



Victorian Volcanic Plain Biosphere Inc.

Association No: A0050709T ABN: 62 305 543 599
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VVPBiosphere>
<https://www.vvpb.com.au/home/>

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General updates

Recent Progress

The last couple months we have been learning everything we can about the Biosphere program, and in particular about the four current Australian Biospheres. Our meetings with these Biospheres have yielded valuable information around what works (and perhaps more importantly, what doesn't, thanks to the candour of these other Biosphere organizations).

We will need to think hard about how many jurisdictions we can realistically cover within a single Biosphere structure and explore models that may ease the legislative hurdles that result from greater scale. (It is certainly not impossible – in fact the first five nation Biosphere was recognized by UNESCO in 2012 along the Mura, Drava and Danube rivers in Europe, albeit after about 20 years of hard work!).

We are starting to introduce the Biosphere idea more widely in the VVP, through meetings with key figures and organizations in habitat conservation, local government, and industry. We have found great support from the folks at Beyond Bolac, the Woorndoo Land Protection Group, and the VVP Conservation Management Network (CMN) in helping introduce the Biosphere idea more widely. Our coordinator also recently presented at the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar, to introduce the VVP and the Biosphere Program. But don't worry if you missed it, you can watch the video version of the presentation via the WBS youtube channel!

Thursday 2 September

24th Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar 2021

Dr Angie Hauben
Research Fellow, La Trobe University
Tracking the Recovery of Birds following
Revegetation on Farms

Dr Elia Pirtle
Project Coordinator, Victorian Volcanic
Plains Biosphere

PLAY ALL

2021 Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar Series

1 video • No views • Updated today

SWIFFT VIC

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Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar
Yesterday at 10:14 AM · 🌐

Dr Elia Pirtle joined us last week as the final speaker for #WBS2021 webinar 1. Elia gave an overview of the history of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, including at least 30,000 years of occupation by Aboriginal people and accounts from early explorers. In just three generations, the impact of European settlement has destroyed 99% of the native grasslands within the region.

Elia introduced the Victorian Volcanic Plains Biosphere Project as a way forward for returning the bal... [See More](#)

Pre 1815 -
Aboriginal peoples manage grasslands for food species

regular fire interval

supraling and aizing

low nutrient soil

len Pergus/ CC
unless credit: Colleen Miller



General updates (cont.)

New Blog

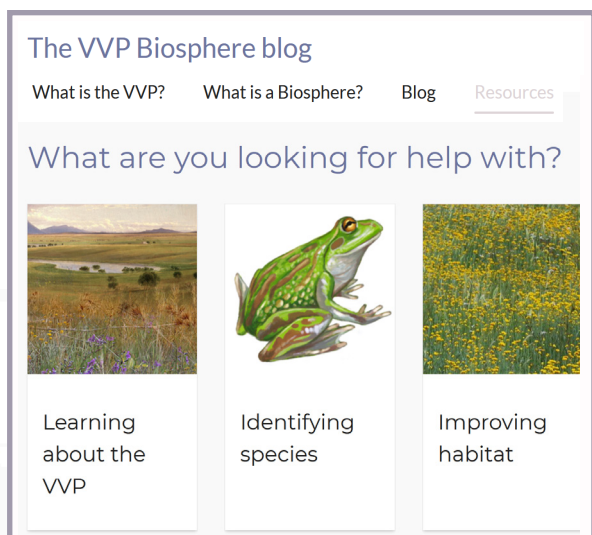
We have just launched a new blog where we will share more detailed articles about Biospheres and activities in the VVP, to supplement our newsletter. You can find it on the main website – just click the new “Blog” tab. Our first post supplements the main story of this newsletter by digging deeper into one of Australia’s four Biospheres, the Noosa Biosphere.

In response to several questions our coordinator received at the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar about where to get resources to support revegetation efforts on your own properties, we have also started collecting resources on the new blog website. Have a look and please post in the VVP Biosphere facebook group what your favourite resources are that aren’t already featured there!



