Northern and Yorke Landscape Board

Achievements 2023–2024

Caring for land, water and nature

LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA NORTHERN AND YORKE

Northern and Yorke landscape region

WAKEFIELD — Council name and boundary

NARUNGGA — First Nation community

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Narungga, Ngadjuri, Nukunu, Peramangk and Kaurna people are the Traditional Custodians of the Northern and Yorke region. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the deep spiritual relationship that Aboriginal people have to Country and the ongoing contribution they make to this region.

Introduction

Working with the local community, First Nations communities and partner organisations, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board cares for our region's land, water and nature.

It is one of 8 landscape boards across South Australia that delivers and supports on-ground programs to sustainably manage our natural resources.

The Northern and Yorke region is a productive part of the state, with 80% cropping and grazing land. It's also a region to enjoy and explore beaches, bushland, mountain ranges and renowned wine-producing areas.

With funding from the landscape levy, the Australian Government and conservation organisations, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board ensures these precious landscapes are valued and protected into the future.

We're proud to feature some of the achievements of the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board during 2023-2024.

Board members

Nine members formed the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board in 2023-2024. They include Geoff White (Chair), Peter Angus, Sam Germein, Russell Johnstone, Erika Lawley, Jenny Loftes, Bruce Michael, Sue Scarman and Adrian Shackley. The Board met 7 times at various locations across the region, including Jamestown, Kapunda, Wallaroo, Clare, Kadina and Peterborough.

More about our board members here

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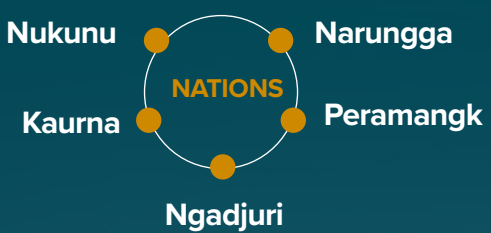
About **150,000 people** live in the **Northern and Yorke region**

Total region spans **38,500km²**

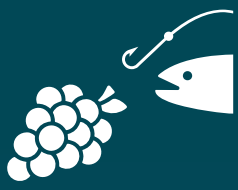
Traditional Custodians:



Major centres: Balaklava, Burra, Clare, Gawler, Kadina, Nuriootpa, Orroroo, Peterborough, Port Pirie.

About **80% of the region** is under agricultural cropping and grazing production, contributing a quarter of South Australia's agricultural earnings.

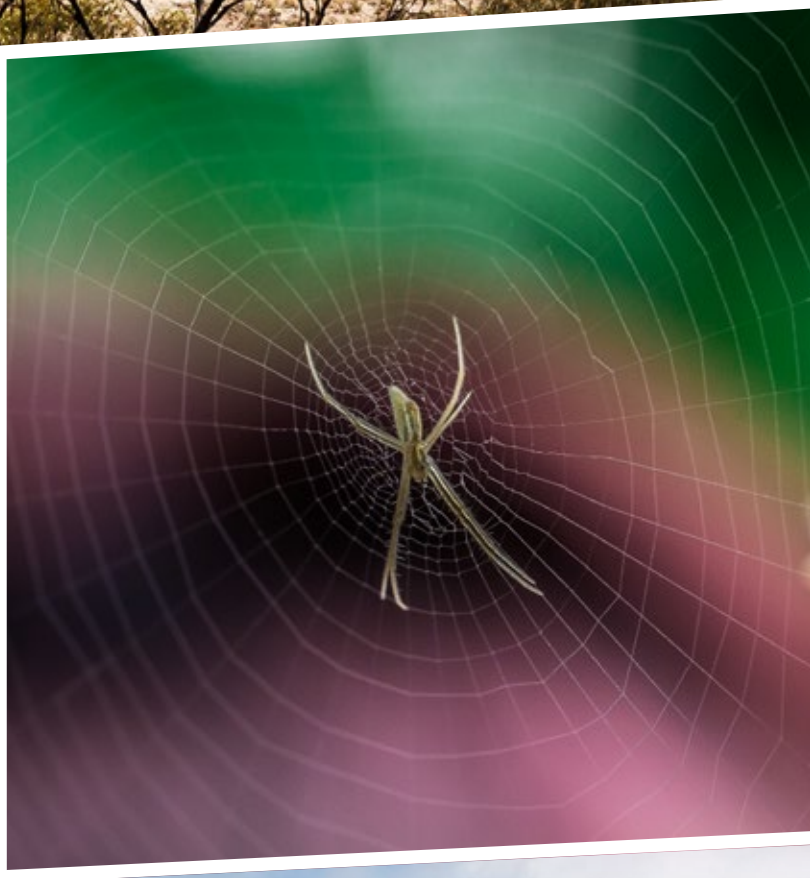
Other industries:
Wine production in the Clare Valley and Barossa Valley, mining and mineral processing, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, horticulture and tourism.



