



# The Conservation Contributions of Ecotourism

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# State of the Environment



# State of the Environment



Extinction rate:  
**100-1,000**  
**times higher**  
than the norm

# State of the Environment

Australia:



# State of the Environment

## Australia:

25% of original  
vegetation  
remains intact

Worst mammal  
extinction rate  
in the world



# Importance of biodiversity



**Ecosystem services are valued at US\$125 trillion/year**

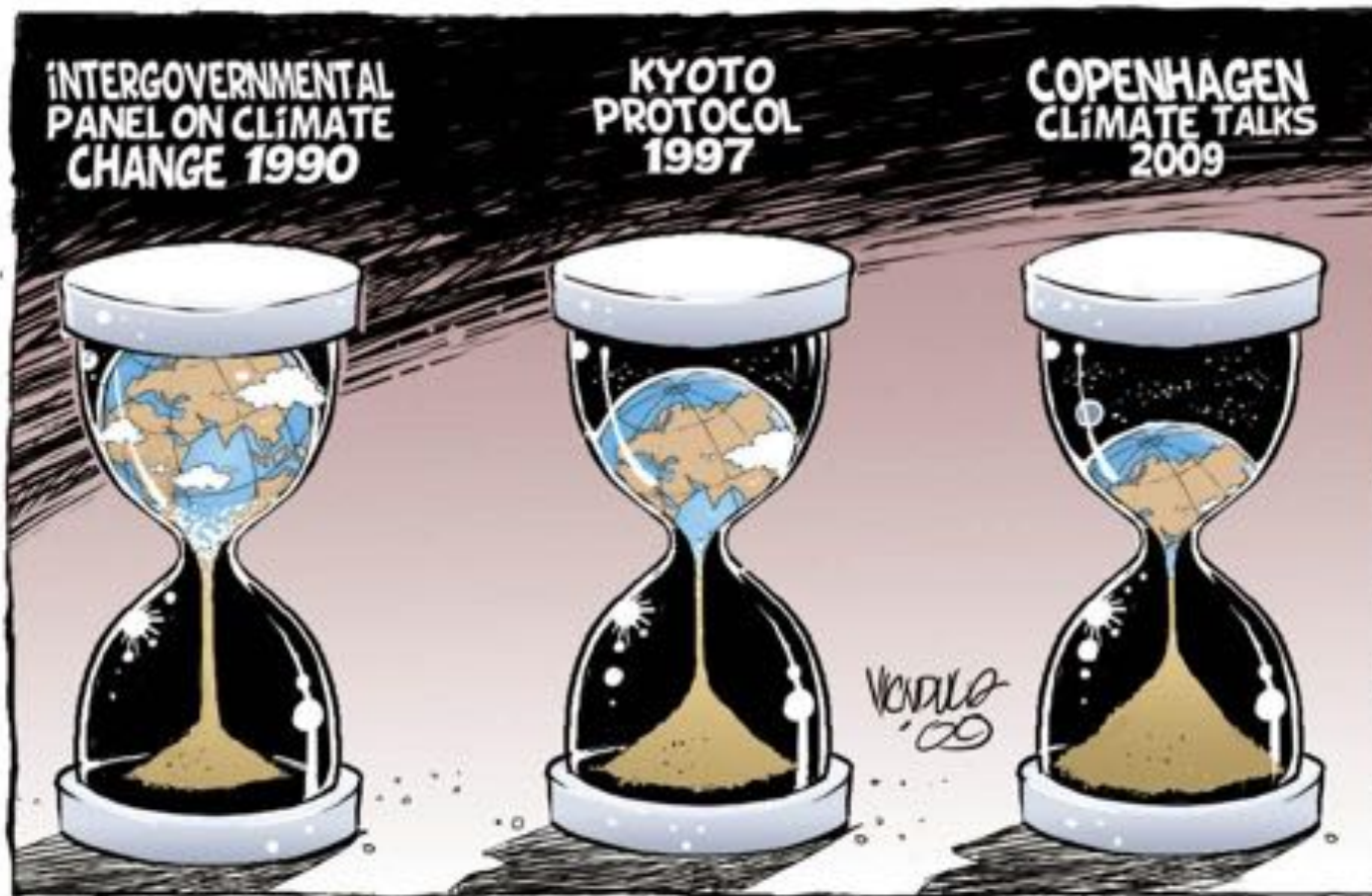
Over 2 billion people rely on forests and fisheries for their livelihoods

# Importance of biodiversity for tourism



**Worldwide:** 10-40% of all tourism

**Australia:** Up to 70% of international tourists and  
30% of overnight domestic tourists



**US\$21.5 billion  
per year**

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# Ecotourism as a conservation mechanism



# Ecotourism as a conservation mechanism

## Sustainability

Minimising negative impacts

## Conservation

Generating positive environmental effects



# Ecotourism as a conservation mechanism

## Conservation needs...

- Urgent action
- Resources
- Social and political support

## Ecotourism...

- ✓ Is well placed for urgent action
- ✓ Can provide resources
- ✓ Can mobilise political, financial & social support for conservation goals



# Ecotourism as a conservation mechanism

## Conservation needs...

- Data, assessments, and evidence-informed decision-making

## Ecotourism...

- ...



