



MEDIA RELEASE

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LEADING GLOBAL CONSERVATION PROPERTY PLAYS HOST TO COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM NORTH AMERICA

One of the world's most unique properties that blends environmental conservation and sustainable horticulture is taking centre stage this week to a group of college students from North America.

Internationally-renowned Banrock Station, in South Australia's Riverland, is playing host to eight students from universities across the United States and Canada, eager to gain first-hand knowledge of the property's global-leading conservation management.

It is the second successive year that overseas students have visited the property as part of the US-based International Student Volunteers Organisation scheme.

The four-week program combines conservation, education, and recreation in adventure travel programs to six countries, including Australia.

The students – ranging in age from 18 to 23 years – are spending their time working and studying on a diverse range of projects at the award-winning wetland complex, including:

- Tree planting in an area cleared in the middle of the vineyard to create a series of corridors between the two remnant mallee sections;
- Working on the completion of a feral proof fence;
- Trapping mammals to monitor the condition of the property's Bettong population, and;
- Undertaking spotlight transects to monitor the numbers and distribution of feral and native nocturnal animals.

“The volunteer program gives international students a chance to complement their studies with hands-on experience at one of the world's most innovative conservation projects,” Banrock Station Ranger/Ecologist, Miss Ruth Coates, said.

“It also provides a great opportunity for Banrock to showcase its unique partnership between active industry and environmental conservation to students interested in the environment, either personally or through their university studies,” she said.

“The students seem to really enjoy their experience – they are getting their hands dirty in an array of projects, but are enjoying the opportunity of experiencing another country's culture and lifestyle.

“And we are excited about showcasing the uniqueness of the property to them, in the belief they will take their experiences back home to the US and Canada, and help spread the word about the work we are doing at Banrock, as well as the need for greater appreciation of environmental conservation across the globe.

“We are hopeful that our involvement in the volunteer program will become an annual event, as there are many advantages on both sides.”

Miss Coates said the students worked in teams, each with a Banrock Station supervisor. They spend two weeks at Banrock Station before embarking on a two-week recreational tour of the east coast of Australia.

The academic elements of the visit include discussion groups, and the writing of field journals to record activities and ideas that flow from work undertaken on the property.

About Banrock Station

Banrock Station Wines is recognised internationally for its pioneering concept of funding environmental projects by donating part proceeds of every worldwide purchase of its wines.

Since its launch 11 years ago, Banrock Station Wines has donated more than \$3 million to help restore and/or rehabilitate more than 60 wetlands throughout the world, including six in South Australia.

The jewel in the Banrock Station crown is its world-renowned wetlands at Kingston-on-Murray, on the Murray River, in South Australia’s Riverland, which consist of 1375 hectares of ecologically significant land, including 1068 hectares of River Murray floodplain wetlands.

In 2002, Banrock Station won the most prestigious wetland conservation award in the world – the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award – for its commitment to wetland restoration.

The wetlands provide a natural habitat for two nationally vulnerable species – the Regent Parrot and the Southern Bell Frog, as well as supporting 166 bird species, including several migratory birds – the Great Egret, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Greenshank, Red-necked Stint, Long-toed Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Fork-tailed Swift and Caspian Tern.

“The Banrock Station wetlands are a shining example of how, through proper and considered environmental management, we can reduce our dependency on major waterways like the River Murray, itself under threat because of the drought and years of unsustainable development,” Miss Coates said.

“There is no reason why the achievements and successes of Banrock Station cannot be replicated many times throughout the world,” she said.

“All it needs is more and more people to recognize the commitment they can make to this important environmental cause when next they buy wine.”