



Climate Action Moreland
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Attention: Open Space Department, Moreland Council
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Draft Moreland Nature Plan submission

We appreciate the effort that has gone into developing the Moreland Council Draft Nature Plan vision on biodiversity. It is an excellent start building upon action point 10.13 in Moreland Council's Open Space Strategy 2004 (originally scheduled to be developed in first three years) and subsequently included as an action point in Council's Open Space Strategy 2012-22. It has been a long time coming.

The Nature Plan should provide an avenue for ecosystem restoration and resilience, and maintain species biodiversity even within our heavily built up and growing population of Moreland. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for many Moreland residents to explore and appreciate local parklands, and reconnect with nature. This submission covers:

1. Nature Plan needs to be considered in a strategic context with the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international commitments, as well as the National Biodiversity Strategy, Federal and State legislation. It also needs to highlight that Melbourne (including Moreland) is a biodiversity hotspot.
2. Expert baseline assessment of biodiversity and ecosystems should be a high priority. We can't properly manage or improve, nor measure success, what we don't have accurate baseline data for.
3. Traditional Land Management and cultural heritage an important priority
4. Refugia sites need identification and prioritisation.
5. Citizen engagement and citizen science is important
6. Control of pests and weeds need to be in line with National strategies
7. Promote success stories
8. Wildlife Corridors and Connectivity important.

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Strategic Context

It is well recognised by the scientific community that loss of biodiversity and species extinctions is a major crisis that is occurring in conjunction with climate change. Yet there is no mention of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in the Strategic context of the Moreland Nature Plan.

During the bushfire crisis over the summer of 2019/2020 we have witnessed an estimated 1 billion native animals destroyed. These are just the obvious species deaths from one extreme climate event. See: (<https://fawkner.org/2020/01/07/bushfires-devastating-australian-biodiversity-species-extinction-likely/>)

I recommend adding reference to the international treaty, the Convention on Biological Diversity, that Australia signed on the 5 June 1992, ratified on 18 June 1993 and became a party to on 29 December 1993 (<https://www.cbd.int/convention/>)