# Ecotourism as a conservation mechanism

## Conservation needs...

- Data, assessments, and evidence-informed decision-making

## Ecotourism...

- ...



# Framework development and application



## Framework

Evaluate conservation activities

58 conservation items

## Application

86 tourism operators with highest level eco-certification

Wildlife-monitoring

Private-protected-area

Corridors/connectivity

Translocation

Research-and-data-collection

Breeding

Weed-removal

Erosion-control

Carbon-capture

Fire-management

Rubbish-removal

Habitat

Support-conservation-organisations

Environmental-interpretation

Resources-for-wildlife

Revegetation

Rescue/rehabilitation

Support-protected-area-agencies

Political-activism

Introduced-fauna

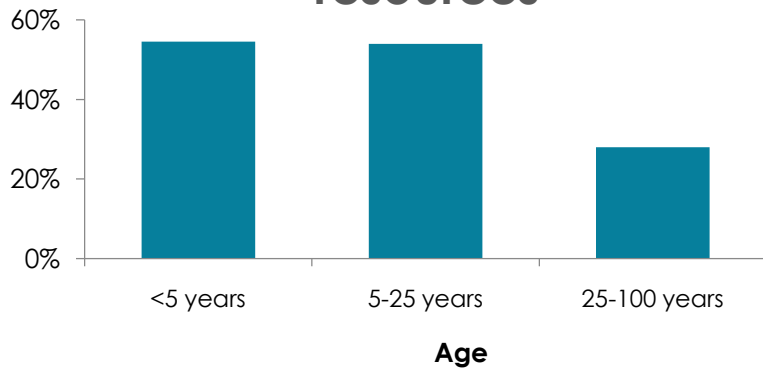
Converting-degraded-land

Community-conservation

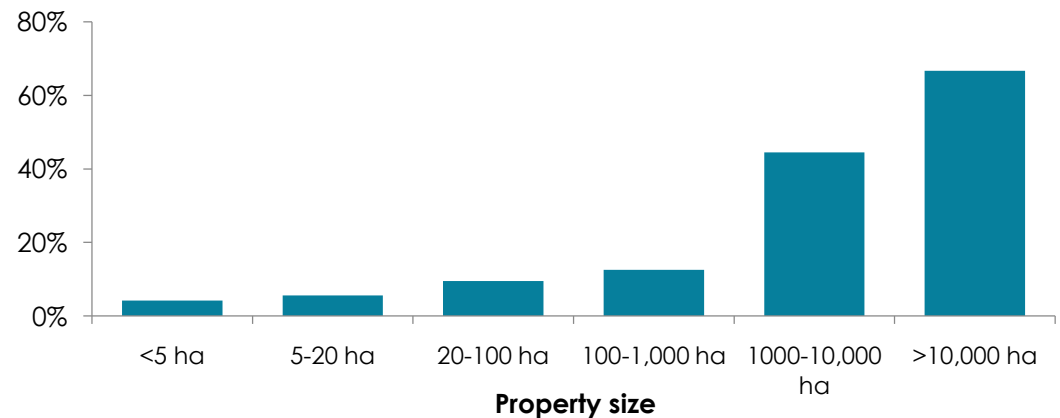
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# Site characteristics