Vote for the VVP cake!

Yesterday, September 7th, was Threatened Species day, which marks the date on which the last Tasmanian Tiger died in captivity. The day reminds us that if we don’t work to fix the balance between humans and nature, many more species could still be lost. To acknowledge the many species still at risk, the Threatened Species Bakeoff was started to celebrate Australia’s threatened species. One of our committee had a go at a VVP themed cake for this year’s bakeoff, featuring a volcanic stony rise (made of chocolate coffee muffins), a striped legless lizard, and a variety of threatened wildflowers (button wrinklewort, hoary sunrays, matted flax lillies, sunshine diuris, and small golden moth orchids). You can check out the rest of the creations at the Threatened Species Commissioner’s facebook page. “Like” your favourites to take part in the people’s choice vote!



Visit the VVPB blog at vvpbblog.com



Feature story: What is a Biosphere?

Have you ever heard of a UNESCO Biosphere? It might surprise you to learn that Australia already has 4 Biospheres across the country (and we once had 13!).

History and purpose of the Biosphere Program

Biospheres are a project of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program. The program aims to conserve biodiversity while at the same time supporting people to live and work as sustainably as possible within their environment. UNESCO, the UN agency responsible for science, established the program in the 1960's, as a way to deal with human-environment interactions. It was born from UNESCO's ties to NGOs such as

the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and other UN programs, including the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FOA). At a conference in 1966, these groups identified the need for a research program that focused on 'man and the biosphere', and thus the Biosphere program was born. From this same conference, the UN environmental program, UNEP, and the World Heritage Convention (which built the framework for the designation of world heritage sites, such as Victoria's very own Budj Bim) were also born.

The hallmark of the Biosphere program is the creation of a global network of sites, called Biospheres. These serve as test places for creating innovation local solutions to the global problem of balancing human and environmental needs.



The United Nations



**UN Food and
Agriculture Organization
(FOA)**

NGOs



**World
Conservation
Union (IUCN)**
(est. 1948)

**International Council for
Science (1931 – 2018)**

- International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS) (est. 1919)
- International Union for Microbiological Societies (IUMS) (est. 1927)



**Man and the
Biosphere (MAB)**
(est. 1966)



**UN Environmental
Programme (est.
1972)**



**World Heritage
Convention**
(est. 1972)



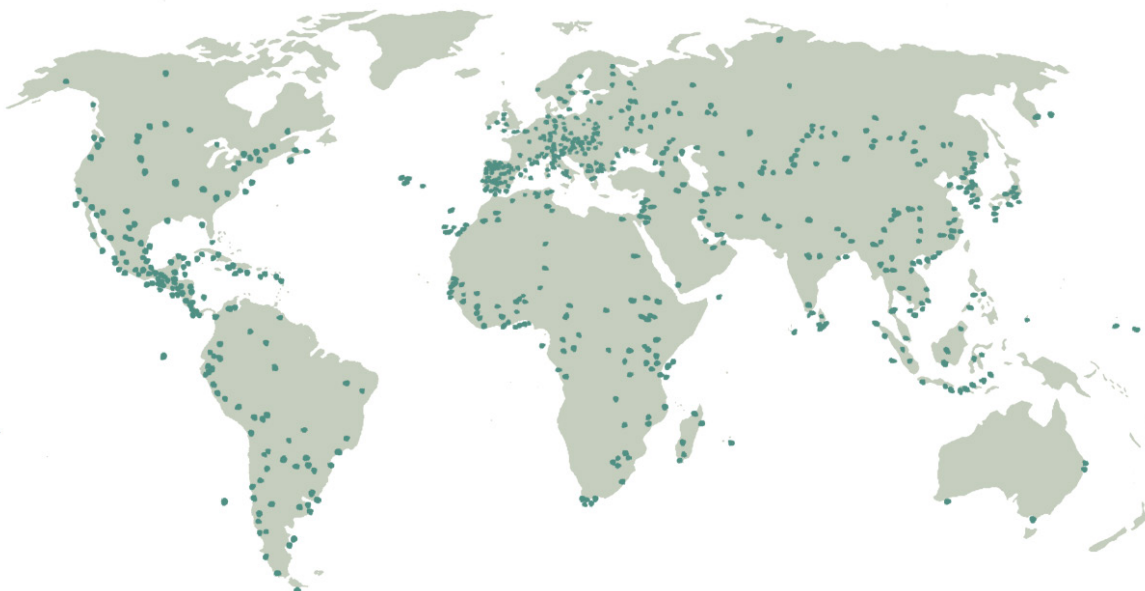
These Biospheres are not like National Parks, where human activities are highly restricted. In fact, Biospheres have whole communities of humans living inside them!