More than **1,000km of coastline**

Average annual **rainfall of 250-600mm**

15,500km² of marine areas



Communities

Active. Informed. Knowledgeable.

Engaging with volunteers, community, schools, landholders, industries, Aboriginal groups, and local government.

Ngadjuri visit scar trees near Burra

If only scar trees could talk...and yet in many ways they do. These ancient gum trees tell the story of how our First Nations people created canoes for transport, containers for food and ceremony and a place to shelter. And they remain culturally significant sites that deserve our protection.

Scar trees were one of the topics discussed at the first Ngadjuri Healthy Country Planning workshop held near Burra. Healthy Country Planning is a process that identifies ways to care for Country. Funded by the Board and facilitated by Conservation Management, Ngadjuri's Healthy Country Planning involved a series of on-Country workshops over 12 months.

Tree-rific community effort in Orroroo and Greenock

They might have been more than 200km apart, but their mission was the same. Tree planting! Thanks to efforts at Orroroo and Greenock for National Tree Day in July, 400 native species were planted.

Twenty-three year 5 and 6 students from Orroroo Area School celebrated the annual milestone, with support from the Board, by planting 50 native trees around the Orroroo Golf Course.

A group of nearly 40 community members and Board staff enjoyed the sunshine and fresh air as they planted 350 native plants in a council reserve along Greenock Creek.

Sharing our love of landscapes at Yorke Peninsula Field Days

Staff and Board members connected with visitors from all over the region at the Yorke Peninsula Field Days in September. We shared helpful advice about how to care for the region's natural resources, ranging from weed control to healthy waterways and revegetation.

Our site buddies Animals Anonymous and Gum Flat Natives brought an extra dose of colour and fun. The native animals were a huge drawcard for children, who met Bob the tawny frogmouth, Charlie the albino carpet python, Gary the goanna and an adorable baby brush-tailed bettong (known as yalgi to Narungga people).

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Bugs, slugs and more at Appila

There was no hesitation to leave their books behind for a day and learn all about bees, bugs, slugs, snakes...and the wonder of nature!

Year 2, 3 and 4 students from Orroroo, Booleroo Centre, Jamestown, Gladstone, Laura, Melrose and Wilmington had a great time at the Appila Environmental Day.

Organised by Caltowie Corridors of Green and funded by a Grassroots Grant, the students rotated through a series of outdoor workshops, including bees with Janelle Butterick, bugs and slugs with Kristen Messenger, and the prehistoric past with Professor Flint. Our own Jennifer Munro, Nick Modra and Morgan McCallum helped the students learn about catchments, habitats and water bugs.

1,207 volunteers generously provided **58,875 volunteer hours** in our region

24 community groups received **free insurance** through the Board

7 schools received support via our **grant funding**

13 schools involved in **cultural education sessions** through our Nature Education program.

$24,610 funded by the Board for these sessions.

Funded 32 Grassroots Grants, totalling **$246,600** and **$602,936** in-kind value

19 Bite-sized Grants funded, totalling **$19,150** with **$93,213 in-kind value**

$325,000 spent on **Aboriginal employment**, services or products

3 First Nations projects funded by Grassroots or Bite-sized grants

3 Five First Nations Landscape Committee **meetings held on Country**

On Facebook, we **reached 369,004** people, **added 713** new followers and had **24,400 Facebook page visits**

Biodiversity

Protected. Improved. Restored.