## Nest site provision & increased resources

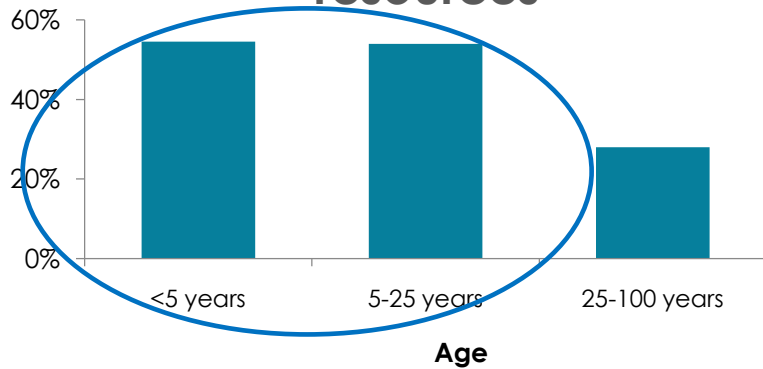


## Reduction of introduced fauna

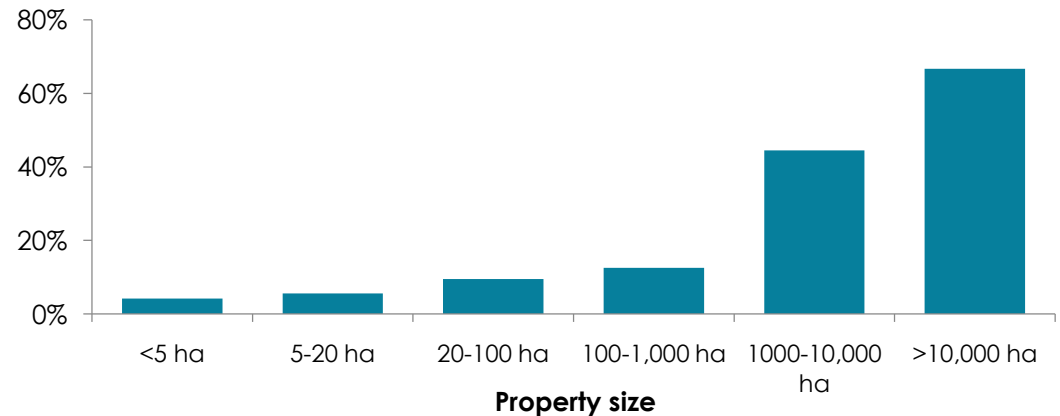


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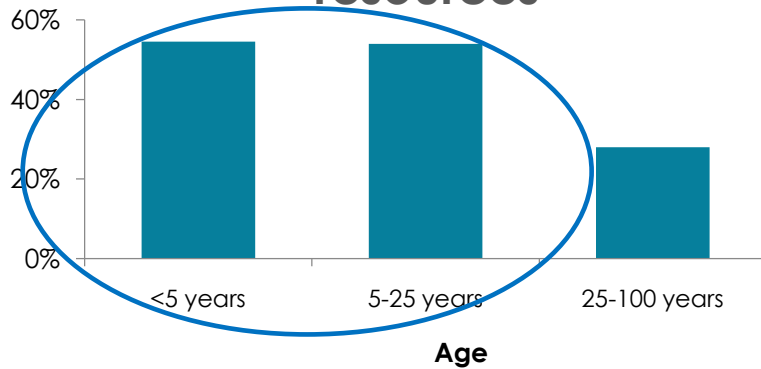


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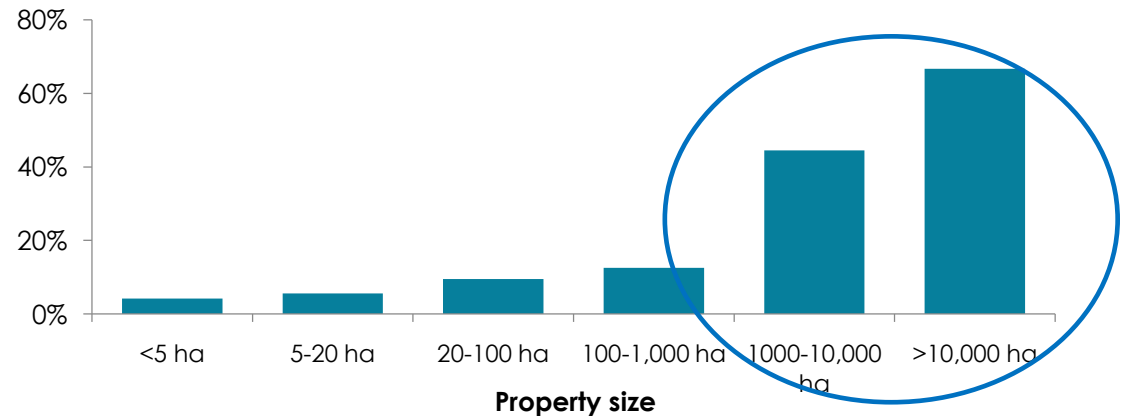