There are currently 714 UNESCO Biospheres in 129 countries, with over 250 million people living in their boundaries. Because these are places where people live and work, the primary function of Biosphere cannot stop at just the conservation of species.

According to the “Seville Strategy”, which was codified the purposes of the Biosphere program, the three required functions of every Biosphere are:

- **Conservation:** contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
- **Development:** foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.
- **Logistic Support:** scientific and technical support for demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring related to local, regional, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.

This is what makes the Biosphere program so unique – a Biosphere must show itself to support both conservation and sustainable development to be successfully accepted, and must continue to fill these functions or the credential will be lost.



714 Biospheres and 250 million people living and working within their boundaries



One way the Biospheres accomplish this balance between humans and the environment is through the creation of three different zones, each with a different balance between the environmental, economic and societal priorities:

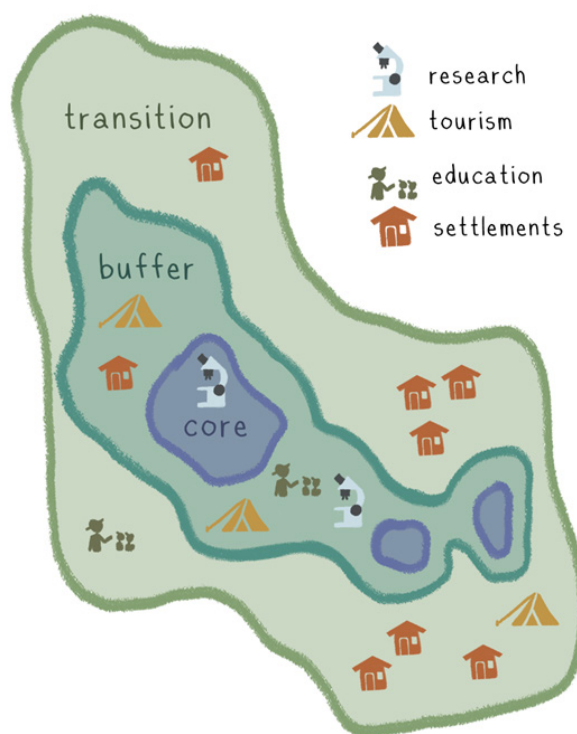
- The **core zone** is the wilderness area where human activities are most restricted. It often is made up of national parks and conservation reserves, and the priority is on attracting research which can improve their management.
- The **buffer zone** surrounds and protects the core, with a focus on education and awareness raising to support the conservation of the cores. It is open to more human activities such as eco-tourism, educational activities, research and community settlements.
- The **transition zone** is the final zone. It is characterized by local communities which foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities. These communities are proud of, and profit from, the natural assets protected in the core. Green product loyalty, eco-tourism, education and environmental awareness are conservation drivers.

An important fact about UNESCO Biospheres is that UNESCO is not actually footing any of the bills! Nor are they mandating a particular governance structure. UNESCO only provides an official and internationally recognized credential. Thus, Biospheres are very much purpose built by their participants, and as such they can vary

quite a bit in structure and funding, based on their goals as well as the legislative frameworks of the jurisdictions within which they exist.