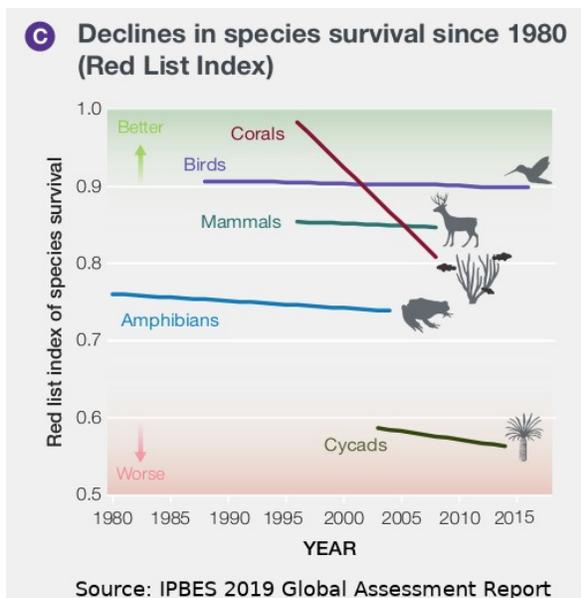
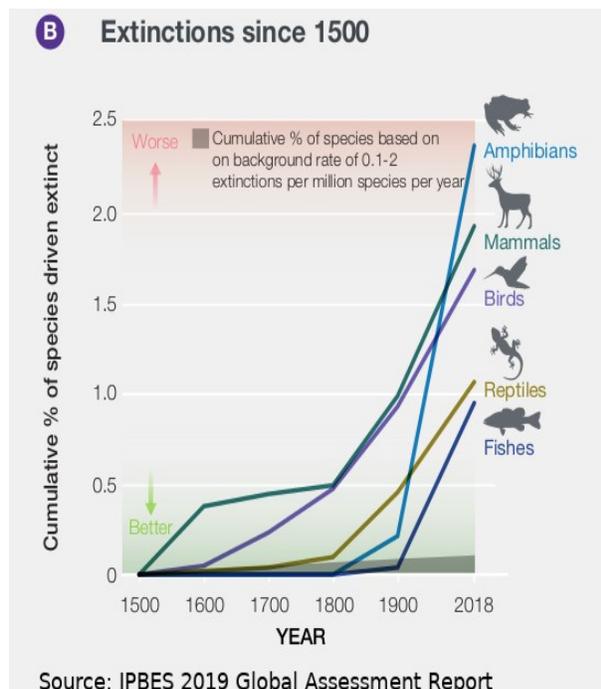
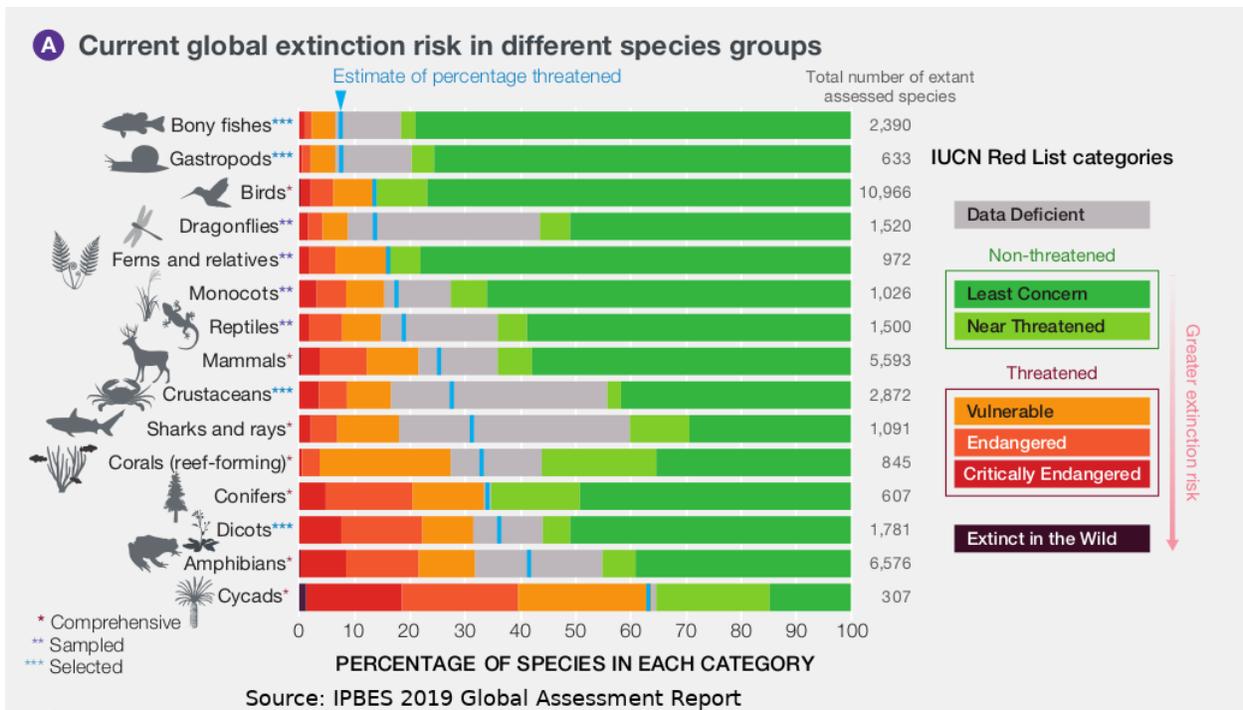
We have an ecological and biodiversity emergency

In terms of global science on species biodiversity, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) should also be referred to in the strategic context. In 2019 IPBES published a major assessment report: The global assessment report on BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES. The Assessment outlines the crisis we face in biodiversity at the global level, similar to and related to the climate emergency. (<https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>)

The Summary for PolicyMakers Section A5 highlights the extent of species extinction: “Human actions threaten more species with global extinction now than ever before. An average of around 25 per cent of species in assessed animal and plant groups are threatened (Figure SPM.3), suggesting that around 1 million species already face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss. Without such action, there will be a further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, which is already at least tens to hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years.”

The report makes clear that we have both an ecological and climate emergency. This should be reflected in the Moreland Nature Plan.

We need to see what we do in Moreland as part of an Australia wide and global context. You have heard this before, but it is necessary to say it again: “Think Global, Act local”. Without the global context the messaging fails to connect and warn people we need to change business and social behaviours.



Some related questions on the Nature Plan and related goals and targets:

- How does the Nature plan meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals? (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)
- How does the Nature Plan meet the Aichi biodiversity targets under the Biodiversity

Convention?