# Site characteristics

## Nest site provision & increased resources



## Reduction of introduced fauna



# Conservation significance screening process

## National conservation policies

- ❑ Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 – 2030
- ❑ Australia's Strategy for Nature 2018-2030
- ❑ Strategy for Australia's National Reserve System 2009-2030
- ❑ Australia's Native Vegetation Framework 2012
- ❑ Threatened Species Strategy 2015
- ❑ Australian Weeds Strategy 2017-2027
- ❑ Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017-2027
- ❑ Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity 2012
- ❑ Australian Heritage Strategy 2015

## Threatened species lists

- ❑ Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992
- ❑ New South Wales Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016
- ❑ Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
- ❑ South Australian Western Australia National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972
- ❑ Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950
- ❑ Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
- ❑ Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act
- ❑ Australian Capital Territory Nature Conservation Act 2014

## Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

- ❑ Threat abatement plans
- ❑ Migratory Species Lists
- ❑ Recovery plans
- ❑ Weeds of National Significance
- ❑ List of Threatened Ecological Communities

# Australia's main environmental pressures

Invasive species

Land-use change

Climate change

Habitat fragmentation and degradation



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Habitat fragmentation and degradation



**No indication of improvement since first  
State of the Environment Report in 1996**

# Environmental pressure: introduced species (fauna)

## The problem:

Most frequently  
cited threat

Impact >80% of all  
threatened species

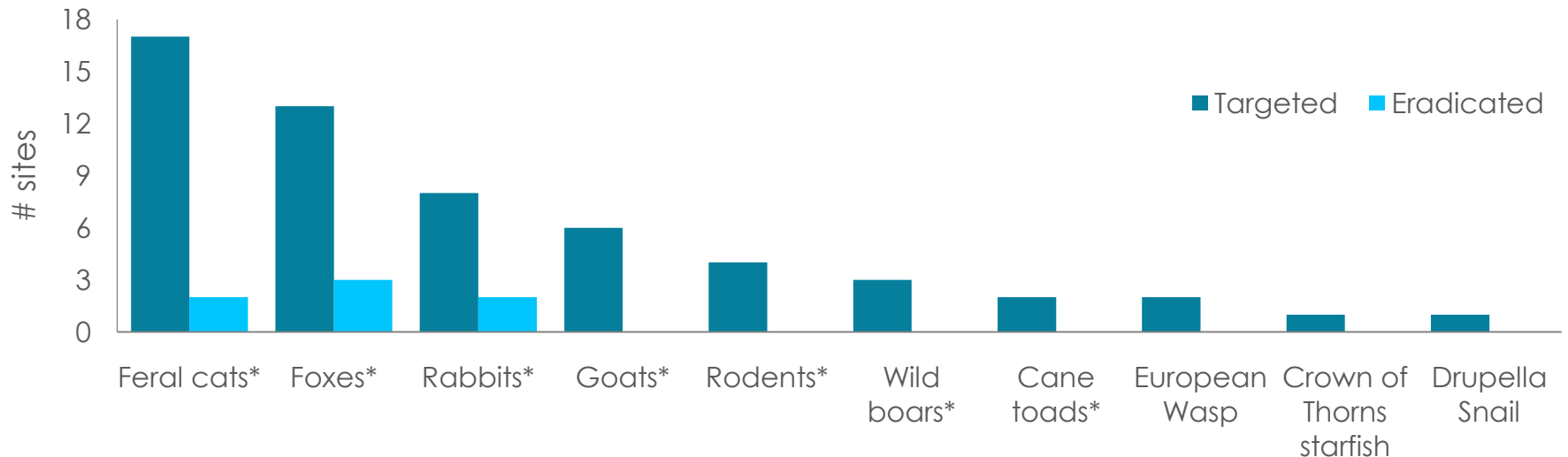


# Environmental pressure: introduced species (fauna)

## Ecotourism actions:

77% undertook actions targeting introduced animals

5 sites successfully eradicated introduced species from their property



\*Species listed individually as Key Threatening Processes

# Environmental pressure: introduced species (flora)

## The problem

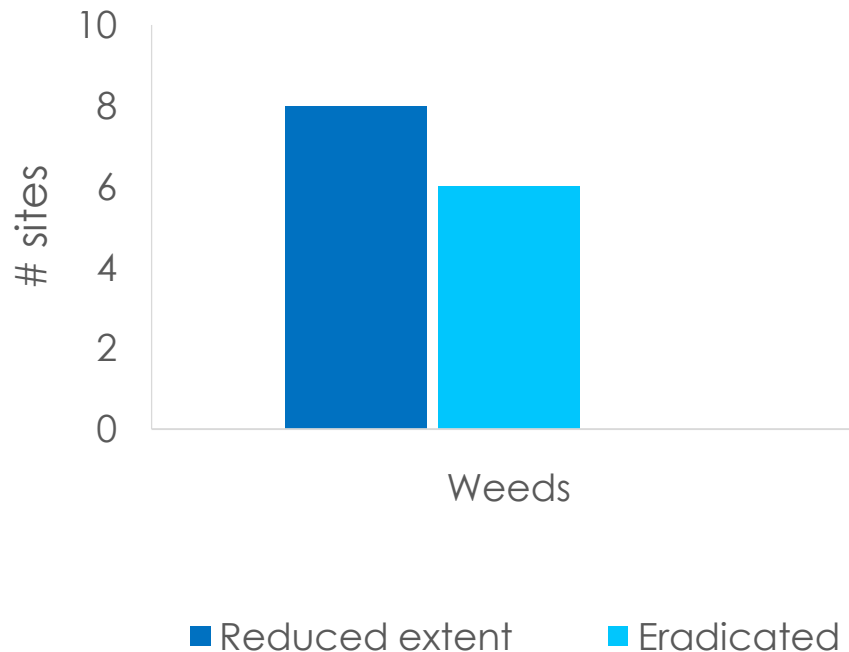
- Two-thirds of the 60,000 plant species in Australia are introduced weeds



# Environmental pressure: introduced species (flora)

## Ecotourism actions:

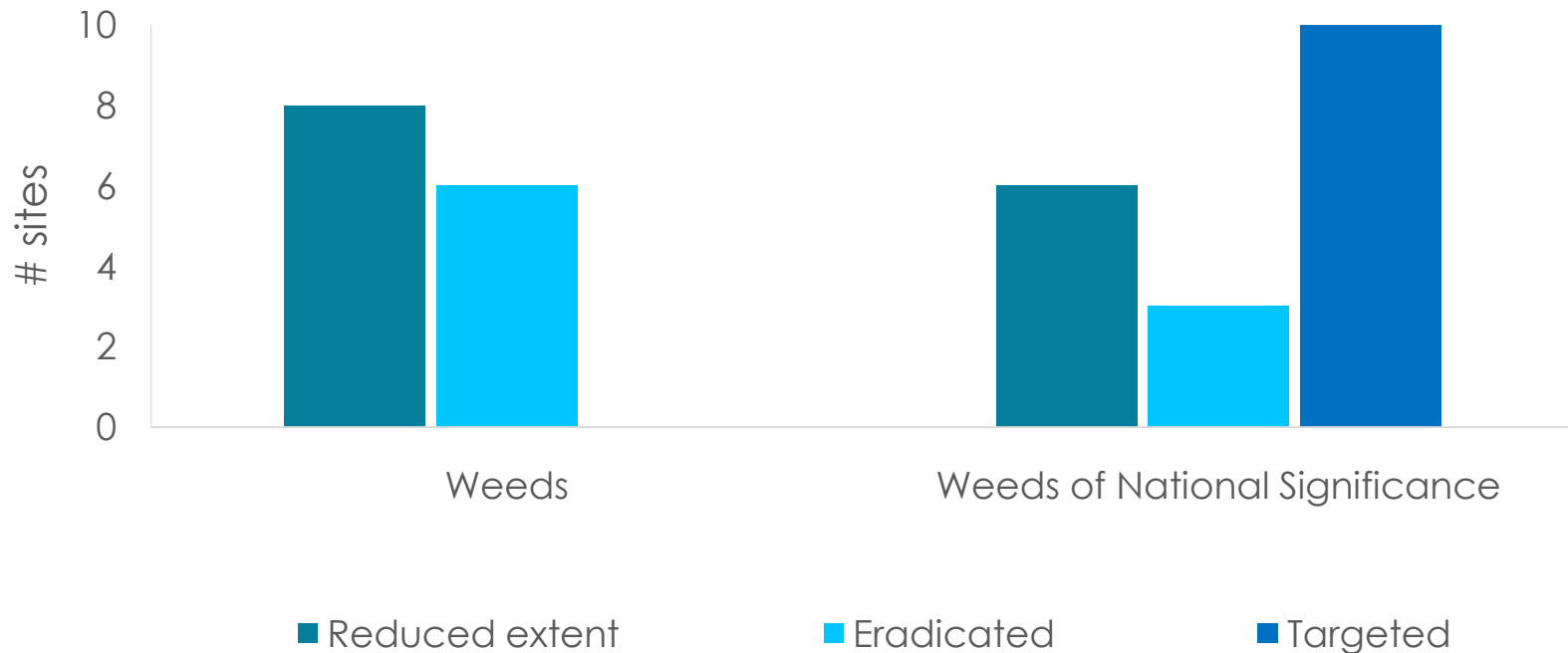
- 100% undertook actions targeting introduced flora
- 6 sites successful eradication