Protecting ecosystems, native vegetation, threatened and listed species, Aboriginal significant sites, rivers and creeks, coasts and marine areas.

Ospreys make comeback

Six man-made nesting platforms are giving endangered ospreys a fighting chance of recovery on Yorke Peninsula.

In a community-led bid to turn around a 26% decline in South Australia's osprey population, six towers have been installed along Yorke Peninsula's coastline since 2021. Ospreys are a spectacular fish-eating raptor that have declined in numbers during the past 10 years due to human disturbance, predation by foxes, crows and seagulls and loss of habitat from coastal development.

Only four years ago there was just one osprey breeding pair on mainland Yorke Peninsula. Now five out of the six towers has a resident osprey pair and during the 2023 breeding season, four young successfully fledged from the towers at Wills Creek Conservation Park (near Price), Point Davenport and Gleeson's Landing.

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Booming bettongs back from extinction on southern YP

A small marsupial reintroduced to Yorke Peninsula after being locally-extinct for more than 100 years is now thriving in its new home in Dhilba Guuranda-Innes National Park.

Latest monitoring of the brush-tailed bettongs – known as yalgiri to the local Narungga people – found 95% of the females checked had pouch young. The critically endangered marsupials were also found across three quarters of the national park, an area nearly twice the size of Adelaide's CBD.

Returning yalgiri is part of Marna Banggara, an ambitious project to restore lost native wildlife to southern Yorke Peninsula. They were locally-extinct due to habitat destruction and the spread of introduced predators, including foxes and feral cats.

The project is jointly funded through the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, the Australian Government, the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, WWF-Australia, and Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, in partnership with the Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

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Groundswell of support for pygmy bluetongue lizards

Through one of our Grassroots Grants, the Nature Foundation rallied together 48 volunteers, 6 of its staff, plus our own lizard enthusiast and landscape officer Nick Modra for its annual Lizard Crawl.

This event is about monitoring the endangered pygmy bluetongue lizard, which is now only found in the Northern and Yorke region, so we can better understand and protect its population into the future. Held at a reserve north of Burra, the group marked out survey plots across 80 hectares and then walked shoulder to shoulder in search of spider burrows, where pygmy bluetongue lizards like to live.

Another group returned a week later to conduct the first population survey, using a burrow inspection camera funded by the grant. Nature Foundation's results will be used as base data for ongoing, yearly surveys as part of a long-term monitoring program.

Malleefowl surprise for volunteers as count remains stable on previous year

Hardworking but often elusive, malleefowl are seen by few people.

So, a group of Marna Banggara volunteers at Dhilba Guuranda-Innes National Park (DGINP) got a pleasant surprise while monitoring the vulnerable species, when a malleefowl returned within metres of them, to continue industriously working on its mound.

Out of 46 mounds surveyed by the group, 7 were active, the same number as last year. The count is part of the annual monitoring program within Marna Banggara on southern Yorke Peninsula.

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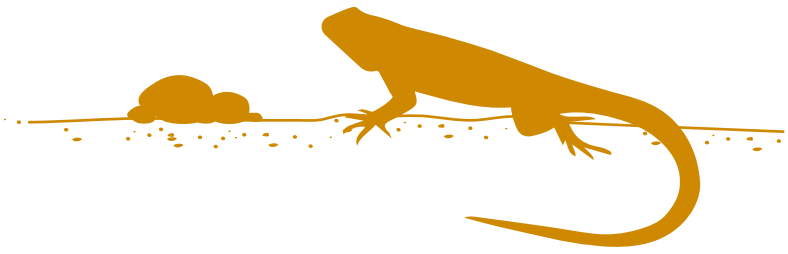

Solar-powered trackers set record straight about wedge-tailed eagles

Solar-powered satellite devices tracking Australia's largest bird of prey, the protected wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*), have revealed its crucial role as nature's pest controller.

South Australian raptor expert Ian Falkenberg, with funding support from the Board, has fitted the devices to juvenile eagles to better understand their foraging patterns and causes of death.