(<https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>)

The Convention on Biological Diversity has also driven the Australian Government to legislate on Biodiversity: the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

Even before this legislation, The Australian Local Government Association adopted a National Local Government Biodiversity Strategy (November 1998)

(<https://www.cbd.int/doc/nbsap/sbsap/au-sbsap-strategy-en.pdf>)

National Biodiversity Strategy

Australia recently updated it's national biodiversity strategy: Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, Australia's national biodiversity strategy and action plan. There is no mention of this document in the Moreland Draft Nature Plan, which seems incongruous.

(<https://www.australiasnaturehub.gov.au/national-strategy>)

- Does the Moreland Nature Plan carry out at the local level Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030?
- How does it meet each of the 12 National objectives and progress measures?
(<https://www.australiasnaturehub.gov.au/national-strategy/objectives>)
- How does the plan interact with other national strategies on Pest Animals, or weeds?
(<http://nrmonline.nrm.gov.au/catalog/mql:2308>) (<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/review-aus-pest-animal-weed-strategy/aus-weeds-strategy>)

Figure 5. Australia's Strategy for Nature goals and objectives

	Aichi biodiversity targets	Sustainable Development Goals
Goal 1: Connect all Australians with nature		
Encourage Australians to get out into nature		
Empower Australians to be active stewards of nature		
Increase Australians' understanding of the value of nature		
Respect and maintain traditional ecological knowledge and stewardship of nature		
Goal 2: Care for nature in all its diversity		
Improve conservation management of Australia's landscapes, waterways, wetlands and seascapes		
Maximise the number of species secured in nature		
Reduce threats and risks to nature and build resilience		
Use and develop natural resources in an ecologically sustainable way		
Enrich cities and towns with nature		
Goal 3: Share and build knowledge		
Increase knowledge about nature to make better decisions		
Share and use information effectively		
Measure collective efforts to demonstrate our progress		

Visit www.cbd.int/sp/targets for further information on the Aichi Targets and <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> for further information on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Are there other policy contexts that should also be investigated and incorporated?

Do we have any international migratory species that involve the Convention on Migratory Species?

International commitments



Melbourne is a biodiversity Hotspot

I was also surprised to find a lack of awareness that Melbourne (and in fact most Australian capital cities) are biodiversity hotspots. Numerous species have survived despite the massive land use change with enormous growth in the human population.

See the 2016 article at Sustainable Fawkner which drew upon peer reviewed research (<https://fawkner.org/2016/02/24/urban-areas-like-fawkner-support-endangered-species/>) by Ives, Lentini et al, Cities are Hotspots for threatened Species (2016). (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/geb.12404>)

At least one of the researchers, Pia Lentini, is a Moreland resident. The research paper has also been adapted for children, including a worksheet which may be useful for science education on conservation in Moreland.

(<https://pelentiniresearch.wordpress.com/2016/02/11/kids-adaptation-of-our-threatened-species-in-cities-research-now-online/>)

Moreland is home to, or visited by, at least 36 threatened species according to an article written by several scientists at the Conversation in 2017.

(<https://theconversation.com/just-ten-mps-represent-more-than-600-threatened-species-in-their-electorates-83500>)

The number of threatened species was also written about and highlighted at Sustainable Fawkner: (<https://fawkner.org/2017/09/07/there-are-36-threatened-species-in-moreland/>)

Baseline Species data and assessment

One of the most urgent actions should be to establish baseline data for biodiversity in Moreland (Action #4.4), which can then feed into ongoing formal monitoring and citizen science to monitor the effectiveness of this plan.

If you don't know what species we have presently got, and their ecosystem dependencies, the action plan is like blundering along Merri Creek Path in the middle of a moonless night.

Establishing a baseline should involve an expert assessment and be done as a priority, with details on estimated species population, ranges, frequency and number of visits if migratory, location, ecosystem dependencies, fragmentation of populations, and any trends in recent population changes.

In an interrogation of the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (24 June 2020) I found 900 species that have been reported within the bounds of Moreland.

(<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorian-biodiversity-atlas>)

I would expect an expert assessment to go much further into detail, which would then inform conservation action and action priorities in the Nature Plan. Hence the need for establishing baseline biodiversity data to be treated as a high priority.

Reading the Draft Nature Plan it is clear that dependencies are important as highlighted by the importance of the blue banded bee to the pollination of populations of the matted flax lilly, which have helped with conservation action.