Generally, Biospheres have one or more “champion” organizations, who are the primary managers and provide the operational funding. Working along with the champion/s are a large number of supporting organizations who participate on consultative committees and forums and partner up to apply for grants and deliver projects that further the Biosphere’s objectives. Research and project funding is sought from outside sources, such as grants provided by government bodies, philanthropic organizations or Universities.

Learn more about how a Biosphere is structured and how it operates in our latest blog post at www.vvpbblog.com.





The Biosphere Program in Australia

Australia became involved in the Biosphere program even before our first Biosphere was designated, through research collaborations between UNESCO and Australian institutes including the CSIRO and several Universities. However, certain hurdles proved insurmountable, including the federal government's limited power over environmental resources and its resulting need to coordinate carefully with state governments. Thus, our first Biospheres were not created until after the establishment of our National Parks and Wildlife service, which allowed the Federal Government to directly manage land via national parks. With this new authority, by 1977, the Federal Government had established our first five Biospheres, and by 1982, we were up to 10.

However, as a result of these Biospheres being largely led by the federal government, and thus sticking to land it could control relatively unilaterally via national parks, these biospheres had a heavy focus on already-protected areas which needed little

state government or community input. So in practical terms, Biosphere designations ultimately changed very little about the land and the way it was managed. They did little to promote research opportunities beyond what was already being done, or opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

This was not the original vision of the Biosphere program, where reserves should be, according to a 1983 review by Davis and Drake, "directly involving NGOs, voluntary conservation groups and private landholders in reserve management". A further review conducted in the 1990's found that with a couple notable exceptions, namely the Fitzgerald Biosphere in WA, none of our Biospheres were hitting the marks set in the Seville strategy, and as a result, our Biospheres were slowly delisted, as they lost government and public support.

Despite the delisting of most of our early Biospheres, the Biosphere approach in Australia was reinvigorated in the 2000s with the creation of new Biospheres which sought to avoid the pitfalls associated with a lack of involvement of local communities. These include Westernport Biosphere (established in 2002), Noosa Biosphere (est. 2007), and the Great Sandy Biosphere (est. 2009). Fitzgerald Biosphere still exists as well, after evolving considerably from its early years to meet updated criteria. The idea is gaining momentum as well, with several Australian regions currently pursuing the program, including the Sunshine Coast.



Successful Biospheres in Australia, like Noosa, must be more than just National Parks, they must include communities



These Biospheres have little resemblance to our early park based attempts. We have learned that Biospheres must be community led to bring meaningful change. This new generation of Biospheres can become an important vehicle for addressing environmental sustainability, economic resilience in the face of changing environments, and reconciliation with our First Nations.

Dig deeper at the VVPB Blog

If you'd like an example of what a community led Biosphere for the VVP might look like, check out our newest blog post which reflects on a successful 14 year history of the Noosa Biosphere in QLD.





Upcoming Events

Sadly, the **Bannockburn Full Moon Party** was cancelled due to the recent lockdown – stay tuned and keep your fingers crossed for another full moon...

Geelong Nature Forum 26th September

The Geelong Nature Forum 2021 is an exciting, multi-dimensional event, showcasing Geelong's natural wonders through a week-long series of nature-based activities, presentations and displays.

The theme of the 2021 event is 'Where The Rivers Run', with a focus on the animal and plant life of the Geelong region's rivers, creeks and wetlands.

Find more info by visiting <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/events>



Frogging on the VVP 7th October

Depending on restrictions, Beyond Bolac will be running an in-person field day, or an online workshop where you can learn how to identify water bugs and frogs. RSVP by 29 September to Jileena on 0428341869 or email beyondbolac@outlook.com





Upcoming Events (cont.)

The Great Southern Bioblitz 22-25th October

Spring is rapidly approaching! This usually means our annual VVPB springtime field trip, but that is sadly not in the stars. But this year, you can still participate in a VVP wide event by joining in the largest scale citizen science biodiversity survey in the southern hemisphere!