"Wedge-tailed eagles provide an important role for pest management on farms," said Mr Falkenberg. "They prey mostly on feral animals, particularly the rabbit, which is their main prey. The tracking data really gives us an insight into the day-to-day life of the eagles. At a fine scale level, we can zoom in on the aerial photography to pinpoint whether the bird is in a paddock cleaning up carrion or in rugged country hunting rabbits."

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Native plants rising to the challenge of coastal resilience

Native plants are thriving along Yorke Peninsula's coastline thanks to a 120-hectare planting crusade across 27 locations. As part of its Djulda-wawa Badja project, the Board has led a revegetation drive since 2022 to help build coastal resilience.

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Update: Common Native Grasses Guide

Whether you are a hobby farmer, commercial grazier, lifestyle landholder, bush block owner, volunteer or viticulturist/orchardist, this guide can help you identify 20 of the most common native grasses found in the Northern and Yorke region. It also contains basic guidelines for establishing and harvesting native grasses, as well as information for graziers about the nutritional value of native grasses.

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Marna Banggara

73 brush-tailed bettongs (yalgiri) released on Yorke Peninsula

60 cameras installed for predator monitoring

46 malleefowl mounds monitored

58 volunteers involved in the project

54 hooded plover breeding pairs monitored

18 hoodies flagged and banded

43 fledglings took flight

Djulda-wawa Badja project

140 hectares of coastal weed control, including boxthorn, boneseed, beach daisy, pyp grass and white weeping broom

400 seedlings planted

72 hectares direct seeded with coastal species at Port Wakefield, Wardang Island and Cape Elizabeth

30 partnership groups involved in Djulda-wawa Badja, working together to protect the coast

Water management

Efficient. Sustainable. Monitored.

Protecting watercourses, permanent pools, water use, groundwater, cultural water, environmental flows, water-dependent ecosystems, river red gums, and saline wetlands and lakes.

Barossa collaborates for catchment health

Caring for the creeks and rivers of the Barossa was the main topic of conversation at The Barossa Cellar in August, as part of the Environmental and Cultural Flows project.

First Nations people and key Barossa wine industry figures came together on Ngadjuri Country as a first step in partnering together to improve the health of water-dependent ecosystems.

Representatives from Ngadjuri, Peramangk and Kaurna met with staff from Treasury Wine Estates, Hill-Smith Family Estates and Pernod Ricard Winemakers, along with Barossa Australia, Barossa Council and Regional Development Australia.

Funding boost for citizen scientists to monitor state's waterways

A $150,000 grant from the state government's Citizen Science Fund was secured to help monitor the health of waterways across three landscape regions. The new funding means established Waterwatch and Waterbug Bioblitz activities in Murraylands and Riverland and Hills and Fleurieu regions will now expand to include Northern and Yorke catchments. The project aims to capture ecological data to support water management, especially in areas of high-water demand. It also looks to incorporate First Nations cultural knowledge as an important part of the holistic management of our waterways.

