridor across the Clarence-Richmond Lowlands

Current distribution of the Coastal Emu Corridor
National Parks & Wildlife Service Reserves
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"The diversity of plants is outstanding; our surveys have identified a large number of native species of natives – a diversity reflecting the status of the region as an internationally renowned biodiversity hotspot."

John



The people; land stewards for conservation

This is an area of NSW that holds immense ecological significance *and* is supported by a “shovel-ready” community, made up of hundreds of landholders. Although the corridor holds a diverse range of properties - in terms of their size, land use, economic value, ecological significance and restoration potential – all landholders engaged across this corridor are aware, willing and ready to commit to being better land stewards.

Achieving whole of landscape conservation for this region will rely on joint public land management approaches across National Parks and State Forests *and* the many adjoining private landholders that buffer and extend this important vegetated corridor.

“Many of these landholders have proven themselves to be interested, committed and in many cases, highly active in participating in NRM activities and managing their properties for private land conservation.”

Mark Graham - regional ecologist

Managing threats to biodiversity

While much of the habitat across the Coastal Emu Corridor is in good condition, areas of disturbance - from clearing, grazing, logging and excessive burning - have seen the emergence of key threats such as invasive weeds, loss and fragmentation of habitat, intense wildfire, and pest animals such as pigs that damage wetlands and introduced predators that impact native wildlife.

Effective programs addressing such threats must be underpinned by capacity building, mentoring and hands-on landholder support to achieve positive outcomes.

Using the Endangered Coastal Emu as a flagship species, a diverse collaboration of people, communities and agencies are now working together and across an area comprising over 8% of the NSW coastline. With proper investment in this program, this Alliance can move towards improving the capacity of landholders to become skilled, knowledgeable and active in on-ground land stewardship. The program aims to build a highly capable network of hundreds of land stewards - to deliver on best environmental management practice across ten’s of thousands of hectares.

Clarence-Richmond Lowlands

population State Forests
 State
 of Environment and Heritage (OEH) 2016”

veys have now identified over 1000 different subtropical and temperate influences of this hotspot. It’s really a remarkable area”

Edwards - Clarence Environment Centre



The Opportunity

Land stewardship needs a whole-of-community, cross-tenure, collaborative approach that is supported by government commitment, investment and action. To achieve success in landscape-scale stewardship for conservation, on ground delivery is most effective where large areas with multiple landholders are collaboratively engaged - working towards common goals for broad-scale outcomes.

The Coastal Emu Corridor across the Lower Clarence - Richmond region offers an outstanding opportunity for investment; in an area where a high volume of willing landholders along with a large number of existing land management programs and stakeholder alliances are already formed.

With the proper commitment, support and financial input, this program can undertake more effective approaches to supporting land stewardship across a priority landscape - delivering on key objectives, including:

- establishing a land stewardship network across an exceptionally biodiverse region of NSW building on exiting partnerships, strategies and programs;
- developing whole of community stewardship approaches to land management; building on the established Coastal Emu Alliance and 100's of existing land stewards we are currently working with;
- undertaking new approaches to effectively share ideas, lessons and stories across landscapes and communities through facilitating the exchange of information and mentoring;
- delivering holistic and integrated NRM strategies that embrace modern and traditional land management lessons and practices - reading and interpreting the natural environment to improve management decisions on what the land needs;
- developing robust measures to monitor changes in wellbeing and stewardship behaviours as part of a multi-year study (in addition to biodiversity measures of change); and
- embracing strategies that enable whole of communities to (re) build connections back to the natural environment, for both ecological regeneration and social repair – linking people and communities across landscapes.



“The importance of these landholders is that, because they own this important land, you can involve them in conservation and they will then be guardians of their property and they can sustain – and protect – diverse habitat.”

Peter Turland - landholder

The Connective is a group of community representatives, organisations and scientists from the environment, education and health sectors that are working together to get Australians outdoors more often and let them know just how important nature is to our everyday lives. We are planning to achieve this step by step, project by project, partner by partner and community group by community group.

The Connective is a place where we are creating projects, undertaking research, building conversations, and sharing stories, information, challenges, new ideas and resources about how we can all play an active role in our natural environment. Where we invite you to view our stories, use our resources and contribute to our discussions at www.theconnective.org.au

For more information contact either Josh Keating jkeating@nature.org.au or Waminda Parker wparker@nature.org.au