# Environmental pressure: introduced species (flora)

## Ecotourism actions:

- 100% undertook actions targeting introduced flora
- 6 sites successful eradication
- 13 Weeds of National Significance were targeted

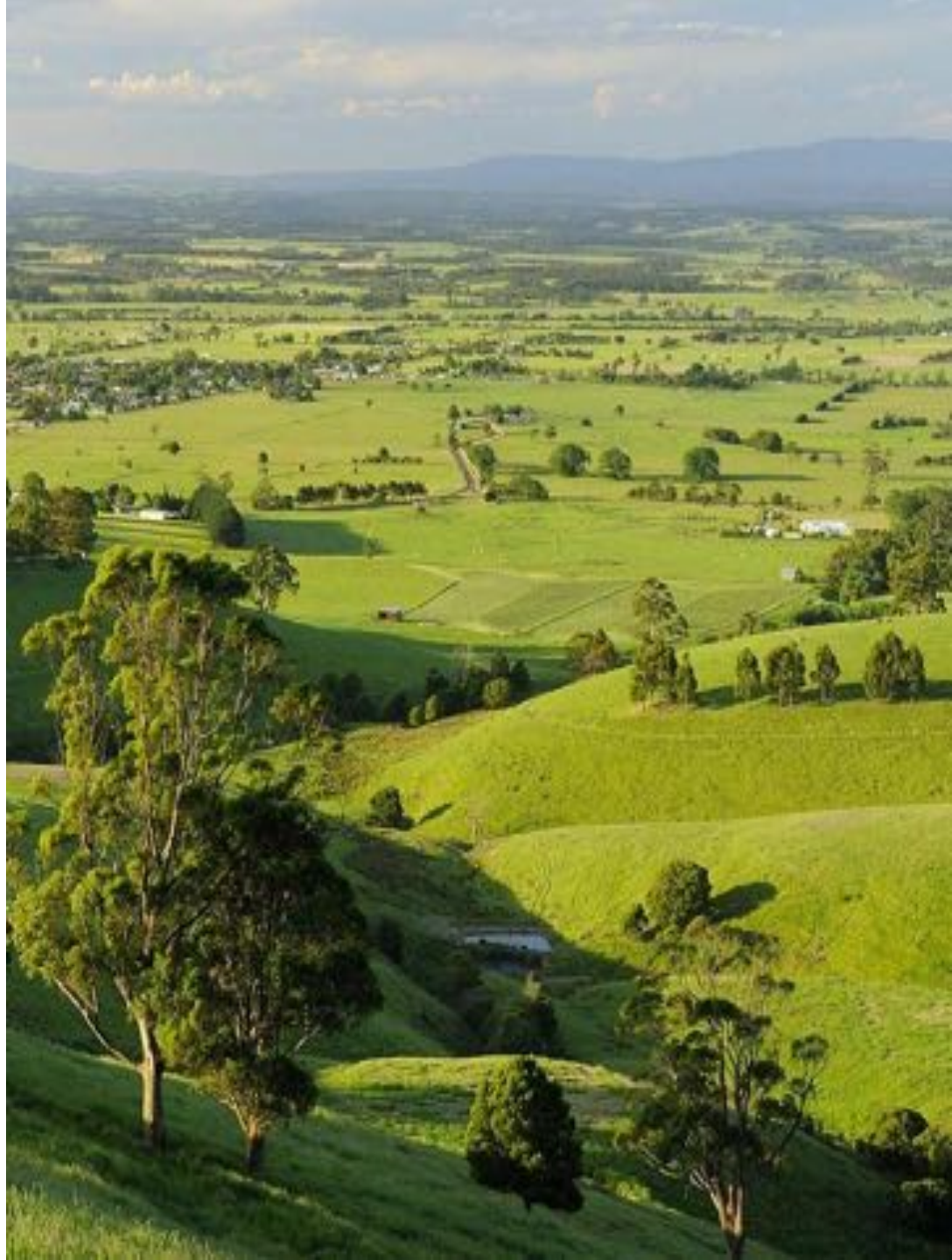


# Environmental pressures: Land-use and clearing

## The problem:

Habitat loss and fragmentation affect 50% of threatened species

Agricultural operations cover >50% of total land area



# Environmental pressures: Land-use and clearing



## Ecotourism actions:

100% sites undertook revegetation activities

Conservation importance related to extent & context

>50% of sites converted degraded land to ecotourism purposes

# Environmental pressure: Land-use and clearing

## Ecotourism actions:

70% of sites created wildlife corridors or increased habitat connectivity



# Environmental pressures: Land-use and clearing

## Ecotourism actions:

65% of sites established formal protected areas

→ Covering 240,000ha

→ 22 legally binding, in-perpetuity conservation agreements



# Environmental pressures: Land-use and clearing

## Ecotourism actions:

Provide refuges for  
at-risk species



Status	PR-1	PR-2	PR-3
Critically endangered	6	0	0
Endangered	13	3	2
Vulnerable	11	10	4
Near threatened	2	2	0
Total	32	15	6

