

A brief history of the Australian environment movement (post-1770)

- 1770 English botanist Joseph Banks, traveling with Captain Cook, sets foot on Australia at Botany Bay. His landing party clashes with Indigenous residents, and wounds several. Later the same year Captain Cook collides with Great Barrier Reef. Cook writes of Indigenous Australians, *“they seemed far happier than we Europeans...they live in a tranquility which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition. The Earth and Sea of their own accord furnish them with all the things necessary for life.”*
- 1789 English government establishes Australian colony to dispose of poor Britons. No official recognition of the rights, or even existence, of Indigenous Australians, and little appreciation of the richness and vulnerability of the continent's natural environment. Cattle and sheep, cats and dogs introduced.
- 1790 First legislation to protect specific native wildlife species (on Norfolk Island). In following decades a number of Acts passed to protect specific species.
- 1836 Charles Darwin arrives in Sydney on the *Beagle*. Upon leaving he writes, *“Farewell Australia! You are a rising child, and doubtless someday will reign a great princess in the South; but you are too great and ambitious for affection, yet not great enough for respect. I leave your shores without sorrow or regret”*.
- 1837 New colonist Mrs Georgiana Molloy commences documenting the extraordinary floristic diversity of a small part of the south west corner of Western Australia – and is led to a sense of reverence by its beauty, in contrast to Banks and Darwin who were both generally dismissive of the Australian landscape and flora.
- 1857 Eugene von Guerard, a migrant from Austria, paints the forest at Ferntree Gully in Dandenong Ranges, Victoria.
- 1861 This painting inspires probably Australia's first environment campaign when the art critic at the *Argus* newspaper in Melbourne, James Smith, commences a campaign to prevent the logging of Ferntree Gully forest.
- 1866 German biologist Ernst Haeckl coins the word 'ecology' (not in Australia).
- 1878 Nature lover R M Collins, born into one of Queensland's oldest pastoral families, begins campaigning for McPherson Range (Lamington) National Park after visiting Yellowstone in USA. He is elected to Qld Parliament and campaigns for legislation to establish national parks, finally adopted in 1906. Qld national parks campaign carried on from 1908 by Romeo Lahey, son of timber mill manager.
- 1879 Australia's first national park declared: Royal NP, south of Sydney.
- 1880 Victorian Field Naturalists Club formed.
- 1886 The Heidelberg school of painters (Roberts, McCubbin, Streeton), start traveling out into the bush to paint nature. Their paintings help change the way Australians perceive and value nature and the natural landscapes, building on the earlier work of Glover, Martens, Chevalier, von Guerard, Piquenit and Buvelot. Artists continue to help colonial Australians come to terms with Australia through the work of Heysen, Preston, Namatjira and on to Nolan, Boyd and Drysdale.
- 1909 David Stead, father of Christina, co-founds arguably Australia's first environmental campaign organization: the Wildlife Preservation Society, in Sydney.
- 1932 Myles Dunphy forms National Parks and Primitive Areas Council in NSW to campaign for protected areas.
- 1937 Sydney novelist Eleanor Dark writes *“Sun Across the Sky”* – dealing with the clash between local residents and a property developer in a small seaside resort.
- Also in 1937, Philip Crosbie Morrison, the 'voice of nature', commences long career of journalism and broadcasting on the environment. His *“Wild life”* radio show, initially to run for 6 weeks in 1938 in Victoria, ends up running for 20 years, goes national, and becomes one of the most popular shows ever on Australian radio.

1946	Judith Wright, born 1915, publishes first book of poetry. Wright goes on to become a leading conservationist, as well as poet. In 1954 she co-founded the Queensland branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society and went on to lead successful campaigns for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and many other Qld environments.	1966	Vincent Lingiari and other Gurindji stockmen and TO's commence strike on Wave Hill and Newcastle Waters pastoral leases in NT.	1974	The first Field Study Centre opened in Queensland at Jacobs Well
	<i>Listen, listen latecomers to my country eat of wild manna there is there was a country that spoke in the language of the leaves</i>	1970	Liberal PM John Gorton offers financial assistance to conservationists to help put their case for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef to Queensland Royal Commission into the reef. Reef campaign succeeds.	1975	Campaigns against woodchipping, and subsequently bauxite mining, in WA's native karri and jarrah forests take off. Original campaigner Dr Beth Shultz still campaigning for WA's forests in 2004.
1962	Rachel Carson publishes " <i>Silent Spring</i> " in USA.		Also in 1970, trade unionist Jack Munday teams up with three Sydney women to place the world's first 'green ban' on proposed destruction of Kelly's Bush for housing development. Green bans and Jack Munday become internationally famous.	1976	Liberal PM Malcolm Fraser shuts down sand mining on Fraser Island after a long campaign by environment group FIDO lead by John Sinclair. Fraser Island becomes a national park shortly after.
1963	Yolngu traditional owners from Gove in NT present bark petition to Federal parliament in Canberra opposing proposed Nabalco (now Alcan) bauxite mine. Justice Blackburn subsequently (1971!) rules that the Yolngu TO's do not have a 'proprietary interest as understood by our law'. Mining proceeds.	1972	Aboriginal tent embassy set up in Canberra, prompted by anger over non-recognition of Aboriginal Land Rights in the Yolngu case. Still going 30 years later!	1976	Also in 1976, Dr Bob Brown rafts the Franklin; helps form the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS); and fasts on top of Mt Wellington in Hobart to protest against visiting US warships.
1964	The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) is established in Canberra by a one thousand pound grant from Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies.	1972	Flooding of Lake Pedder in south west Tasmania despite national campaign in opposition. United Tasmania Group, Australia's first green political party, established in response to damming.	1979	Seminal Terania Creek NSW nonviolent protest campaign against logging of rainforests, leads to creation of 6 new national parks and Premier Neville Wran's decision to ban rainforest logging in NSW.
1965	Australian Littoral Society is formed to protect fight to protect the Great Barrier Reef.		Independently, Dr Bob Brown, newly arrived in Tasmania and working as a doctor in Launceston, places an advertisement in the <i>Australian</i> and three Tasmanian newspapers likening the flooding of Pedder to the killing of the last Thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) and the genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines.	1982	The Franklin blockade. 1,200 arrests; dam stopped in 1983.
1965	Vincent Serventy films Australia's first TV nature series - " <i>Nature walkabout</i> " - in the Northern Territory.			1983	Environment Centre of the Northern Territory formed
				1989	Nudgee Beach Field Study Centre opened in May.
				1991	Queensland 20 field Study Centre's are renamed Environmental Education Centres
				1999	Queensland Environmental Education Centres and Outdoor Education Centres begin to operationally work together.
				2004	Northern Territory's only Field Study Centre is closed

- 2005 Victoria and New South
Wales begin trialing the
Australian Sustainable
Schools Initiative
- 2007 Queensland initiates
Queensland Sustainable
Schools Initiative (QESSI)
- 2009 Earth Smart Initiative and
Science Sports Initiative
highlights sustainability
and science in Queensland
primary schools
- 2012 Australian Government put
on notice by the United
Nations committee
regarding the World
Heritage status of the
Great Barrier Reef

Reference

Almost all entries are derived
from the highly recommended
book: "**Ecological Pioneers: A
social history of Australian
ecological thought and action**",
Mulligan M. and Hill S.,
Cambridge University Press, 2001.
Any errors in translation belong to
Peter Robertson.