This year between the 22-25th October, the Great Southern Bioblitz is on. It is an annual opportunity to participate in a global biodiversity survey using the free iNaturalist platform. The bioblitz takes place across 14 countries, and last year over 90,000 observations of over 12,000 species were made. To join in, we have registered a VVP wide project as part of the Great Southern Bioblitz!

How can you participate? It's as easy as going out into your backyard and photographing every plant or animal species you can find, and uploading the photos to iNaturalist!

We will send out more detailed instructions soon, but in the meantime, mark it in your calendar to get out onto your property the week of October 22nd and record everything you can find.



You can check for more upcoming events at the VVPB Blog (www.vvpbblog.com)



Next Steps

VVP Biosphere Inc. is a registered charity organization with DGR status working to facilitate the creation of a Biosphere in the VVP. We are researching the program, approaching local governments and necessary stakeholder groups and developing a proposed zone map and governance structure.

Our major next step is to start approaching councils to explain the Biosphere program and lay out the benefits for councils to get involved. This will let us build our proposed Biosphere map. If you want to see a Biosphere established, you can help by calling your local council and expressing your excitement for the possibilities a Biosphere could bring your local area!

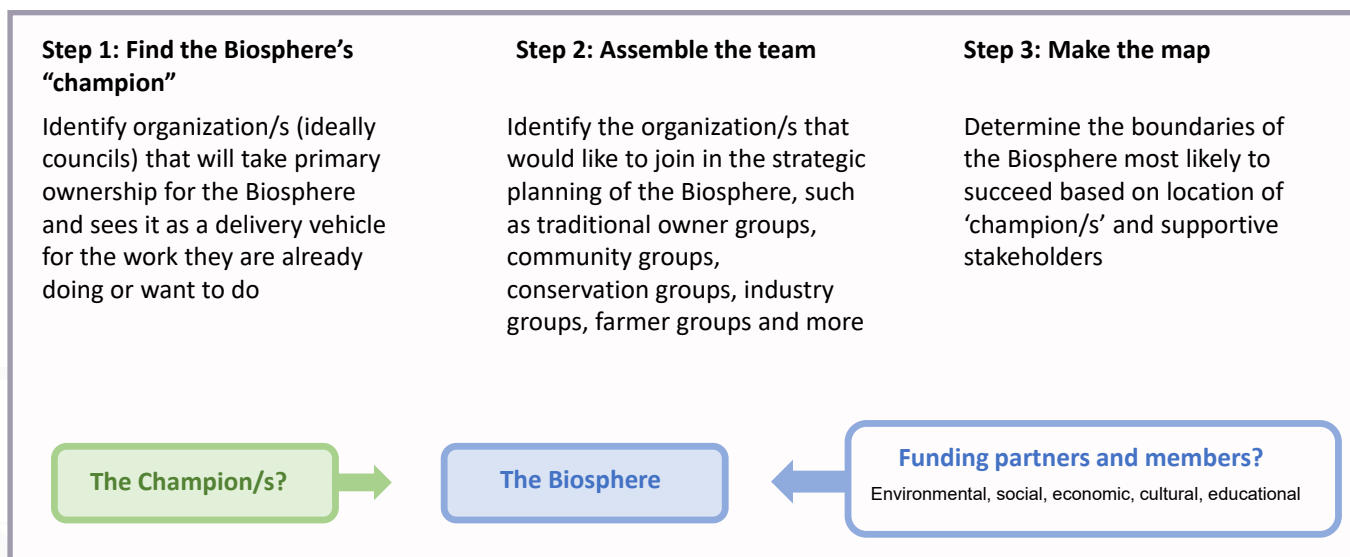
Get involved!

If you are interested in being a part of a VVP Biosphere, please reach out to our project coordinator, Elia, who would love to discuss the project with you:

Dr. Elia Pirtle
eliapirtle@gmail.com
0414143456

You can also join our facebook group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VVPBiosphere>



The first three steps (there are more steps beyond this!)