PR-1: Formal protection agreement

PR-2: conservation arrangements e.g. Land for Wildlife

PR-3: general protection, no formal arrangements

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# Environmental pressure: Climate change



**The problem:** Shifting climatic zones, frequency/intensity of natural disasters

**Ecotourism actions:** 17% of sites reported increased rates of carbon capture

## Environmental pressure: Climate change



## Underlying challenge: Lack of data



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## The problem:

- Insufficient knowledge for 99% of Australian species



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## The problem:

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## Ecotourism actions:

>90% of sites undertook or participated in environmental research projects



# Underlying challenge: Lack of data

**National Recovery Plans:** Highlight critical need for data collection and data sharing e.g. southern cassowary



# Conservation crisis solved?

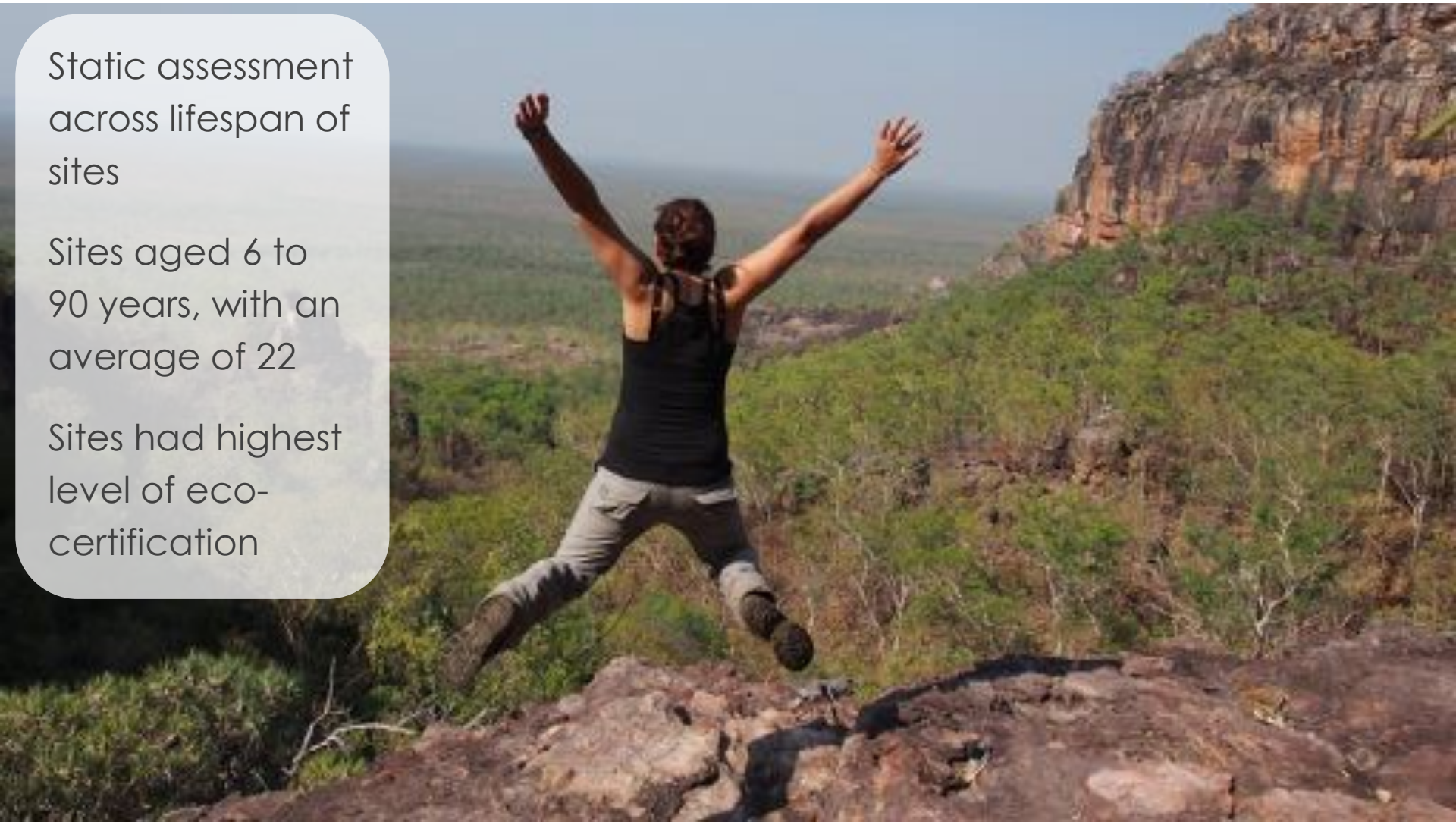