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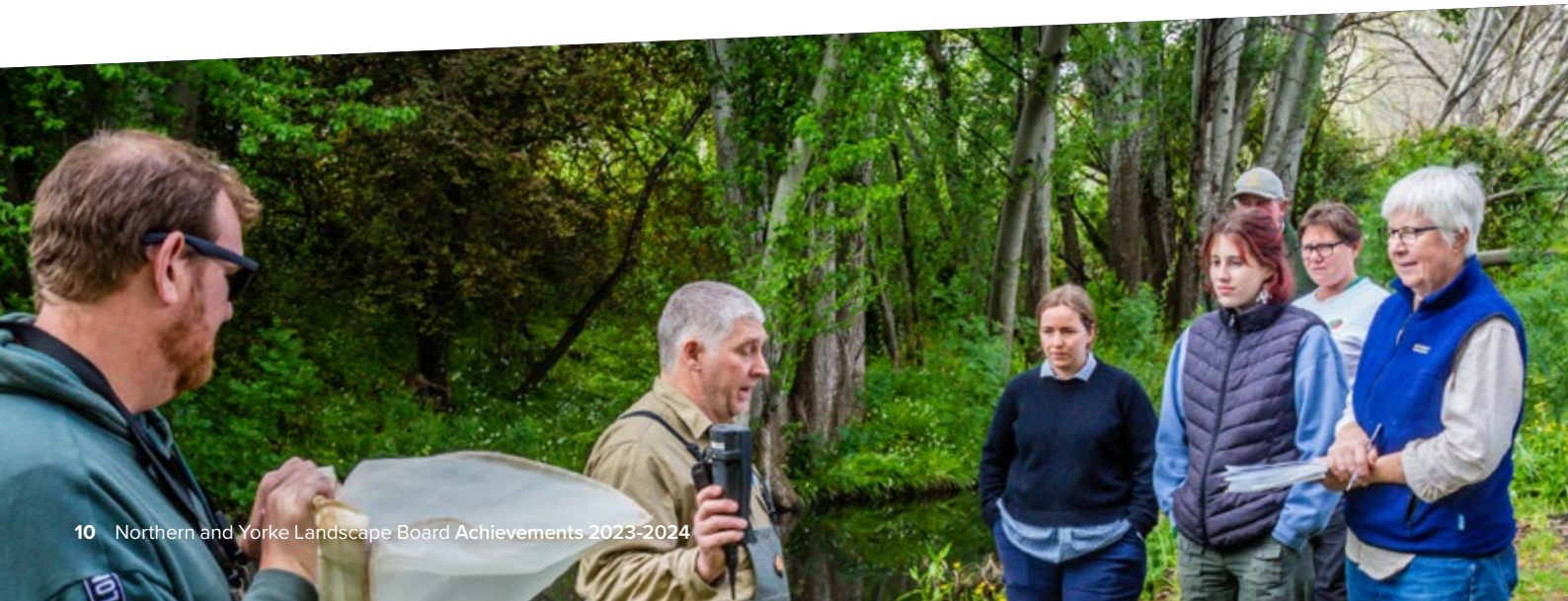

Fish surveys reveal alien species dominate Barossa waterways

A team from Nature Glenelg Trust sampled 16 sites across the Barossa in March 2024 to provide an update on the status of the fish community.

The samples were dominated by alien species of fish, especially the declared noxious species eastern gambusia (*Gambusia holbrooki*) and to a lesser extent redfin perch (*Perca fluviatilis*). The most common native species was flathead gudgeon (*Philypnodon grandiceps*). There was also a strong population of the locally threatened and more sensitive mountain galaxias (*Galaxias olidus*), localised to Jacob Creek and Tanunda Creek.

Freshwater fish are useful indicators of environmental change. Monitoring patterns in the number and extent of the different species provides valuable information on changing conditions.

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Neighbours come together for catchment health in the Mid North

Steady progress was made in 2023-2024 as part of the 3-year Regenerating Catchments in the Mid North Farmscape project, which aims to connect and protect remnant vegetation along Mid North watercourses. It involves 12 landholders with waterways through their properties, who are keen to improve water quality and biodiversity. In the past year, the project has protected more than 10km of watercourse. Nearly 7km of fencing was erected, 57ha of revegetation completed and woody weed control occurred across 14ha. It's a great example of what can be achieved when motivated neighbours team up to improve our waterways.

Environmental and Cultural Flows

14 **surface water,**
9 **ground water,**
14 **tree condition index** and
16 **fish survey monitoring sites**
2 **weir pools** in Barossa surveyed to identify water volume

Regenerating Catchments

12 **landholders** involved

6,917 **metres of fencing** erected to protect watercourses

10,700 **metres of watercourse** protected or enhanced through fencing, weed control and/or revegetation

57.8 **hectares of revegetation** completed, including 13,435 seedlings planted and **12,000** **metres** of direct seeding

14 **hectares of woody weed control**

4 **off stream water points** installed and 1 community planting day held

25 **Water Affecting Activities** enquiries, with **24** **permits issued** and **3** **development approvals** reviewed

2 **Water Allocation Plans** (WAPs) in progress, including amendment of Barossa WAP creation of first Baroota WAP

Sustainable agriculture

Adaptive. Resilient. Healthy.