Once baseline data and dependencies have been collected, it allows for a more informed process in Action 3.6 scheduled in Year 2

- Compile a list of fauna to be encountered in Moreland and develop interpretive and educational material for residents, schools and community groups. (Action #3.6, Year 2)

Traditional Land Management

In addition to the existing material Under 1.2 Traditional Land Management, it would be worthwhile including detail on how seasons were experienced on Wurundjeri Country, which is related to seasonal weather and plant and animal cycles.

See for example Yarra Council Nature strategy outlining how the Wurundjeri identified seven specific seasons.

(<https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/-/media/council-meetings-documents/2019-council-meetings/council-meeting-12-november-2019/114-attachment-1-final-draft-nature-strategy--2020-2024.pdf>)

Sofia Sabbagh did a Wurundjeri seasons calendar, although probably too detailed to reproduce in the Nature Plan. It may be worth commissioning a simpler Wurundjeri seasonal calendar for inclusion in the Nature Plan. Please note, use of the Moreland Nature Map by Sofia Sabbagh, needs to be properly credited.

We recommend that Action Points 4.5 and 4.6 be given a High Priority:

- Finalise the Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities outlining a partnership approach. (Action #4.5 year 1)
- Partner with Traditional owners (eg Narrap team) in Caring for Country in Moreland. (Action #4.6, Year 1 ongoing)

Importance of Refugia in conserving biodiversity

Refugia is another area that seems to have been overlooked in the Nature Plan.

There is a need to research, manage and protect important refugia sites for biodiversity- sites that offer greater protection for biodiversity through extreme events such as floods, drought, extreme heat, and the increasing temperature trends associated with climate change. See Reside, Welbergen et al, Characteristics of climate change refugia for Australian biodiversity (2014) (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/aec.12146>)

We must also be aware as the climate changes, and with widespread land use change, our cities (including Melbourne) are likely to become refugia for non-endemic native species, including threatened species. eg Grey Headed Flying Fox. See Cities as Refugia for Threatened Species, Mark McDonnell, Melbourne. 2 October 2013 (<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2013/10/02/cities-as-refugia-for-threatened-species/>)

Citizen science and citizen engagement

Engaged Citizens, as part of citizen science contribution, should also be encouraged to use the VBA Go app to report species sightings, which contributes valuable information to species population and range. (<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorian-biodiversity-atlas/vba-go>)

We agree on the importance of establishing a 'Gardens for Wildlife' program in Moreland. (Action #2.1, Year 1) Indeed, there is already a public Facebook Group with over 500 people titled Creating Gardens for Wildlife in Moreland (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/519953362127357/>)

Resourcing

We are well aware of the competing interests for Council budget funding. We appreciate action 3.1 which would fund the resourcing of a Conservation programs Officer in Moreland.

- Engage a Conservation Programs Officer to undertake strategic projects, support community conservation activities and implement nature engagement programs (Action #3.1, Year 1)

Control of Pests, Weeds

The Draft Nature Plan makes no mention of control of pest fauna such as rabbits, foxes, Indian myna birds.

How does the plan interact with other national strategies on Pest Animals, or weeds? (<http://nrmonline.nrm.gov.au/catalog/mql:2308>) (<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/review-aus-pest-animal-weed-strategy/aus-weeds-strategy>)

Promote success stories

The Environmental Sustainability award encompasses such a broad range of activities, from urban forestry to plastics and recycling to climate policy. Perhaps we need a separate award promoting conservation and biodiversity in the municipality as part of the Moreland Awards System?

This would help Promote success stories and those individuals who have stepped up in speaking for the native creatures, and country, who have no voice themselves.

Connectivity and wildlife corridors

Appreciate seeing this emphasis on further enabling wildlife corridors as part of the Moreland Nature Plan.

- The development of a Connectivity Plan which identifies key corridors and habitat requirements for select representative species will help to prioritise locations and designs of revegetation programs for most effect. (Action #1.1, year 1)
- Undertake a review of land ownership and management along waterways and key habitat corridors to identify opportunities to improve connectivity for both habitat and public access. (Action #1.16, year 3)

M80 Western Ring Road corridor

Need for Better Management of vegetation and weed control under Ausnet easements with a view to increasing wildlife corridor connectivity (The ownership of the land from Merri Creek to Jacana along the Western Ring Road Trail varies, but very disappointing there is no effective management plan for this corridor, which could increase its potential as a east-west wildlife corridor linking Moonee Ponds Creek to Merri Creek. No weed eradication program evident.