# Conservation crisis solved?

Static assessment  
across lifespan of  
sites

Sites aged 6 to  
90 years, with an  
average of 22

Sites had highest  
level of eco-  
certification



# Ecotourism and conservation: where to from here?



# Ecotourism and conservation: where to from here?

## Ecotourism is a tool

It needs informed users, government policies, and cross-sector collaborations



# Ecotourism and conservation: where to from here?



# Ecotourism and conservation: where to from here?



## Information sharing and knowledge brokers

Improve efficiencies

Optimise efforts

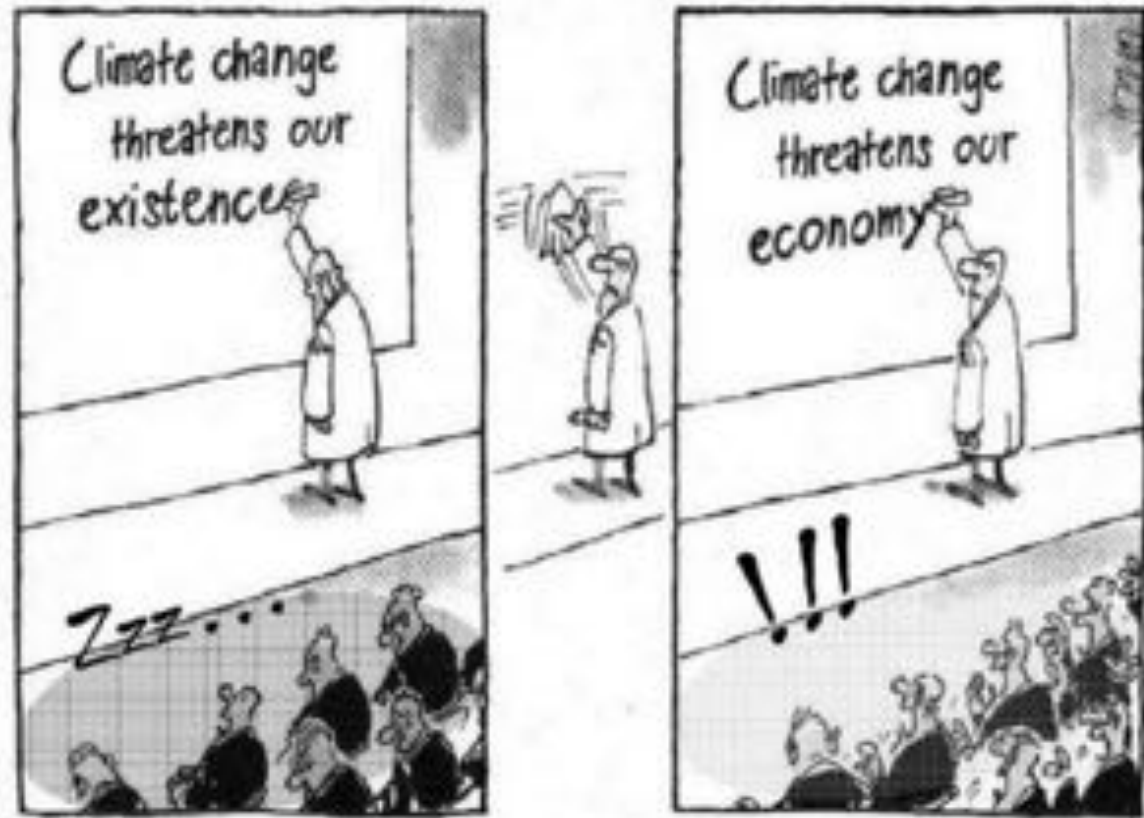
Reduce barriers

Increase accessibility

Provide targeted

information

# Ecotourism and conservation: where to from here?



## Communication

We need to tailor our message to get the outcomes that we want

**Money doesn't grow on trees...**



**But maybe ecotourism is the next best thing!**