Enhancing soil, water and biodiversity value to build resilience in agricultural systems.

Soil Biology Forums

The Board hosted 3 Soil Biology Forums during September in Carrieton, Barossa and Clare, with key presentations from NSW farmer and consultant Colin Seis, co-developer of the Pasture Cropping technique and University of WA's Emeritus Professor Lynette Abbott who spoke about soil organisms and their role in natural ecosystems and agriculture.

The forums focused on the importance of soil biology and practical ideas about biological inputs in broadacre farming, with information tailored to each of the 3 locations.

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That's a wrap for Living Flinders

Our Living Flinders project, funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, helped landholders in the Rangelands district apply sustainable land management practices and build resilience into their farm businesses.

As one landholder said, "Doing the program has helped highlight the importance to manage the landscape better so that the next generations can have a viable property."

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Farmers grab Dry Times grants

Amidst the challenge of significantly low rainfall in 2023, the Board launched the On-Farm Dry Times grant program for Rangeland farmers in the region.

More than 40 landholders facing tough conditions were awarded up to $2,000 for farm infrastructure projects to help bolster resilience and drought preparedness. The funding pool was exhausted in just 8 weeks and supported many innovative projects, with water infrastructure high on the priority list. More than 188,000 hectares were positively impacted through the program.

Upskilling the next generation of soil experts

More than 20 university students benefitted from a soil pit learning day led by the Board's soil scientist Dr Geoff Kew in November.

The students from Flinders University, University of Adelaide and University of South Australia spent the day at Hare's Chase vineyard in the Barossa and tested the theory that the best soil learning happens in a soil pit. They learnt how to identify soil horizons, texture and structure and complete simple tests for dispersion and pH.

Sustainable ag program delivering savings to farmers

A sustainable agriculture project being shared with farmers in the Mid North is already providing considerable cost savings, and helping build farming system resilience and drought-proofing.

Precise mapping of soil pH across paddocks on farms in the Robertstown/Emu Downs area is showing the value of targeted mapping and greater understanding of pH variability.

Farmers Herb and Chris Ruediger hosted a field walk and demonstration on their Emu Downs farm, where participants were able to see the difference in soil profile across two soil pits in one of their paddocks.

The project is led by Mallee Sustainable Farming, with a number of other project partners including the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Future Drought Fund.

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27 weather stations maintained in Burra, Burra Mokota, Burra Sod Hut, Virginia, Mt Pleasant, Point Pass and Neales Flat

13 sustainable agriculture **workshops and meetings.**

Collaborated with **16 industry and farming systems groups**, and supported **5** of them through **grants**

3 soils projects active across the region

223 soil tests, 9 soil pits
4 soil carbon sites established

7 soil information resources developed

Worked with **2 universities on soil projects**, including PhD support.

3 agricultural projects
Grassroots Grants-funded

Pest plants and animals

Targeted. Coordinated. Collaborative.

Reducing economic and environmental impacts of pests.

Letting nature do the leg work

Rust fungus (*Puccinia myrsiphylli*), a biocontrol agent for bridal creeper, was sprayed along roadsides in winter. Efforts were concentrated in the Barunga West Council area and the rail corridor around Bute, as well as on a burn scar on Upper Yorke Road. Rust fungus was also released on unaffected plants on southern Yorke Peninsula to secure a nursery site that can be harvested in the future.

Meanwhile, 20 landholders grabbed the chance in spring to release thousands of biocontrol bugs to help control salvation jane and horehound. Plume moth caterpillars like the taste of horehound, and feast on the plant's growing tips and then defoliate the stem. Pollen and flea beetles are the best antidote for salvation jane. The beetles chomp the weed's flower buds and then attack its leaves and roots.

An army of cactus-fighting cochineal insects were released along 3 of the Mid North's major rivers to tackle prickly pear infestations. About 80 cochineal sites were established as biological control hotspots during summer, with a concentration along the North Para, Gawler and Light rivers where the Opuntioid cactus species is abundant.

African boxthorn blitz targets Tickera's fragile coastline

The next round in an ongoing bout with African boxthorn started in October with the Board engaging a team to knockdown the invasive, prickly weed in Tickera's coastal reserve.

Funded by the coastal resilience project Djulda-wawa Badja, the targeted boxthorn control was carried out along several kilometres of coastal vegetation in the Barunga West Council area. It is the latest in a series of tactics employed to reduce the declared weed's impact on a coastal ecosystem under pressure from pest plants and animals, erosion and climate change.

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Invasive buffel grass continues destructive march across SA

One of Australia's worst environmental weeds, notorious for its invasiveness, has been identified in at least 30 new locations in the Northern and Yorke region. The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board's region-wide roadside survey of buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), covering 668 kilometres, found 31 more buffel grass sites than the last survey conducted in 2014. The rigorous survey, which complements the Board's annual monitoring and control program, found a buffel grass infestation 42km from the nearest site identified a decade earlier.

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On the lookout for new weeds

The eagle eyes of our landscape officers led to a number of problem weeds exposed in our region.

The first wild occurrence of blind cactus (*Opuntia rufida*) was spotted north of Carrieton, the only place the prickly pest has naturalised in Australia. Blind cactus is a declared weed with tiny hairs called glochids that when dislodged, can irritate eyes or even cause blindness in animals. The small infestation was controlled by chemical injection.

Stinknet or globe chamomile (*Oncosiphon piluliferum*), a weed never seen before in South Australia was spied on a roadside about 10km south of Orroroo. It had overtaken a 100 metre stretch of the roadside. One of our landscape officers treated the area five times to prevent any seed set. Early intervention combined with persistent follow-up treatments should eradicate this weed over time.

While inspecting and treating declared weeds in the coastal dunes of North Beach Wallaroo, landscape officers exposed the garden escapee known as cape marigold (*Dimorphotheca pluvialis*), an annual African daisy species that has only appeared in South Australia on a few occasions. Cape marigold can quickly dominate areas, especially dunes and sandy or disturbed soil and become very difficult to eradicate.

Feral rabbits in urban areas

Community members from Edithburgh, Yorketown, Stansbury, James Well, Sandy Creek and Clare attended rabbit control workshops in summer. The free workshops shared tips for controlling feral rabbits in urban areas using best practice methods.

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Pest plant and animal control

191 **landholders** involved in fox bait distribution in spring and autumn

25 **Landholders** from the Rangelands district involved in meat injection days to control predators

2,571 km of **road and rail weed control**

846 **enquiries** including pest plant and animal control advice

5 **rabbit control workshops**

978 **feral deer controlled**

5,709 **feral goats removed**

Biological weed control

2 **boxthorn rust** nursery sites

23 **sites** supplied with plume moth for horehound control

83 **landholders** received cochineal from **3** **cochineal nurseries** to control opuntia cacti

15 council roadside **weed management plans**

Achievement snapshot

The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board works alongside the community, Traditional Owners, councils and other stakeholders to sustainably manage landscapes and maximise the ecological, environmental, economic and social benefits for the region.

Here is a snapshot of the key projects and activities delivered in 2023-2024:

Communities	**$1.57m**
Support for development of Healthy Country Plans	✓
Nature Education program	✓
Five Nations Landscape Committee	✓
Grassroots and Bite-sized grant programs	✓
Insurance support for community land management groups	✓
Biodiversity	**$2.25m**
Marna Banggara project	✓
Djulda-wawa Badja project	✓
Regenerating Catchments in the Mid North Farmscape	✓
Water Management	**$1.75m**
Environmental and Cultural Flows project	✓
Barossa and Baroota water allocation planning	✓
Promotion of environmental and cultural flows in water management planning	✓
Sustainable Agriculture	**$1.26m**
Weather station and soil moisture sensors	✓
Soil projects	✓
Soil Extension Officer	✓
Pest Plant and Animal Control	**$2.90m**
Coordinated fox and rabbit control programs	✓
Release biological controls for pest weeds	✓
Rail and road corridor weed management plans	✓
Pest control workshops and advice	✓

Keep in touch

Here are some of the ways you can keep up-to-date with the latest news from the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board:

landscape.sa.gov.au/ny

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